



Stewards  
For the  
Coastal Environment

## Salt Ponds Coalition

Phone: (401) 322-3068

E-Mail: [info@saltpondscoalition.org](mailto:info@saltpondscoalition.org)

P.O. Box 875, Charlestown, RI 02813

Website: [www.saltpondscoalition.org](http://www.saltpondscoalition.org)

Preserving our coastal ponds: Point Judith, Potter, Card, Truston, Green Hill, Ninigret, Quonochontaug, Winnapaug, Maschaug, Little Maschaug

Charlestown Town Council  
Charlestown Town Hall  
4045 South County Trail  
Charlestown, RI 02813

January 20th, 2010

Dear Council Members,

We are writing to express opposition to the proposed Town of Charlestown boat launch facility in the Mud Cove area of Ninigret Pond. There are already boat launch facilities in the immediate area and around the pond that can handle boater needs - there is no need to tear up land, salt marsh and pond bottom to make another.

Salt Ponds Coalition is familiar with the site and has the following concerns.

### **General concerns:**

- This is undisturbed shoreline where birds such as heron and egrets find refuge. Why disturb it unnecessarily?
- The water in front of this site is shallow and rocky. It is prime oyster habitat that will need to be dredged to accommodate boats and trailers. A serious effort is underway to restock the pond with disease-resistant oysters and we should be preserving prime habitat for the return of oysters, not destroying it.
- Much of the lot is wetlands, or low-lying ground where water collects and soaks into the earth. Adding fill and pavement will reduce the ability of this area to absorb surface water
- Storm water from pavement and ramp will run into the pond along with petro chemicals leaked from cars, trucks and motorboats.
- The launch is in the quiet end of the pond, where kayakers, wind surfers and other passive forms of recreation predominate. It would be inappropriate to add significantly more motorboats in this area.
- The portion of the pond where the proposed launch is receives less flushing than areas closer to the breachway and is more susceptible to pollution.
- There are also many shoals and sand flats between the launch and the breachway, including newly restored eelgrass meadows. Large motorboats, driven by people not familiar with the pond, will run aground and will damage the pond bottom.

### **If this is a free facility:**

- The town will be creating a site that will host a lot of drinking and littering. Alcohol and public motorboat launches go together. Our organization leads a cleanup of the Quonnie Breachway launch each fall and we see first hand the amount of alcohol consumed on the premises, as demonstrated by the hundreds of discarded cans and bottles littering the site.

- The clam flats in proximity to this site will be subject to many more people – likely more than they can sustain. An unattended launch would also ease access for poachers – an band of which was arrested in the Quonnie Pond shellfish spawner sanctuary last year.
- Areas of the western basin are shallow and prop wash from many additional boats could churn up and activate/suspend nutrients in the sediments and go against nitrogen reductions the Town is trying to achieve through expensive programs. Spinning propellers and prop wash could also dislodge more eelgrass, which would be bad for the ecosystem and would contribute more smelly weed to the pond shore.

**If this is a pay-to-use facility**

- Why tear up the shoreline when Lavin's landing –right next door – has a perfectly good launch and welcomes the public on a pay-to-launch basis. Why not work out a deal with Mr. Lavin to provide town access to his launch? The Lavin facility and the proposed Charlestown site are so close together, town parking and recreational amenities could still be located on the driving range field.

Ninigret Park and Ninigret Wildlife Refuge are just down the street and already supply most of the resources outlined in this proposal. The park and refuge have wonderful hiking trails, viewing platforms, picnic areas, playgrounds and more. The refuge also has a brand new boat launch for car-top boats such as kayaks and canoes along with easy parking and rest rooms.

The proposal currently circulating strikes us as an unnecessary and misplaced expenditure of taxpayer money that will degrade the health of Ninigret Pond. Money would be better spent on stormwater and wastewater management improvements that will help clean up the pond, as well as on resources for dredging and maintaining the breachway, which badly needs it. The parcel in question would best serve as undisturbed vegetated shoreline with great oyster habitat just off shore.

Salt Ponds Coalition supports public recreation on the pond – as demonstrated through our kayak and Salt Pond Safari programs – and would embrace a plan to get more Charlestown citizens on the water in low-impact boats such as sailboats, kayaks and canoes.

The integrity and cleanliness of Ninigret Pond is vital to local and migrating wildlife. It is of paramount importance to those who own or rent property around the pond, those who make a living off its shellfish, and to those who visit established facilities to recreate on its shores and waters. We urge local leaders to protect the pond and direct present and future users to established launch sites around the pond.

Sincerely,



Art Ganz  
President



Mark Bullinger  
Executive Director