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The Committee for the Great Salt Pond

B L O C K I S L A N D , R I

Member Newsletter | Summer 2020

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The Committee for the Great Salt Pond
PO Box 1092 • Block Island, RI 02807



OUR MISSION

To protect and enhance the environmental quality of the Great Salt Pond, including its shorelines and wetlands, and to promote appropriate and productive uses of the Pond's resources by residents, visitors and local businesses.

OUR WEBSITE

www.cgspblockisland.org

Visit our website where you can catch up on activities for the coming season, pay your annual dues or make a donation. There is a page dedicated to the 6th Swim the Pond event on July 26, 2020. You will be able to read all the details about the event, including registration for the swim.

FUNDING

Individual contributions, membership dues, special events, program grants. IRS 501(c)3 non-profit.

Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Thank you for your support of the Committee for the Great Salt Pond. We are happy to report that the pond remains healthy, our water quality-monitoring program is active and our annual Swim the Pond continues to grow as a demonstration of how great the pond truly is.

ABOUT US

Directors

Sven Risom, President
Cheryl Moore, Vice President
Cindy Pappas, Treasurer
Betsy Pyne, Secretary
George Davis
Henry duPont
Tricia Foley
Bob Greenlee
Bruce Johnson
Carl Kaufmann
Catherine Pucket
Mitchel Silberbush

Members

Approximately 450

Governance

Up to 16 Directors

Committee for the Great Salt Pond

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CHAMPLIN'S DECISION. On February 11, 2020, the CGSP received from the Providence Superior Court the final decision regarding 17+ years of legal battles over the proposed massive expansion of Champlin's Marina into the Great Salt Pond. Specifically, the Court ruled on the CRMC (Coastal Resource Management Council) treatment of Champlin's vs. other marina expansions. The Court unequivocally decided that there was no prejudice in the CRMC ruling. In fact, the ruling states: "For the reasons that follow, Champlin's appeals are denied in their entirety."

Our lawyer, Dan Prentiss, has added, "After a thorough study of the 55+ page decision we feel the judge did a really thorough job in rendering this decision. In an administrative appeal, the appellant (Champlin's) had to show that the agency decision was made without any support in the evidence, or was otherwise "arbitrary and capricious" or contrary to accepted law. Judge Rodgers applied those standards and found without equivocation that there was an abundance of evidence to support all of the CRMC's findings and conclusions. She discussed the evidence at length, including reference to testimony of CGSP's Sven Risom and Henry duPont. She also relied substantially on the testimony of Harbormaster Steve Land (and former harbormaster Chris Willi), and CRMC staff. Her decision follows pretty closely with the arguments that the CGSP made in its briefs. There is no question that the intervenors brought about this decision, both at the CRMC and in the superior court. There turned out to be some pretty complicated issues of fact and legal issues."

It is our belief that the engagement and persistence of the CGSP, Block Island Land Trust, and the Town of New Shoreham made the difference. The CGSP would like to especially thank our attorney and friend Dan Prentiss for his leadership, approach, expertise and support. The advocacy and interest of all brought out the best in the members of the CRMC in truly protecting public trust resources.

After 17+ years, the CGSP wants to extend our thanks to everyone for their participation and support. It is clear that when we all work together in support of the Island, great things can happen.

The Superior Court case is now concluded. Champlin's has 20 days to file a petition with the Rhode Island Supreme Court. We then have 20 days to respond, and the court will then, at some point, rule on whether it will take up the case on appeal.

THE ISLAND HAS A NEW HARBORMASTER. The island has a new harbormaster, Kate McConville. Appointed in February by the Town Council, she succeeds Steve Land who has taken a new job running a marina in New York City. Kate brings a wealth of experience to her new post. She will be supervising a staff that manages boating in Old Harbor and in the Great Salt Pond, one of New England's busiest boating centers. Her department is also responsible for the seasonal pump-out service for waste disposal.

McConville came to the island in 1995, soon after graduating from the University of Rhode Island. One of her first jobs was as the intern for our Committee for the Great Salt Pond. Next came a part-time position with the Harbors Department, assisting with rentals of town moorings. From then on, for many seasons from spring into fall, she has been out on the Pond in a Harbors boat on a daily basis, often dawn to dark.

She joined the town's Rescue Squad in 1998, became a licensed EMT, and in 2007 was named captain of the squad, supervising a group that numbers 20 or more.

Kate has been Assistant Harbormaster since 2011, with a two-year break to serve as the town's 911 dispatcher. Since 2018 she has been the Harbors Department's Administrative Assistant, a year-round post responsible for running the office as well as oversight of activities on the water. She is obviously well-qualified for the position of Harbormaster.

July 31, 2021
Swim the Pond-6
Andy's Way • 11:00 am

Register today.
www.CGSPBlockIsland.com
Go to 2021 Swim



The Great Salt Pond Swim

6

September 6, 2020
Annual CGSP Meeting

Check our website
for meeting updates.



6TH ANNUAL GREAT SALT POND SWIM POSTPONED. At the 5th annual CGSP Swim the Pond in July 2019, some 109 swimmers entered the water at Andy’s Way, swimming a 1-mile loop toward Beane Point and back. Five groups ranged from very competitive and recreational swimmers to the last group that used fins and floatation devices. All had fun while showcasing the clean water and outstanding recreation area. In the photo to the right, happy swimmers were the order of a beautiful blue-sky day. We would like to thank all our volunteers and sponsors as well as Ocean Adventures and the Block Island Club for their support.



The 6th annual Great Salt Pond Swim originally scheduled for July 25, 2020 has been postponed until **July 31, 2021**. The Committee for the Great Salt Pond has made this decision for the safety of our swimmers, volunteers, and the Town of New Shoreham. We look forward to a return to normalcy next summer and a great swimmer turnout. Details of the swim can be found on our website www.CGSPBlockIsland.org or visit our Facebook page.

SHELLFISH AND AQUACULTURE. In addition to eating oysters, crabs and shellfish from the pond, many people enjoy doing their own clamming. Did you know that over 2,400 clamming licenses were sold in 2019 and some 30,000 “keeper” clams were “seeded” into the pond! Shellfishing is a real income source for the town. In addition to clams, the Shellfish Commission has been working on managing and harvesting green crabs, a long-time invasive species.

Invasive species control represents another collaborative effort with other Great Salt Pond organizations. Using the CGSP’s boat, the Shellfish Commission has an ongoing green crab trapping effort, and the Block Island Maritime Institute is initiating a green crab monitoring program to study population and molting patterns. Green crabs decimate eelgrass beds, accelerate shoreline erosion and feast on juvenile shellfish and crustaceans, all of which negatively impact the Pond’s ecosystem.

Aquaculture is strong in the pond with four oyster farmers actively growing oysters, and two kelp farmers developing a new aquaculture crop. The beauty of sugar kelp is that it grows in the fall and winter with a spring harvest. So while the pond is quiet and empty of tourists, the kelp farmers are busy growing a healthy new crop.

Additionally, last season the CGSP was one of 57 monitoring organizations from New York to Maine that participated in the first ever Shell Day water sampling led by the Northeast Coastal Acidification Network (NECAN). These samples were analyzed for total alkalinity to better understand the current state of ocean and coastal acidification (OCA) on the Northeast coast. Shellfish are sensitive to OCA, primarily at their larval stages, and shell growth can be negatively impacted across multiple life stages. Minor shell degradation (chalkiness, brittleness) has been observed in some of the Great Salt Pond’s clam beds and in other Rhode Island waters, with no negative impact on edibility. The current thinking of the Shellfish Commission is that local marine soil conditions are the primary cause. At press time, the alkalinity testing results for our Pond were not yet available.



WATER QUALITY TESTING. The CGSP samples the water at 14 sites every two weeks from April into November. Six of the sites are on or just outside the harbor while eight are at tributaries near the pond where we track flow and contaminants from the watershed areas. Based on our data, the pond is relatively clean throughout the summer. There are some hot spots that we keep a close eye on, but interestingly enough, most of the concerns stem from faulty septic systems or storm water run-off in the tributaries!

2020 will mark the twentieth consecutive year that the CGSP has participated in the University of Rhode Island’s Watershed Watch program (URIWW), sampling the Great Salt Pond for water quality from late spring through early fall. As water samples are collected from the boat, water temperature, water salinity and dissolved oxygen are measured, and water clarity is observed. In the lab, these samples are tested, measuring bacteria, nitrogen, phosphorus, chlorophyll and pH. Both field monitoring and laboratory analyses indicate that the greater Pond is in good health, despite tributary waters that can test poorly in the summer months. This is a significant historical database, made possible by CGSP funding, a small group of dedicated CGSP volunteers, and the assistance of URIWW. This testing allows us to identify and address changes in the Pond’s health for everyone’s benefit!

RECREATIONAL USES OF THE GREAT SALT POND. Recreational uses of the Great Salt Pond are many, including nature walks, fishing and shell fishing, and recreational boating. No activity will be more impacted by the Covid-19 virus epidemic crisis this summer than recreational boating, which will be severely limited by the state and local regulations designed to prevent the spread of the virus.

Sailing organizations in the North East have canceled their regattas including Off Soundings, Block Island Race Week, and the Bermuda Race, all of which were scheduled to be held in June.

To ensure safety, Block Island Community Sailing and the Block Island Club will likely have to limit their sailing programs to small boats with limited crews, such as family members who are living together. Sadly, until the spread of the epidemic is brought under control, recreational boating will most likely be limited to kayaking, paddle boards, or dinghies if one is going to safely enjoy the recreational resources of the Great Salt Pond.



BURGEES. We will still be selling our popular burgees this summer, representing a 16-year tradition. Originally, the burgee was created to raise money for the Double Ender Committee who organizes the July 4th fireworks and Parade. We normally go boat-to-boat in the Pond, selling the burgees prior to July 4th, with the proceeds going to the Double Ender Committee and the Committee for the Great Salt Pond. While the fireworks and parade are cancelled for 2020, the burgees are available for purchase. If you or anyone you know are interested in purchasing the 2020 “year that wasn’t” burgee, please send an email to Bruce Johnson at BDJohnsn@Comcast.net.



The CGSP would like to thank all the organizations and businesses that work on and support the Great Salt Pond.