

Nobody can do everything— but everybody can do something

ACROSS THE POND & BEYOND

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It's full moon time as I write, but good luck enjoying a swath of moonlight across your pond if you're lucky enough to live on one. I won't belabor the subject of this year's weird weather pattern (what pattern)?

Ponds. Yes, our ponds. They are one of the many issues that come up for discussion when people who live on them, or have a special interest in them, get together—as they do tend to define our town. They are an integral part of Pembroke's history. Think about it.

Native Americans depended on the ponds for food and a means of travel. We have our historic Herring Run which is tied into Furnace and Oldham Ponds. And let's not forget the virtually ignored little Gorham Mill Pond which connects the end of the herring's "run" to Furnace Pond. Gorham Mill Pond had a mill there at one time, and iron was provided by Furnace Pond for ship building up on the North River.

Mayflower Grove would not have existed had it not been for Little Sandy Bottom Pond. Summer camps for children were established on Hobomock and Furnace ponds. The Finnish population came to Pembroke and they continue to enjoy their camp with the sauna and bathhouse on Furnace Pond. Oldham's Monument Island has its history and there's an active swim program, beach, and boat landing there today. There are beaches at Stetson Pond and the beach at Little Sandy is active with swimming.

Were it not for the ponds, the cranberry bogs would not have been established. A summer population soon began building cottages around the ponds, with Hosea's and other establishments,

which would not have thrived beforehand.

There was Hobomock Pavillion where Oliveira's sits today on the edge of Hobomock Pond. Big Sandy Bottom Pond is a reservoir for drinking water, though not for Pembroke. The City of Brockton has drinking water rights to Furnace Pond.

Let's not forget beautiful Silver Lake, most of which lies in Pembroke, the rest in Kingston. And on the Duxbury line, Pembroke shares shoreline with Upper and Lower Chandler Mill ponds.

Now, most of the summer cottages have been converted to year-round homes. These changes have had an impact on our ponds, as have the bogs. The ponds are the jewels of our town. However, like fine jewelry, they need to be taken care of, treasured, and protected.

Enter the grassroots group that became the Pembroke Watershed Association (PWA).

There are so many questions those of us who are actively involved with PWA are asked on a regular basis. "When are 'you' going to do something about Oldham Pond?"

"Or what about Furnace Pond?"

"What's happening about Hobomock Pond?"

Some residents are really angry. "I can't even launch my boat—too many weeds."

"I don't dare step my big toe in the pond with all that stinky scum."

"I'm afraid to let my dog out, because he's used to going in the pond and with that algae, he might get sick."

"If something isn't done pretty soon, I'm putting my house up for sale—or else going to the town for a tax rebate. I'm not paying that much for a waterfront place I can't use."

"Is it safe for my kids to take swimming lessons at Oldham?"

"Where have all the fish gone?"

And so it goes.

But the PWA has no solid

answers right now. We wish we did. We spent money on a study of Oldham Pond to treat the algae. The town of Hanson agreed to help fund it because part of Oldham lies within Hanson. We were ready to roll, permits done except for one agency needing to sign off. That group monitors endangered species and Oldham is on the list for a couple of endangered shellfish. PWA then paid for mandatory special divers to explore Oldham for the species and found one of them still was there—so the treatment planned was prohibited.

Right now, PWA is waiting for word from that environmental agency to see what, if any, treatment will be allowed. If one is, it could be more than we have in our treasury. What happens with Furnace, which we'd like to treat as well, depends on what we hear about Oldham.

As for Hobomock, if it's safe to skate on that pond any time the rest of the winter, it is permitted. However, until further notice, the pond is closed to any other recreation. The town and PWA await word from the state as to whether it will continue monitoring and treating Hobomock's hydrilla infestation.

PWA President Ray Holman, and his wife Diane, who is a PWA Director, deserve a lot of credit for all their time spent dealing with the various organizations tied into these current negotiations, communications, and questions.

Quite frankly, there is a small core of us who have been actively involved with trying to save our ponds for the past five years, and we can't be expected to carry the load without more help from others.

The wheels of environmental affairs turn slowly and patience is required. Sometimes I wonder why the people who yell the loudest and expect the most don't get involved to help solve the problems. Nobody can do everything, but everybody can do something—across the ponds and beyond.