



Happy February from Lagoon Pond! I am proud to tell you what the Board and Advisory Committee have been accomplishing this past quarter. The enthusiasm and willingness to contribute to our mission to improve the health and well-being of the Pond has been pretty amazing. So, let me get right into it. (I do apologize for the length of this email, but you'll see, there is A LOT going on).

1. Safe Harbors Marina (SHM): The Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) approved the project submitted to it by SHM, accepting certain offers by SHM and placing certain conditions on the project. Although the LPA opposed certain aspects of this project, the offers and conditions the MVC placed on it are significant and include: (i) funding a feasibility study for restoration of the saltwater marsh near the marina, (ii) committing to work with the Towns, advisory boards, pond organizations and others in improvement to the Pond, (iii) installing an information sign in the West End describing "no wake" zones, etc, (iv) partnering with Tisbury on the efficacy of dredging in the West Arm, (v) prohibiting copper bottom paint, (vi) attaining "Clean Marina" status, (vii) conducting water quality testing, etc. For more info on the terms of the MVC's approval, please see the decision to be published on the MVC website shortly.

But MOST IMPORTANTLY, during this process the LPA decided to "reach across the aisle" and approach SHM with the idea that we are all stakeholders and can help each other make improvements to the Pond. Chris Scott at SHM has been enthusiastic about this partnership and we have already discussed several ways we can help each other, including placing navigational aids in the West Arm and at the Tisbury boat landing and distributing our boating regulations brochure to SHM's customers. We are in the middle of putting together a consortium of businesses, Town officials and not for profits who have an interest in the Pond. This working group is planning to meet every other month to exchange knowledge, ideas and resources, with a commitment to improving the health and well-being of the Pond for all of us. So, stay tuned...

2. Hospital Sewer Leak: This past weekend, the hospital had a leak in its sewer lines. Because of the proximity to the Lagoon, several areas in the Lagoon have been closed to shellfishing until appropriate water quality testing indicates satisfactory results. This incident emphasizes how fragile and compromising adverse events on the Lagoon can be and how we all need to remain diligent in protecting it.

3. Committee Highlights: We have set up four committees at the LPA to better focus our mission. Highlights from these committees are as follows:

Membership/Outreach Committee~ This committee has updated our member list and is currently reaching out to Island businesses to join our mission in a substantial way. Under Barbara Kopans' guidance, it has discussed ways to get our current members more involved and how to expand our member base. In addition, Lani Goldthorpe and Becky Rivera have been working with our webmaster, Maddie Henson, in updating our website and social media presence. Go to our website at lagoonpondassoc.org to see the progress we have made! Our website will soon become a great source of information and education about all things on Lagoon Pond.

Science Committee~ The LPA's mission and all of our activities must be science based. We are grateful that Maria Abate, a Marine Biologist, has joined our Board this year! Under Maria's leadership and guidance we have applied for certain grants for water monitoring equipment and have met with the MVC, SHM and the Shellfish Constables to discuss how we can work together on making real changes on the Pond. Currently, we are working with the MVC to set up a single repository containing all scientific data relating to the Pond. It is a huge undertaking but is a first necessary start to tracking and understanding trends on the Pond. In addition, Becky Rivera and David Reed have joined forces to become our "nitrogen experts". They have been meeting with the Towns' Boards of Health, wastewater committees, oyster farmers and others to gather information regarding the current state of play in getting the Lagoon's "Total Maximum Daily Loads" (TMDLs) of nitrogen down to recommended levels.

Fundraising Committee~ Our smallest committee in terms of human capital, this one has had a major impact. First, we applied for and received \$5,000 from the Martha's Vineyard Community Fund in December. These funds will be used for our internship program on the Pond. This year we will have 2 interns working with the Oak Bluffs and Tisbury shellfish constables as well as the MVC and the Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group. If you know of any potential candidates for these positions, kindly forward them on to Doug Reece or respond to this email. This has been a successful program for us in the past and helps involve our island youth in conservation projects. Second, our leader Chris Hall, together with Maria Abate's input applied for funding to help the LPA lease and install a "Sonde" device which will allow us to monitor the water quality in the Pond on a real time basis! If all goes according to plan, and we get the funding, you should be able to see, real time, what the state of the Pond's water quality is at any time. So~ cross fingers! Finally, we have applied for a grant to fund a "Bio Blitz" in the Pond. This event focuses on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time. It is an event we want to do several times per year. Coupled with the water quality testing, it would enable us to track flora and fauna in the Pond and find out what effects one has on the other over time.

Strategic Planning Committee~ This committee is project focused. It has overlapped with the other committees, helping look into the nitrogen issues, developing the grant initiatives and coming up with other project based initiatives on the Pond. Currently, Amy Russo and others are developing an amazing brochure which will enable us to do more effective outreach. Dani Ewart, Doug Reece and others are working on a kiosk for the Tisbury boat landing which will have a map of the Lagoon highlighting areas of which boaters and others should be aware and we are looking into how best to continue to help educate our members and the public on the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plans, Permeable Reactive Barriers and Innovative and Alternative Septic Systems, all of which are necessary to help reduce the Lagoon's TMDL or nitrogen and other nutrients that are negatively affecting the Pond.

Wow! Crazy huh? This is a pretty effective group of people representing YOU and caring for the Pond we all love. Join us!

In closing, I wanted to report that I just got back from Florida where I saw the devastation from Hurricane Ian firsthand. It is more than humbling to see what Mother Nature has done, even 4 months later. I saw huge shrimp boats piled one on top of another like toys, house upon house reduced to a pile of sticks, refrigerators stuck high in trees where the water took them, high rises that can no longer have occupants, piers and giant trees blown away, a house picked up and moved half a block, resting against a downed telephone pole. Horrific. 71 people lost their lives. And yet...resilience~ people rebuilding and cleaning up debris, a house with flowers, a couple in lawn chairs outside of their RV which is sitting on a slab where their house used to be~ and people at the beach, enjoying the sun and swimming in the ocean.

I worry about a hurricane of that magnitude here. I worry about the Lagoon and its ability to take the development we have forced upon it. Mother Nature doesn't care who you are. You can't win against her, you can't outwit her. But there is always a chance for resilience-a chance to rebuild, to right the things that have gone wrong, to learn your lesson, to show Mother Nature your respect. Join us in doing our best to right the things we have not done well in the Lagoon. Join us in aiding Mother Nature's resilience. We need to do it for our children and our children's children. It is the right thing to do.

See You on the Water!

Sherry Countryman, President

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