

ACCABONAC PROTECTION COMMITTEE



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Editor • Jorie Latham

The Year's Ups & Downs

We've had numerous successes in the past year. No longer a parking lot, the grass around Pussy's Pond may grow at last. The Trustees have instituted a plan to control the kayaks that had proliferated at Louse Point, with more than 100 left sitting on the vegetation and blocking the beach. The Town has decided to purchase (with help from the county, in some instances) several parcels that will help to preserve Accabonac's health and beauty. Water quality seems to be improving due to increased flushing from the Gerard culvert. We have had our grant from the Overbrook Foundation renewed and enlarged! OMWM and phragmite-removal projects are getting underway, and the county is working on a new plan to perform vector control using "Integrated Marsh Management" practices rather than the old ditch and spray approach. Hurray!

However (you knew that was coming), we are also looking at the arrival of public water in Springs. While we recognize that this may be necessary for the school and folks on Gerard, it was not supposed to come without adequate environmental study. Likewise, we are dismayed at the total lack of movement toward maintaining the Barbara Hale Refuge as a meadow, which the Town not only agreed to but in fact had inscribed in bronze on the very handsome stone marker that stands at — what will someday be — the entrance on Springs Fireplace Road. This stone, several other signs and the culvert on Gerard have been targets of spray-paint vandalism. The ongoing pressures of development, the enlarging of houses and the addition of new ones, continue to be sources of concern.

Overall, we do seem to be moving in a positive direction — maybe slowly or with some steps back — but there will always be the need for attentive, caring and determined folks (like you!), who cherish this area, to pay attention, get information and take action.

The Springs Historic District & Accabonac Harbor

by Nancy Kane

On March 25, 2004, the Town Board voted to establish The Springs Historic District. The district encompasses



*Julius D. Parsons, passing the Springs chapel.
From Springs/A Celebration*

ten old farmhouses, four barns, the church, the early school (Ashawagh Hall) and the blacksmith shop. It is wonderful to look at these old buildings and consider how little has changed in over 100 years.

The area is centered on Pussy's Pond and Accabonac Harbor. This is less obvious today than it was in the late 1800s. The early settlers owned portions of land adjacent to the harbor, where they harvested the salt hay to feed and bed their cattle and insulate the foundations of their homes. Early photos show open expanses with few if any trees.

In recent years, the APC has been advocating the restoration of saltwater meadows that once surrounded much of the harbor. The Guidelines Manual for the historic district supports the idea of open vistas. It promotes "open yards and clearings ... and visual connections between historic buildings and vistas to Accabonac Harbor."

The manual pays special attention to The Nature Conservancy preserves. It notes that one of those preserves "is at a critical location adjacent to the church, cemetery and creek to Pussy's Pond and across the road from the intact farmhouse and fields at 803 Fireplace Road (the Julius D. Parsons house). Vistas from these properties to Accabonac Harbor are important to the setting of the historic district and maintain the historic connection between this settlement and Accabonac Harbor." In 2005, The Nature Conservancy did do some clearing on this preserve. However, the vistas that Mary Louise Dodge remembers seeing from her front door at 803 Fireplace Road clearly do not exist as they did when she was a child.

A more impressive view is offered by the three-acre TNC preserve behind the Pollack-Krasner House

where, as the manual indicates, "The open vista across salt meadows to the harbor is important to the setting of this National Historic Landmark."

The Accabonac Protection Committee salutes the residents and board members who supported the designation of the historic district. It is exciting to think that many years from now, this section of overcrowded Springs shall, hopefully, still retain reminders of the early rural landscapes. The preservation and restoration of the meadows along Accabonac Harbor would play an important part in the preservation of this heritage.

Should You BuzzOff?

by Jim Zayjac

Ticks and Lyme disease both appear on the rise around Accabonac, and they beg a look at methods of tick-bite prevention. Virtually every product on the market for tick control relies on permethrin, a synthetic version of the natural insecticide pyrethrum, derived from the dried flower heads of certain chrysanthemums. Owners of dogs, cats, horses and other domesticated animals recognize permethrin as the tick-control ingredient in Frontline, Advantix and similar products. Permethrin is also the active ingredient in Damminix, designed for use on yards. Now comes tick-repellant clothing woven with permethrin. Sold under the BuzzOff clothing label, items of apparel such as trousers, socks, shirts, gloves and hats are available through Orvis, L.L. Bean and other well-known retailers, as well as online (see www.buzzoff.com). BuzzOff fabric repels mosquitoes, ants, flies, chiggers and midges, in addition to ticks, and is approved by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Any downside? Apiarists, clambers and fishermen should wear these products with extreme caution since permethrin is highly toxic to both bees and most forms of aquatic life. BuzzOff clothing shouldn't be dry-cleaned since permethrin breaks down in the process, but permethrin isn't soluble in water so BuzzOff clothing can be washed as many as 25 times while remaining effective — you might want to keep a laundry pen handy to track each washing on the garment itself. Wash clothing woven with permethrin separately, and only in a well-functioning septic system, where the active compounds can break down before reaching our drinking water or Accabonac Harbor.

No repellent is a guarantee, so be sure to check yourself for ticks after every possible exposure, and familiarize yourself with proper procedures for dealing with ticks when found.

OMWM? IMM? What's in an Acronym?

by Jim Zajac



Photo Courtesy: Mike Bottini

OMWM (Open Marsh Water Management) is a term that's been applied in recent years to describe a variety of techniques for dealing with the ditches and mosquitoes common to salt marshes such as Accabonac. Now we're informed by the recently published SCVCWMLTP&FGEIS (Suffolk County Vector Control Wetlands

Management Long-Term Plan & Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement) that OMWM is no longer the term of choice: in favor these days is IMM (Integrated Marsh Management), which is meant to connote a more holistic approach, keeping marsh health as its paramount concern.

Comprised of several volumes and thousands of pages, the recently published Suffolk County plan promises a new dawn for the county's 17,000 acres of marshland but sends mixed signals to those of us concerned specifically with Accabonac Harbor. On the positive side, the report classifies Accabonac as among the 46 top priority sites in the county for larvicide reduction and progressive restoration efforts. On the other hand, the report recognizes the limited financial resources available and generally pushes back to the distant future any hope for major restoration projects anywhere. The APC, at the request of Peconic Baykeeper Kevin McAllister, has endorsed the recommendations of the county's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). They challenge several aspects of the Vector Control report, including its failure to make an appropriate distinction between mosquito control to prevent disease and mosquito control to abate nuisance. The APC intends to continue monitoring Vector Control's plans as they move forward and to work on keeping improvement of Accabonac as a priority for the county.

More information on the Long-Term Plan and Final Generic Environment Impact Statement is available from Suffolk County Mosquito Control: www.suffolkmosquitocontrolplan.org/. For more information about the Council on Environmental Quality, see www.co.suffolk.ny.us/webtemp3.cfm?dept=11&id=219

Public Water ... What Will It Mean to Accabonac Harbor?

by Nicholas Bryan

Members of the Accabonac Protection Committee are concerned about the installation of public water in Springs and the effects it could have on Accabonac Harbor. While we understand the need for public water at Springs School, at our recently approved Community Center and in locations (such as Gerard Drive) that suffer saltwater intrusion, we believe the extension of this service to other locations within Springs should be approached with caution.

In the December 7 issue of The East Hampton Star, in a front-page article headlined "Public Water Moving into Springs," Town planning consultant Lisa Liquori articulates many of our concerns. As she points out, the availability of public water can lead to a number of negative consequences, including the following:

- Population density in the already crowded Springs could increase if new dwellings with public water do not require the spacing now mandated between wells and septic systems. Ms. Liquori points out that the County Health Department currently requires new lots in the Springs to be a minimum of one acre, to provide sufficient space between private wells and septic systems. With public water, half-acre lots could be created.
- Chlorinated public water might have a negative impact on bays, harbors and human health. Because Springs homes have septic systems, a lot of additional water, water that will not be removed by sewers, will be going into our already saturated filtration system and will probably have a negative impact on Accabonac Harbor.
- Informed citizens understand that substances they use on their lawns and in their drains can directly affect their own drinking water. With public water, residents may be less cautious about using toxic chemicals, and those chemicals would negatively impact the harbor.

The East Hampton Town Comprehensive Plan incorporates the Water Resources Management Plan Recommendations that wisely call for an environmental impact study and a public scoping session prior to extending public water mains throughout Springs. The APC urges all residents to insist that these precautions be implemented promptly, prior to the delivery of public water to Springs.

Renewed Grant ... and Then Some!

by Anita Wright

Thanks in part to administrative support from Group for the South Fork, APC was awarded a \$3,000 grant from the Overbrook Foundation in the fall of 2005. In mid-November of 2006 Anita Wright, GSF Environmental Educator and current advisor to APC, submitted a report to the Overbrook Foundation summarizing APC's work during the past year. The Overbrook Foundation responded with a generous grant renewal of \$5,000 to fund APC's important work to protect Accabonac Harbor and its environs.

Our sincere thank you to the Overbrook Foundation and to the people who helped bridge this connection.

Kudos to trustees: Kayak control at last!

by Jim Zajac

The APC salutes the East Hampton Town Trustees, who have announced that storage of non-motorized boats at Louse Point will be subject to a \$100 permit as well as a \$200 fine if left after the season.

Throughout 2006, the APC carefully monitored the situation at Louse Point, where overnight storage in late August exceeded 130 personal watercraft; we repeatedly expressed to both the Town Board and the Trustees our concerns about environmental and aesthetic damage caused by the increasing clutter.

While the APC Steering Committee took the hard line and lobbied for a total ban on overnight storage, we're nonetheless pleased that the Trustees recognized the problem and took swift, responsive action. We hope their move has bite, and we promise to continue keeping a watchful eye.

Joining the Worldwide Web

It seems like only last year that we finally adopted an email address (it was). Now APC is moving up in the world of communication. We will soon have our own website where we'll post events, issues, contact information, beautiful pictures and our brochure (like the website, in the works).

Meanwhile, our email address remains:
APC11937@yahoo.com.



Photo Courtesy: James Laudando

ACCABONAC PROTECTION COMMITTEE



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What You Always Wanted to Know About Septics ...

by Cile Downs

Here in a region where sewer networks are unknown and likely to remain so, everybody with a house also has a septic system. But, strangely, few people have more than a foggy notion of what that system is and what goes on in it. As you can imagine, this doesn't lead to the best care and upkeep. A faulty system can endanger both groundwater and the closest water body, be it creek or bay, and cause you a whole lot of trouble.

The usual septic arrangement consists of a 1000- or 1500-gallon septic tank, where breakdown of wastewater by bacterial action begins. This tank is connected to several leaching rings, their number and size determined by the number of bedrooms in the house and how many feet there are between surface and groundwater. In the septic tank, solids sink to the bottom as sludge, fats and soaps float on top as scum and the water between (the effluent) continually overflows into the leaching rings. All three undergo "digestion" by bacteria during this process. From the rings, the effluent seeps out into the soil, which is supposed to filter all solids and bacteria out of it before it reaches groundwater. In our area, the soil is mostly sand, an excellent filter. And don't forget — groundwater also moves through this sandy soil, so everything not actually water-soluble is filtered out and left behind.

County inspection and approval are required for all new septic systems; in the HPOD area, the Town may impose even stricter standards. We in the APC should be very grateful for this, since bacterial or chemical contamination is extremely dangerous to our creek. When a simple upgrade to an already existing system is done, the Town oversees it.

There are alternative septic systems, for instance fields instead of rings. Newer ones are made of recycled plastic, light and easy to handle. These have the advantage of being shorter vertically, leaving an extra foot between system and groundwater, for more filtration. One disadvantage can be the need for a wider area of ground, so very small lots can't have enough distance from one's own or a neighbor's well. It is also probably useless at present to try to get County approval for them in new construction: the traditional leaching rings arrangement enjoys a "cookie-cutter" approval process, and the County is loath to entertain new ideas. We can only hope that they will eventually learn. Meanwhile, do consider a field if you plan to upgrade.

We constantly hear advice to pump out septic tanks every two to four years. Some even recommend pumping twice a year, though it's doubtful this extreme is ever necessary except for a system that is utterly failing. Naturally, if your tub drains sluggishly

or the toilet refuses to flush, you call for pump-out at once. But if this happens again, the whole system is probably clogged and needs to be replaced, not repeatedly pumped out.

Also remember that the Town's waste treatment facility has limited capacity and trucking waste out of town costs money. We should find better methods of determining how often — if ever — pumping is really needed. Pumping company folks naturally have a bit of conflict of interest about this and are not the ones to ask.

There's one clear conclusion: we all should be careful to do nothing to harm the operation of our system. A septic tank should contain thriving bacteria continually at work, breaking down waste. To promote bacteria, all you have to do is refrain from killing them. Many household products contain bacteria-killing chemicals, so you must be vigilant. Anything "antiseptic" is obviously working against your septic process.

One of the worst offenders is chlorine, common in bleach and cleanser. Non-chlorine bleaches are available online from Seventh Generation and in health food stores and some supermarkets. With cleanser, if you insist on the chlorine, here's an idea. Scrub your sink or tub when you have time to leave the chlorinated powder on it until it dries. This gives plenty of time to disinfect the surface and allow the chlorine to evaporate away. Then the powder can be safely washed down the drain.

Limit the amount of detergent you use, or use a relatively harmless one (available from the same sources as non-chlorine bleach). If you need fabric softener, you are probably using too much detergent.

Never put anything down the drain that is so caustic or poisonous you should avoid getting it on your skin. Certainly, nothing designed to kill tree roots should go into your septic system. An herbicide that wound up in the creek could kill plant life there; for the same reason, also avoid using chemicals on your lawn. Never flush any drug down the drain; drugs are increasingly common and very disturbing contaminants in groundwater. Drugs and herbicides may not affect the operation of your septic, but your septic is how they can end up in groundwater, with bad results.

Bacteria can't digest real solids — cigarette butts, paper towels, sand or coffee grounds — so do not put them down the drain. A garbage disposal is another bad idea. Never pour grease down the drain; instead, wipe out greasy pans before washing them and add the greasy paper towel to your compost heap.

It's an inescapable conclusion. "Out of sight, out of mind" won't do with septic systems. They work the way they are designed to — if we use our heads, learn how they work and take care of them.

Enforcement Needs You!

by Jorie Latham

At a recent meeting, Capt. Edward Ecker, Jr, of the EH Town Police, came to speak with us about our concerns that vandalism, dumping and other illegal activities have been ramping up at various road ends around the harbor. These areas are remote and in some cases invisible from the road. The spray painting of our sign and other signs and structures, including the culvert bridge on Gerard, seemed likely to be the acts of local teens (as some were "Class of '07" graffiti). There is also worry that drug dealing may be going on at the end of Landing Lane. We requested increased surveillance. We were told that numerous arrests have been made townwide for vandalism and that there is a "zero tolerance" policy in place for underage drinking. However, it is not possible for the police to be everywhere, as we know, and Capt. Ecker stressed the importance of citizens making complaints IMMEDIATELY to improve the chances that these activities can be stopped.

Toward that end, he requested that we let our members know to call **EH Town Police dispatcher: 537-7575** with their concerns. Capt Ecker's direct number is 537-6863. Try to get license plate numbers and descriptions of vehicles and people involved. If there is no response in reasonable time, call back and ask for a supervisor.

WHO DO YOU CALL....?

While your first call should be to the police, for specific or ongoing concerns, you may also want to call those specifically responsible:

Call to report

Emergencies (only!): **911**

Illegal Beach Driving:

Harbormaster: **329-3078** & Police: **537-7575**

Boating Violations:

Harbormaster: **329-3078** & Police: **537-7575**

Illegal Dumping:

Parks and Recreation: **324-2417**

Active Littering:

Police: **537-7575**

Domestic Animal Problems:

Animal control: **324-0085**

Wildlife problems:

Natural Resources **324-0496**

Lighting or other code violations:

Building Inspector: **324-4145**

Code Enforcement **324-3858**; fax (new): **329-5899**

Please keep these numbers handy and call the appropriate official, recording the time, place, (vehicle description), and date.

If no action is taken, call or write the Town Attorney: **324-8787** and our Town Supervisor: **324-4141**.

Authorities can also be reached via the Town's website:

<http://www.town.east-hampton.ny.us/>

For more information, the East Hampton Town Code is available from the Town Clerk's Office, and on the Web: <http://www.generalcode.com/webcode2.html#newy>