

# Columns

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## *A-Pods, a welcome and elegantly simple tool for a cleaner and safer pond*

By Henry Patterson

I'm a guy who rented and then bought a little house on the north tip of White Pond 40 years ago. Through some rewarding but stressful years of owning and operating restaurants, I often returned home late at night, stripped down and walked right off the end of our dock. The pond's healing ablution saved my sanity. I sold the restaurants in 1991, but I still end most days in the pond. I start the day that way too.

Imagine my horror when the algae blooms worsened and swimming was banned. Was my long-held plan for my dotage in peril? Suddenly I needed to learn everything I could about cyanobacteria and the nutrients that fed its growth. My neighbors and I confirmed our septic systems were properly maintained. We dug drywells and regraded our gravel road, getting more careful about keeping groundwater away from the pond. We worried that others in the watershed were blithely fertilizing lawns, unaware of the risk.

When Jon Higgins showed up (thank you Beth Kelly!) with his A-Pod devices and novel ideas about collecting the algae and the nutrients, I could not have been more psyched. The prevailing winds have always made our north cove a natural collection point for whatever

floated on the pond's surface. Would we mind terribly if the A-Pods were installed in front of our property? I said, "Mr. Higgins, are you kidding? Please tie the A-Pod right to our dock! Do whatever you need to do! Could I make you some lunch?"

This is now the third year. Higgins Environmental has removed hundreds of pounds of algae and nutrients from White Pond. The pond has been safe to swim all year and we had 28 feet of visibility in June! (The 30-year average, I'm told, is 18 feet.)

Jon says he now sees how pine pollen is a major contributor to nutrient loading. Climate change is making the pollen season some 20 days longer, and the daily pollen levels are also 21% higher, according to a Harvard School of Public Health study, so pollen has jumped to the top of the Least Wanted list. The A-Pods collect the pollen and Higgins Environmental takes it away.

The White Pond community cannot claim that algae blooms are behind us or that our water quality is all that we could ask for. The whole world is facing unprecedented changing conditions and more challenges surely lie ahead. Higgins Environmental has demonstrated that intelligent, elegantly simple measures can be taken if we can stay vigilant and be proactive.