

GSLA Year End Letter – 2013

Dear Association Members,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Great Sand Lakes Association I am pleased to provide you with a report on the activities and accomplishments of the Association during 2013.

Our primary focus and responsibility as Board Members is to keep the ponds, the beaches and the surrounding land of the GSLA healthy for the enjoyment of homeowners and their guests. To this end, the Board is committed to doing whatever is necessary, within our financial means, to maintain the water quality at the highest levels, to keep the beaches clean and to preserve the lands surrounding the ponds. To quote Ted Borman, the past President and current Treasurer of the GSLA; "Unless we do that, our recreational opportunities decline, the scenic beauty of "our little corner of Heaven" fades, and our property values decrease".

Keeping the ponds and the surrounding property healthy requires continued vigilance by all of us to do our part to minimize nitrogen and phosphorus entering the ponds. These chemicals come from the use of fertilizers near the pond as well as driveway and road run-off into the ponds. Each of us can play a part in this important mission and I encourage you to help out in any way that you can. We are always looking for new people who share the same passion for the preservation of the ponds and surrounding properties to join the board as well as volunteers to help with activities that occur throughout the year such as spring & fall beach clean up, summer water quality testing, beach committee, web site maintenance as well as the summer picnic. If you would like to help out then please let us know. We have added a "volunteer page" to the web site that you can complete and let us know what you would be interested in.

Among the activities undertaken this year are the following:

- We launched the Association's website at www.gsla-harwich.org that will make you aware of all the events that occur during the year as well as news of interest for all members. It also provides you with a way to communicate directly to the board on matters that interest you. I encourage you to log on and let us know your thoughts and ideas for improvement.
- We met with the Harwich Conservation Agent (Amy Usowski) to secure approval for beach sand replenishment at Association, Pleasant Park and Vacation Lane beaches. We followed that with meetings with various companies for bids as well as sampling the different types of beach sand over the summer and fall. I am happy to report that we have secured the beach sand and will replenish the beaches in April.
- In an effort to minimize erosion, hold the soil and improve the aesthetic beauty of the beach areas, we have planted various native bushes around Association Beach and Paradise Path.
- We worked with the Harwich highway department to come up with options to minimize erosion of the parking area at Association Beach – unfortunately they did not see the solution as being one that the town would pay for. So, we solicited bids to add a berm to redirect the road run off to a catch basin. The low bid came from the same company that will be providing and spreading the beach sand so we were able to negotiate a better price for both jobs. The work is expected to be completed in April.
- We revised and enhanced the watercraft policy (see www.glsa-harwich.org website) that has been on the Association books for many years due to the following:
 - boats have encroached upon beach and bathing areas making it difficult to get in the water and swim safely
 - the number of boats on Association beaches has increased substantially over the past few years and by registering the boats the board will know which ones belong to Association members
 - the beaches have become "long term boat storage areas" where many boats have sat for years without usage thus creating mosquito breeding grounds as well as animal habitats
 - consideration for other association members who want to freely and easily access their boats for daily usage
- This year, as always, some members volunteered to clean up the beaches in both the spring and fall. This minimizes the overall cost of landscaping services and allows us to redirect our limited funds in other areas. In addition we pay to neaten the "bird" beaches off Queen Anne Road (Hummingbird, Bluebird, etc.) and to have trash and fallen trees

removed from the larger Association beaches.

- Volunteers test the water quality during the summer to provide data to the Harwich Water Quality Task Force.
- Volunteers created the parking permits for Association Beach and delineated the parking spaces so that residents do not find themselves shut out of the parking area when they go to use the beach on a hot summer day. In addition, they continue to monitor the parking area at Association Beach to make sure unauthorized vehicles are not occupying the spaces.
- We continue to provide liability insurance against injuries in the ponds and on the beaches.
- We continue to pay Barnstable County to test the water quality at the Association beaches for bacterial levels; all of which tested well below the state established safe level for bathing beaches
- We continue to elevate the profile of the Association by having meetings with the Town's Police Department, the Highway Department, and the Conservation Agent.

The two social activities that are organized by the Association are the annual picnic and the annual holiday luncheon.

- We had a successful summer picnic in August. Although the weather did not cooperate early on, we managed to get the kayak and sunfish races off and had a very competitive showing by all that participated. Those who came to that event enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs supplied by the Association as well as delicious side dishes and desserts brought by members. Volunteers set up the tables, tents, and grills and cooked the hamburgers and hotdogs.
- We had a successful holiday luncheon in December where approximately 40 members came out to celebrate the season as well as meet and greet both old and new members of the Association. The holiday luncheon also gave the Board an opportunity to inform members of the important work of the Association.

We have big plans ahead for 2014. For example:

- We will have new beach sand spread on the main beaches for you to enjoy this summer
- We will continue with planting plans for several of the beach areas to hold the soil and sand to minimize erosion
- We will extend and increase the size of the berm to prevent rain water from flooding the parking area of Association beach
- We will listen to members on the changes to the watercraft policy in an effort to improve the boat storage problems and access for all boat owners on the Association beaches
- We will continue to improve the web site as a means for two way communication and dialogue with members and we encourage your feedback and comments

I think that we have great momentum from the work that was done in 2012 and 2013 under the leadership of Ted Borman and I am excited to take the helm and move forward in 2014.

Please help us continue the great work for the Association by paying your Annual Dues promptly, by letting us know how we can do things better, by volunteering your time or talent, and by getting the word out to your neighbors who may not be current members to increase the membership beyond its current level. I think we do an admirable job with the limited funds at our disposal to preserve the ponds and the beaches for your enjoyment as well as maintain a strong Great Sand Lakes Community.

Yours respectfully,

Jim Robichaud
President, GSLA Board of Directors