

GSLA Year End Letter – 2014

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 2014.

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.

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 runoff. 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. You can contact us by accessing the www.gsla-harwich.org website and click on the "volunteer page" to let us know what you would be interested in.

Among the activities undertaken this year are the following:

- We re-nourished the Association and Vacation Lane Beaches in May and received many compliments on the quality of the sand and its overall look and feel. We purchased 100 yards of sand that was used on the two beaches and this was a good start. The board will assess the overall beach conditions in early spring and determine if additional beach sand is needed. Since quality beach sand is difficult to come by, we will make inquiries with local companies over the winter to check on availability.
- We installed a drainage trench to catch run off from Clearwater Drive uphill from the boardwalk at Association Beach. We continue to work with the Harwich Highway Department to come up with options to minimize erosion of the parking area at Association Beach. The board is monitoring the road runoff and erosion and once we have sufficient data we will seek the town's assistance in rectifying the issue.
- In an effort to minimize erosion, hold the soil and improve the aesthetic beauty of the beach areas, we planted various grasses on the slope to the Vacation Lane Beach. We also installed new fencing at Vacation Lane Beach to create a boat storage area as well as replaced fencing at Association Beach.
- We enforced the watercraft policy (see <http://www.gsla-harwich.org/policies-and-forms-downloads/>) 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

I am happy to report that due to your cooperation and assistance with adhering to the policy, the board in working with the Harwich Harbormaster, removed 18 abandoned boats that were left on the beaches for many years. In addition, the beaches were less populated with boats that infringed upon the swimming areas, improved the aesthetic beauty of the beaches and made it easier to clean the beaches in the spring and fall.

- We continue to improve the website to 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 to www.gsla-harwich.org and let us know your thoughts and ideas for improvement.
- 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 to 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 and we had to reschedule the picnic to the following weekend, we had a good turnout and had very competitive kayak and sunfish races. 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 good holiday luncheon in December to which came thirty members 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 2015. For example:

- We will continue with planting plans for several of the beach areas to hold the soil and sand to minimize erosion
- We will evaluate beach conditions and add new beach sand where appropriate
- We will hire a tree company to remove dead branches around the beaches that are a potential hazard
- We will repair and replace fencing around the association property
- We will continue to work with Harwich DPW on our options 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 made great progress on many of the initiatives that we set out to do in 2014 and I am confident that we will continue to do whatever we can to improve the beaches and surrounding land of the association in 2015.

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