

## GSLA Year End Letter – 2018

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 2018.

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.

The year 2018 could be characterized as the year of “high water” as we had a perfect combination of a very wet winter with a few late March Nor’easters, coupled with an inclement spring and a summer that had more rain than normal. All of this led to high water throughout the year that contributed to flooded basements, beach erosion, and overall smaller beaches to use and enjoy over the summer months. As I write this in early February 2019, the water level is very high for this time of year and I expect more of the same for 2019. The board will do a thorough assessment of all the beaches and property of the association in the spring and make recommendations for enhancements or improvements.

As you will see in the attached cash flow statement, the year 2018 was a relatively small year for capital improvements to the beaches and surrounding property. This is typical after a big year of capital improvement spending in 2017 and allows the association to build up its cash reserves for future outlays.

I am happy to say that we had 216 paid members in 2018 which is consistent with the membership in the previous year. As always, my goal and the goal of the board is to increase the overall membership, and I am hoping that with your help in getting the word out to your neighbors who may not be members, we can increase our membership beyond 220 in 2019.

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. We suspect the high water in 2018 contributed to some issues with water clarity in the ponds possibly due to excessive nitrogen and phosphorus from lawns as well as leaching fields that were under water for many months. Although we cannot control the weather and the high water, each of us can play a part in this important mission to minimize chemicals that enter the ponds by limiting our use of lawn chemicals and by paying careful attention to the types of plants and products we choose for landscaping.

We are always looking for new people who share our passion for the preservation of the ponds and surrounding properties to join the Board or to volunteer to help with activities that occur throughout the year such as spring & fall beach clean-up, summer water quality testing and 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](http://www.gsla-harwich.org) website and clicking on the “Volunteer” tab to let us know what how you would like to help.

Among the projects and activities undertaken this year are the following:

- Maintenance: We removed trees and tree limbs as well as repaired and replaced many sections of fencing around the association property.
- Safety: We continue to enforce the watercraft policy (see <http://www.gsla-harwich.org/policies-and-forms-downloads/>) that has been on the Association books for many years. I am happy to report that the number of un-registered and un-authorized boats on the beaches has declined significantly. We continue to monitor the number of boats on the beaches on a monthly basis.

- Communication: We continue to make information available to you via the website to make you aware of all the events that occur during the year as well as news and photographs 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](http://www.gsla-harwich.org) and let us know your thoughts. We're grateful to **Robert Clinton** who upgraded the web site in 2018.
- Beach clean-up: This year, as in the past, 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 funds to other areas.
- Water quality: Volunteers test the water quality during the summer to provide data to the Harwich Water Quality Task Force. Please let us know if you would be interested in participating in this activity. It takes two members about one hour in early morning five times a year. Training and a rowboat are provided.
- Beach bacterial testing: We continue to pay Barnstable County to test the water quality at the Association beaches for bacterial levels. We are happy to report that all tested well within the state established safe level for bathing beaches.
- Insurance: We continue to provide liability insurance against injuries on the GSLA beaches.

Two social activities are organized by the Association: the summer picnic and the annual holiday luncheon.

- Summer picnic: We had a successful summer picnic in August. The rain held off; we had a good turnout as well as 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.
- Holiday luncheon: In December, a total of 56 old and new members of the Association came to celebrate the season. We had the event at The Riverway Lobster House in Yarmouth. The food and service were excellent, and everyone enjoyed the table favors as well as the chance to win some nice door prizes.

We have big plans ahead for 2019. For example, we will

- Examine fencing around Association Beach for repairs & possible replacement
- Add plantings on several of the beach areas to hold the soil and sand to minimize erosion
- Continue to work with the Conservation Agent to monitor the weed growth around the ponds
- Continue to work with Harwich DPW on our options to prevent rain water run-off into the ponds and work with them to inspect and possibly install catch basins where needed

Please help us continue the work of the Association by paying your **annual dues** promptly, by letting us know your ideas for doing things better, by volunteering your time or talent, and by getting the word out to your neighbors who may not be current members. I am proud of what we accomplish with the limited funds at our disposal to preserve the ponds and the beaches for your enjoyment and to maintain a strong Great Sand Lakes Community.

Yours respectfully,

Jim Robichaud  
President, GSLA Board of Directors