

## GSLA Year End Letter – 2019

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 2019.

What a year it was! As with last year, we experienced high water, beach erosion, some flooded basements, and a reduced area for all beach activities. As I write this letter in January, the water remains high and once again, John Joseph, Bucks and Kiddy's Ponds form one large body of water. This may be "the new normal". However, what the Town of Harwich and more notably the Great Sand Lakes neighborhood experienced on July 23<sup>rd</sup> was something quite unexpected and extraordinary. The first tornado to hit the Cape since 1977 caused extensive damage to some homeowners' property as well as to the beaches and surrounding land of the association.

To make matters worse, the tornado hit right in the middle of the busiest time of the year for tourism and rental season. Many homeowners were concerned about the state of the beaches and surrounding property for future tenants. Well, what happened next is simply amazing and is a true testament to the spirit of our Great Sand Lakes Community. Within two days after the event we had the beaches clear of debris so that vacationers could enjoy the remainder of their time. Even so, we still had to do significant tree work and stump removal at Association Beach, with just one week to make things safe for the summer picnic, I am happy to say that we were able to overcome all the challenges the tornado gave us, and we put on an excellent summer picnic for everyone to enjoy. My heartfelt thanks go out to everyone who volunteered time, energy, strength and equipment to help us get "our association house in order" after the visit of a very disruptive guest!

As I have said in previous annual letters, 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. With water levels expected to be even higher in coming months, 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 2019 had no major capital expenditures. There was no beach re-nourishment partly because of the high water levels and because we had completed beach re-nourishment in 2017. However, we did have a large "unbudgeted" expense of \$2067 related to tree removal and trimming as a result of the tornado. In addition, we expect to incur significant future expenses to replace some trees that were lost on Association Beach. Any contributions that you can make to help defray the cost of tree replanting would be greatly appreciated.

I am happy to say that we had 217 paid members in 2019, the highest number ever! As always, my goal and the goal of the Board is to increase the membership, and I hope that with your help in getting the word out to your neighbors, we will have even more members in 2020.

Keeping the ponds and the surrounding property healthy requires all of us to do our part to minimize nitrogen and phosphorus entering the ponds. We suspect the high water in the past two years has 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. We all need to limit our use of lawn chemicals, consider organic or all natural alternatives, pay careful attention to the types of plants and products we choose for landscaping and maintain a natural border of trees and vegetation down to the water.

We are always looking for 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, 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 how you would like to help.

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

- **Maintenance:** Tornado clean-up –With the help of volunteers, 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.
- **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. The website 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.
- **Beach clean-up:** 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 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 during the summer. Training, equipment, 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 picnic in August. It was a beautiful day and we had a good turnout as well as very competitive kayak and sunfish races. Those who came enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs supplied by the Association as well as delicious side dishes and desserts brought by members.
- **Holiday luncheon:** In December, almost 60 members of the Association, including some new homeowners, came to celebrate the season. The food and service at The Riverway Lobster House in Yarmouth were excellent, and everyone had a chance to win some nice door prizes.

We have big plans for 2020. For example, we will

- Plant new trees on Association Beach
- 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

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