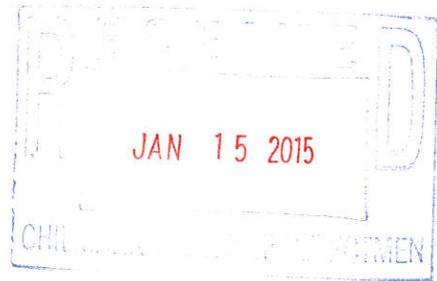


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1/12/15

Honorable Board of Selectmen
Chilmark MA -
Gentlemen,

I have read enough about
Pond health - Phragmites and spending
money - Here's my thoughts for
your consideration and information.



To the Board of Selectman of Chilmark and those interested in the health of Chilmark Pond.

I am Seth Wakeman, a resident of Connecticut with some 80 years of experience and knowledge of Chilmark Pond.

My family built a summer home overlooking the pond and owned a beach lot since 1934. I spent summers from 1934 through 1950 with active use of pond and beach. From 1951 to 1955, I was in the Navy, but spend† much year round time in Chilmark. From 1955 through 1956, I lived and worked in town. In 1986, I moved back to Chilmark. During the period 1986 to 2002, I had been a commissioner supervising activity on Chilmark Pond for the abutting landowners. I retired to Connecticut in 2002. I've continued to visit and observe since that date.

In the 1930's, the pond was different. The lower pond had a large point which reached almost to the beach. Heavy marsh grasses grew over a peat subsurface. The point had lots owned by various people. It was used in those years for hunting duck and geese. There were two islands of this peat and marsh on the beach side of the pond. Occasionally, sections of peat emerged on the ocean side of the beach where the receding sands no longer protected the land.

During the 1930's and 40's, there was an active fishery at the pond. White perch were seined and shipped. Oysters were harvested as were steamer clams. I watched Ben Mayhew potting eels in the mid 1940's.

The 1938 great hurricane changed the pond. Buildings on the beach washed away. Dunes were flattened and the sand swept into the pond. The pond opening had been for many years at the middle of the lower pond. So much sand filled the area that the opening (which required a narrow beach with deep pond water

inside) moved to the upper pond. Doctors Creek, which had filled with sand, had been dredged to permit inter-pond water flow.

Opening the pond was the duties of the Commissioners of the Pond. Normally done at spring, summer and fall, or more frequently when heavy rain falls occurred. The openings were to drain the over-filled pond to protect the field around the pond and to support the fishery. Only in later years the summer people complained because their yards were subject to flooding. The openings were dug by the local men with shovels. The beach width obviously was important. In 1945, the pond in late summer was very high. The Commissioner had not acted to open the pond. A few of us summer kids opened the pond ourselves (a successful opening but no pay for the openers!). In later years, machines did the job in less time but not as exciting for the pond folk.

Through the years, the pond has continued to shrink – the beach always moving north and sand filling into the pond. The fisheries slowed and died except for oysters; especially in Wades Cove a long way from the beach.

About 1993, Bill Wilcox did a survey of the upper and lower ponds. He plotted depth, turbidity at stations set by GPS bearings. The figures should still be available at the MV Commission. This should show definitely the movement of the beach.

Over the years, the flora has changed. Where the large point was is primarily water. The marsh grass and reed have mostly died off. The water being shallower, warms up, and is not as salt filled as before. West Tisbury Great Pond is not affected as much. It has long coves away from the beach, not as susceptible to filling from sand.

The question today is what to do! King Canute once commanded the tide to stop. He learned that even a king has its power limited by nature. Sea level is rising, the beach is moving landward. We bemoan trying to have things "as it always was".

What can we do now! We must adapt to present day conditions. Think to the 1930's when there were five year round homes bordering the pond. Since 1940, the residents have expanded their numbers tremendously. What does this mean? Roads for runoff, lawn and garden fertilizers, and septic systems all of which provide our pond with nitrogen.

We should look to regulations to restrict chemicals used on the water shed, retard the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and to get better control of septic systems. More closed septic systems probably are in order.

I enjoy the pond today. I wish it was as it was forty, fifty, seventy years ago. The limitations put upon the pond to save the piping plovers and restrictions on dredging sand back on the beach hinder water quality because of inadequate flushing.

A study is great, but we can't stop nature. Let us not waste taxpayers money.

cc: Vineyard Gazette

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