November 14, 2022

To the Board of Health, Chilmark

Re: Off Chockers Ln, Chilmark A.P. 33-8

We are a concerned group of neighbors who believe the Board of Health should deny the variances sought by the Quitsa Nominee Trust. The current proposal to ignore required separations between the natural environment and the septic and leaching facilities for a four-bedroom house ignores both the delicacy of the site and the laws designed to protect it.

In 1964, Barbara Chamberlain published a book entitled “These Fragile Outposts.” Well before climate change became an issue, she presented a geological history of the Cape and Islands that showcased their fragility. The site under review today is one of the most fragile spots on this fragile island. It sits on a small sliver of land surrounded by water and wetlands. To the north is Menemsha Pond; to the west and southwest, a salt marsh; to the east, an arm of Quitsa Pond called Lovey’s Cove; to the south and southeast, wetlands across Chockers Lane; and to the northeast, Short Beach on Menemsha Pond and another salt marsh between Lovey’s Cove and Short Beach. The proposed leaching field is too close to almost all of these delicate environments.

Menemsha Pond is an invaluable and threatened resource. Apart from its recreational uses, it is not only home to new active oyster fisheries but also to the scalloping and clamming that it has supported for generations. Moreover, in recent years, Menemsha Pond has become a spawning ground for striped bass, a prized and threatened species. Juvenile bass can be seen schooling in the Pond all summer and fall. The marsh is also home to a wide variety of animals and birds, providing shelter and a source of food. Based solely on the leaching field’s proximity to the marsh and its potential impact on the oysters and striper population in the Pond, as well as other fauna, we believe the request for variances should be denied.

Additionally, we urge the Board to consider the elevation of the site and the coming impact of global warming on the water level in Menemsha Pond. The Pond is tidal and will be affected by sea level rise. The proposed leaching facility will lie below the surface of land that appears to be no more than 17 feet above the current sea level. With water levels rising and storm surges becoming more common and more extreme, we are concerned that contaminated groundwater will travel from the leaching facility to the Pond and the marsh, potentially causing serious damage to each.

We strongly urge you to honor the environmental laws protecting Menemsha Pond and the surrounding wetlands and deny all four variances requested. These laws were put in place for a reason.

The Stern Family

2 Chockers Lane

The Cohen Family

4 Chockers Lane

The Karnovsky Family

5 Chockers Lane

The Shands Family

8 Chockers Lane

Fankuchen/Kantrowitz Family Trust

8 Sheep Pen Lane

The Craig/Noyes Family

9 Sheep Pen Lane

The Flanders Family

4 Tucker Trail

The Bezanson Family

23 Chockers Lane

The Ryerson Family

25 Chockers Lane