

The Three Bays Monitor

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Estuaries Project Update

What are Estuaries?

Estuaries are special bodies of water that form where freshwater from rivers and streams flows into the ocean, mixing with the salty seawater. The result is a unique community of plants and animals including shore and sea birds, shellfish, marine mammals and fish, living in an environment that is among the most productive on earth. Unfortunately, nitrogen from a variety of sources, including septic systems, wastewater treatment plants, and lawn fertilizers, leaches into groundwater and flows into estuaries, resulting in the growth of nuisance

plants that use up all the oxygen in the water, forcing out the fish, shellfish and indigenous plant species.



The Estuaries Project

As part of the Estuaries Project, Three Bays Preservation has completed another successful season of monitoring the water quality of our local estuarine system, helping us to evaluate water quality, determine how it relates to the health of the estuary, and recommend land use changes necessary to bring about an improvement. Three Bays' assistance was also credited by Barnstable Dept. of Public Works Assistant Director Mark Ells with the establishment of a broader, town-wide

monitoring program. Three Bays is proud to be leading the town, having created the launching point from which the town-wide Estuaries Project will be expanded.

Little Island, looking South

On a broader state level, Three Bays has also received praise. According to Dr. Brian Howes of UMass Dartmouth, Director of the Estuaries Project, "Three Bays Preservation has played a critical role in focusing attention on declining nutrient related water quality, which is far and away the most critical environmental issue facing Cape Codders in the coming decades. With help from Three Bays, the \$12.5 million Estuaries Project has been established to address nutrient issues throughout S.E. Massachusetts."

Three Bays Preservation depends on the help of volunteers to make this project work. We remain grateful to all who participated these past years, and welcome new participants in the future.

Summer 2002 Update from Massachusetts Audubon's Coastal Waterbird Program

The summer of 2002 saw more shorebird breeding on Sampson's Island/ Dead Neck than at any other time in recent memory. Fourteen pairs of Piping Plovers nested on the island, making it one of the most important breeding sites in Massachusetts. Tern numbers also increased, with over 450 pairs of Least Terns and 200 pairs of Common Terns nesting on the island.



According to Matthew Bailey of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, most of this increase can be attributed to the renourishment projects that Three Bays Preservation has undertaken over the last few winters. Working with Audubon staff and coastal engineers, Three Bays has created attractive habitats for terns and plovers. For example, this past winter's renourishment site hosted no Least Terns in 2001, yet boasted 138 pairs this summer! As always, Audubon staff members were on hand full-time during the spring and summer to protect the breeding birds and to educate visitors about the island's natural history.

The Western tip of Sampson's Island, showing new bird habitat.

A New Way to Receive *The Three Bays Monitor*

In an effort to cut down on mailing costs, and to eliminate clutter in your own mailbox, we now offer you the option of receiving *The Three Bays Monitor* via email. If you would prefer this service, please send your email address to info@3Bays.org and include your name and address as it appears on this mailer, so that we can efficiently make the change.

New Faces in the Office

With the departure of staff member Pat Viens, Three Bays Preservation welcomes new Office Administrator Jane Harrington of Falmouth. Jane will be answering the phone, and will be responsible for the day-to-day affairs of the office. With the continued growth of the organization, Christopher Adams of Centerville has also joined the staff. Chris will be handling newsletter production, website management, and events planning, freeing Lindsey Counsell to stay focused on field work. And last but not least, Cathleen Foley-Dupuy of Centerville will be assisting on special projects as needed.

... and a big Thank You to all the volunteers!

As the season draws to a close, we extend a special Thank You to all of you who gave so much of your time and resources to further the cause of Three Bays Preservation. From taking countless water samples, hosting fund raisers, and aiding at presentations, to stuffing envelopes in the office, your assistance has been invaluable! We couldn't do it without YOU!!

Annual Giving Drive Underway

By now, most of you have received a request to support Three Bays Preservation, Inc. through our Annual Giving Drive. We ask you to consider the important accomplishments that your previous support has made possible, from the dredging that increases the water flow in our estuaries and has improved bird habitat, to the scientific work that has helped to pinpoint where many of our pollution problems have come from and what the solutions might be. None of this work could have been done without you — as volunteers who collect water samples, and as generous donors who recognize the need for an organization that is dedicated exclusively to the protection of our beloved estuarine system. Please consider a significant donation this year.

Thank you!