

The Three Bays Monitor

Vol. 8 - August 2001

Yes, We Have No Discharge: Three Bays Earn Federal Designation

Congratulations to the Town of Barnstable, the EPA and, yes, us at Three Bays Preservation, Inc. on the recent federal designation of the Three Bays as a no-discharge area. Now, boaters are prohibited from pumping their bilges directly into the water, and must use a fixed pump-out facility at the Oyster Harbors Marina or a pump-out boat that makes the rounds of the area's many moorings and docks.

For many, the designation came as a shock - but only because they couldn't imagine that it had ever been legal to discharge waste into the water, particularly water that has a documented history of pollution problems.

Officials at the Barnstable Health Department began the application last year, armed with information that they and Three Bays Preservation, Inc. had collected concerning contamination problems in the embayments. Among the important data: our finding that, in some parts of the estuarine system, humans, through boat pump-outs or failed septic systems, accounted for up to 50 percent of fecal coliform organisms in the water.

No-discharge areas are in place in Chatham, Wellfleet Harbor, Wareham, Waquoit Bay, Westport, Nantucket Harbor and all of Buzzards Bay.

To all of our volunteers who toiled collecting water samples: Thanks! Your work helped to lay the foundation for this important milestone in the protection of the Three Bays.

Annual Meeting Set for September 6

What a year it's been. Our volunteers stepped up to the plate to provide the water sampling needed for our justly celebrated water quality report. Our scientific advisors and consultants produced an unprecedented study using DNA fingerprinting to determine the source of pollutants in our bays. And the Three Bays were designated a no-discharge zone by the EPA, in part because of the legwork done by members of Three Bays Preservation, Inc.

To learn more about what we've done this year and what we plan to do in the future, please plan on attending our annual meeting, Thursday, September 6, 6-8 PM, at the Wianno Yacht Club in Osterville. Three Bays staff, consultants and board members will be there to answer any questions, and it will be a good opportunity to interact with several public officials who are planning to attend. Please RSVP to the Three Bays office: 508-420-0780.

Attention Homeowners and Landscapers: Green Doesn't Have to be Mean

We at Three Bays Preservation, Inc. understand how it works in this culture: when it comes to lawns, the greener the better. Sure, we can sing the praises of the much-maligned dandelion, and encourage folks to consider turning a yard into an environmentally friendly pasture, but we are realists.

Still, as we see the alarmingly high levels of nitrogen in the bays - much of it from lawn fertilizers - it bears repeating that lawn treatments have come a long way in recent years. In fact, there's a whole regimen of organic fertilizers that will keep your little patch of land a verdant oasis, while posing little or no threat to groundwater or the Three Bays estuarine system.

To learn more about what environmentally safe products are on the market, stop by or call the Three Bays office.

Also in Stock: Whatever You Want

As always, we encourage folks to drop by our office to say hello, have a cup of coffee, or review the loads of information we keep on hand, including:

- The 1999 Field Season Water Quality Report
- The 2001 DNA Report
- Previous newsletters
- Brochures
- Member questionnaire results for the past two years
- Newspaper articles on the work of Three Bays Preservation, Inc.

Please feel free to suggest other information that you think would make our office a valuable community resource.

Also, if you have any books or periodicals dealing with the issues that we face at Three Bays Preservation, Inc., we'd be delighted to add them to our library.

Doing Flips for FLUPSY: Innovation Comes to West Bay

We make no secret of the fact that we are traditionalists of a sort. That is, our work at Three Bays Preservation, Inc. is motivated by the tradition of clean water and healthy shellfish in our embayments. But while we honor the past, we are not hostage to it. When an innovation comes along that helps our cause, we take action.

Enter FLUPSY, an exciting new approach to shellfish propagation that Three Bays Preservation has recently put into operation in West Bay. An acronym of Floating Upweller System, the FLUPSY pumps water into tanks, providing fresh nutrients to shellfish that are able to grow in the absence of predators.

Clearly, the FLUPSY can be of particular value in nutrient-rich water with poor circulation - which, unfortunately, describes the condition of parts of the Three Bays.

Many local shellfish areas have suffered greatly in recent years, when algae blooms have killed the eelgrass that is the animals' natural habitat. The relatively poor water flow in the Three Bays also makes it tough to flush out the nitrogen that causes the blooms.

At the same time, although shellfish are sensitive creatures, they are also a natural filter for nitrogen. So, the FLUPSY's success at propagating scallops and quahogs will help the overall water quality of the Three Bays. Within the past few weeks, we've deposited 50,000 quahog and 500 scallop seeds in our FLUPSY. When the animals are big enough to survive on their own, probably in October, we'll transplant them to West Bay.

What then? Well, first come, first served.

We're Only a (Free) Call Away... Or a Click

Out of town, without any change, and desperate to learn the latest results from our water quality monitoring program? No need to panic. We have a new toll-free number: 1-866-313-BAYS. We also encourage folks to visit our web site: www.3bays.org. You'll find all sorts of useful information. Consider making it your home page.

Vox Populi

While we at Three Bays Preservation, Inc. take it as one of our central missions to work with elected and appointed officials at the local and regional level, we also know that the residents' voices matter most - and rightly so! If you'd like to send a letter to anyone at any political level - from Town Councilor to Congressman - concerning anything that affects the Three Bays estuarine system, give us a call and we'll be happy to provide names and addresses.