

Winter 2013 (Click to read)

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Working to preserve, protect and enhance the natural resources of Cape Cod.

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Dignitaries and stakeholders gathered in October on the banks of Santuit Pond in Mashpee to dedicate the pond's newly restored fishway and dam, which will greatly improve access to the pond for spawning river herring.

The project is one of 24 water restoration projects completed so far, thanks to funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Cape Cod Water Resources Restoration Project. The CCWRRP is a Cape-wide initiative of 76 high priority salt marsh restoration, stormwater remediation and fishway restoration projects that provide environmental and economic benefits across the region.

APCC coordinated the advocacy effort that led to Congressional authorization of the CCWRRP in 2009 and the allocation of \$6.5 million in start-up funding for the project in 2010. Additional funding for the \$30 million CCWRRP has been stalled due to ongoing budget battles in Congress. APCC is currently working with Congressman William Keating and Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey on efforts to restore funding so that the other CCWRRP restoration projects can commence.

The Santuit Pond dam and fishway restoration project is one of the last to be completed under the initial CCWRRP funding. The October dedication of the completed project was marked by attendance from representatives of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, local, regional, state and federal government representatives, and elected officials that included County Commissioner Mary Pat Flynn, state Rep. David Vieira, state Senator Daniel Wolf, and Congressman Keating.

The event was organized by the towns of Mashpee and Barnstable, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Cape Cod Conservation District and APCC.



APCC and other environmental organizations across the state are calling on the Massachusetts legislature to stop two bills that would result in the dismantling of the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA).

The nearly identical Senate Bill 345 and Senate Bill 411 were filed early this year and are currently under review by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. Last year, a similar bill was released by the same committee and was advancing through the legislature until a coordinated effort by Massachusetts environmental organizations, including APCC, halted further progress of the bill. The legislative session ended before any additional action was taken.

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If adopted into law, the current bills would:

- Undo current protections for rare species by placing impossible and unprecedented requirements on the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW).
- Inject uncertainty, delays and conflict in the review process for projects that may impact rare species.
- Up-end long-standing appeal procedures and case law. Turn the clock back more than 20 years in the state's commitment to protect its endangered species.

APCC strongly supports An Act Relative to the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (House Bill 756), which would make improvements to MESA and ensure continued protections for endangered species. This bill is also under consideration by the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture.

[More information about the MESA bills.](#)



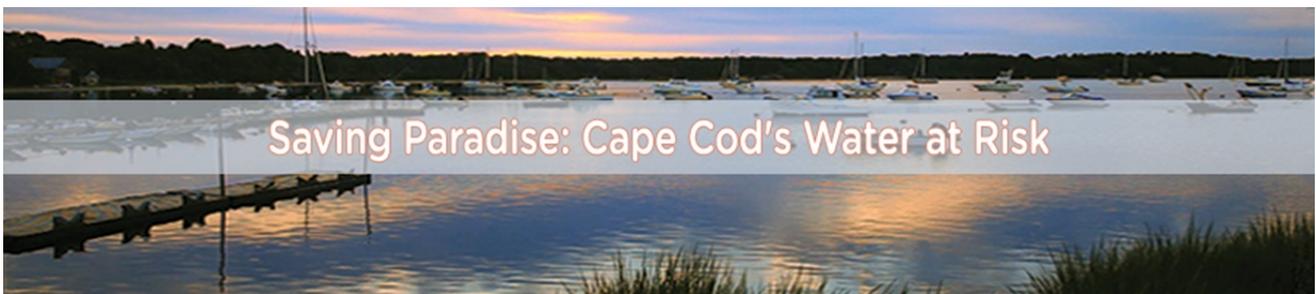
At the request of its board of directors, APCC is conducting a science-based review of the potential for environmental threats to Cape Cod from the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in Plymouth. The review was prompted by ongoing safety issues associated with the Pilgrim plant, coupled with public concern over a Fukushima-like nuclear disaster happening in the Cape's own backyard. **Click to expand.**

The 2011 Fukushima nuclear reactor disaster in Japan released radioactivity that contaminated several hundred square miles, required the evacuation of 150,000 people, and contaminated soil, water, crops, fisheries and seawater. Today, ongoing releases of radioactive water into the ocean still occur, marine fisheries off Fukushima remain closed, and the decommissioning of the damaged reactors is only beginning.

Fukushima raised fears worldwide that other aging nuclear power facilities could pose threats to humans and the environment. Here in Massachusetts, the Pilgrim plant has been in operation since 1972. In 2012, it was relicensed to operate for another 20 years despite concerns raised by the public about safety issues.

APCC's review, which is underway, will cover existing impacts from the plant and the potential for threats to Cape Cod's environment. It will also examine Fukushima's impacts to see if there are lessons that could apply to Cape Cod.

Natural resources to be considered in the review include the Cape's shellfish beds, shellfish aquaculture, fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands, ponds, streams, embayments and beaches. The Cape is also home to 215,888 year-round residents, plus many more summer visitors, so APCC's review will look into threats to public health and safety as well. All of Cape Cod lies within a 50-mile radius of Pilgrim.



APCC has released a short documentary video that showcases three Cape Cod citizens from diverse backgrounds and traces how their lives have been affected by the region's water quality issues.

The purpose of the 14-minute video, *Saving Paradise: Cape Cod's Water at Risk*, is to help explain the personal connection each individual on Cape Cod has to the Cape's ponds, bays and drinking water, and how nutrient pollution—primarily from septic systems—directly impacts the quality of our lives here on this peninsula.

The video follows a shellfisherman, a homeowner with a private well, and a life-long pond-front resident, each of whom explain how their day-to-day lives are closely linked to and affected by the Cape's water resources. The three case studies represent a cross-section of Cape residents whose lives and livelihoods are connected—many times unknowingly—to the health of Cape Cod's water.

APCC plans to make *Saving Paradise* available through a variety of avenues, including local cable television, distribution to town boards and through internet access. The video can be viewed online at www.apcc.org.

The video is also available to other organizations and community groups for screening. Groups interested in arranging a viewing of the video can contact APCC at info@apcc.org or 508-362-4226.

Saving Paradise was produced for APCC by UnderCurrent Productions through grants from the Prospect Hill Foundation and the Friendship Fund.



The estimated herring run size at Stony Brook in Brewster topped out this past spring at an estimated 153,262 fish, making this the highest run yet since APCC's volunteer counting program began in 2007.

The estimate, which was released by the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries this autumn, is based on data supplied by volunteers who counted herring passing through the fish run. APCC trains the volunteers, collects and organizes the count data, and forwards the information to Marine Fisheries.

In late 2010, the undersized culvert under Route 6A was replaced with an 18-foot-wide culvert in order to restore tidal flow. In the three years following restoration, the average run size is 77,127 fish, while pre-restoration run sizes in the four years before restoration averaged 26,700 fish. Herring run size estimates in previous years were 22,348 (2007), 25,289 (2008), 11,062 (2009), 48,099 (2010), 37,091 (2011), and 41,028 (2012).



Other runs on Cape Cod saw modest increases or in some cases decreases in run sizes in 2013, so it is not likely that the increase was due to a regional increase in river herring populations. Although it is premature to credit the culvert improvement for the increase, the post-restoration herring numbers are cause for some cautious optimism.

River herring are important in the coastal food web. Their populations have been declining, and in 2005 the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries banned the catch, sale or possession of river herring.

On Cape Cod, there are about 14 herring runs monitored by volunteers. It is the most active area in the state for herring run monitoring, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the volunteers.

For more information, visit our [herring count program pages](#).



APCC members attending the October annual meeting voted on changes to the organization's board of directors.

Tabitha Harkin, Elizabeth Jenkins and Elizabeth Nill were elected to their first terms as board members. Thomas Huettner was elected to a full term after being first appointed by the board earlier this year to fill an unexpired term.

Board members Michael Corrigan and Robert Cunningham were each reelected to serve another three-year term at the October meeting. After many years of service to APCC, Sandy Baine, Mark Nelson, Erica Parra, Mark Robinson and Susan Shephard retired from the

board.

The following are brief introductions to our most recent directors.

Tabitha Harkin is a former APCC intern, having worked as a graduate student in the Herbert Whitlock Internship Program in the summer of 2007. Now, she is a community design planner for the Cape Cod Commission. Tabitha has a dual Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Hartford Art School, and a Master in Landscape Architecture from California State Polytechnic University. She is a certified LEED Green Associate and a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. She is an enthusiastic gardener and loves to sketch, hike, bike and kayak around Cape Cod. Tabitha and her husband live in West Yarmouth.

Thomas Huettner is a principal of Second Nature Gardenworks, a Landscape Design firm, and holds a Massachusetts Construction Supervisor License. He graduated from New Jersey Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering, and is also a graduate of the Community Preservation Institute at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth. He has pursued graduate studies at Boston Architectural College towards a Master of Architecture. Thom has been active in many facets of local government in the town of Dennis, including serving as chair of the Dennisport Revitalization Committee. He and his wife Shannon Goheen live in Dennisport.

Elizabeth Jenkins moved to Cape Cod in 2010 as principal planner for the town of Barnstable, working on comprehensive land use planning projects, economic development and downtown revitalization initiatives, and partnerships to promote climate change awareness. She is a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Prior to moving here, she worked as a planner in the Kansas City metro area, conducted research for the Minneapolis Department of Community and Economic Development in support of a legislative campaign for sustained and increased brownfields remediation funding, and, with AmeriCorps VISTA, initiated a service-learning program at a private university in St. Paul. She has a Master in Urban and Regional Planning from the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities and a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Elizabeth and her husband, Nathan, reside in Yarmouth Port.

Elizabeth Nill, a lifelong summer resident of Barnstable Village, moved there permanently seven years ago. She and her extended family have long been involved in and supportive of efforts to protect the Cape's many resources. After a varied career in both the private and nonprofit sectors, Liz retired in 2008 and indulged her creative passion by opening a custom design women's dress shop in the village, which has since closed. She has maintained an active consulting practice, providing professional services to mission-driven organizations, which has allowed her to support her passions.



Deep in the woods in Falmouth’s Coonamessett Reservation, a venerable white pine yields to the ravages of a winter storm and topples to the ground. But the death of this forest dweller isn’t a tragedy, and the tree’s story doesn’t end here.

In fact, ecologists now say dead trees play an essential role in the ongoing health of a forest’s ecosystem. Far from being useless, the dead tree will provide shelter for mammals, reptiles, and amphibians that take up residence in the tree’s cavities or in dens dug underneath it. Insects, worms and other invertebrates will utilize the fallen tree for both shelter and as a source of food.

In the wake of its falling, the tree will create an opening in the forest canopy that allows sunlight for undergrowth, and which also provides an opportunity for a new generation of trees to become established. The decayed material from the dead tree, broken down by mushrooms, fungi, insects and microbes into humus, will enrich the forest floor with nutrients that further benefit new growth.

The decaying tree may become what is known as a “nurse log,” (left) providing an elevated growing platform for seedling trees that sprout directly from its moist, nutrient-rich rotting wood and away from competing growth on the ground.

There in its final resting place on a slope or along a stream bed, the tree even serves as a valuable barrier against erosion.

A dead tree in the middle of the forest—or even on one’s property—may be regarded as useless, unattractive and something that should be removed, when quite the opposite is true. It is an essential ingredient of the continuing life cycle of Cape Cod woods.