

February 7, 2023

To: Community Preservation Committee (CPC)
Town of Harwich, Massachusetts

David Nixon, Chair, Recreation and Youth Commission Representative
Kathy Green, Real Estate and Open Space Committee Representative
Mary Maslowski, Planning Board Representative
John Ketchum, Conservation Commission Representative
Robert Doane, Historic District Representative
Joseph McParland, Housing Committee Representative
Elizabeth Harder, Housing Authority Representative
Larry Ballentine, Selectmen's Liaison
Carole Ridley, Selectmen's Appointee
Kelly Barber, Selectmen's Appointee

RE: 2023-24 CPC Application for Skinequit Pond Alum Treatment—Response to Question Raised at the 1/12/23 CPC Meeting

Members of the Harwich Community Preservation Committee:

I recently reviewed the video of the Committee's January 12, 2023 meeting, at which the members discussed the FY23-24 Skinequit Pond Alum Remediation application, and I would like to address the question regarding actions that WASH and property owners have taken and will continue to take to prevent further degradation of the pond waters.

As pointed out by one CPC member and outlined in the CPC application, WASH was founded in 2004 to address pond water quality and has invested time, effort, and significant resources to mitigate further degradation of the pond waters. The majority of the pond's shoreline is buffered by natural growth, with several lawns that abut the pond. WASH communicates regularly with pond property owners through its annual meeting in June/July and via emails, and, with each point of contact, makes sure to include steps that residents/renters can take to prevent further load in the pond. WASH also reaches out to new owners when properties change hands to engage and inform them around this issue. I have included several examples from prior emails sent to WASH members below.

The majority of Skinequit Pond property owners are well-informed, engaged, and supportive of preventing further degradation of the pond. Over the past 25 years, WASH has worked in cooperation with the Harwich Natural Resources Director and Conservation Administrator to mitigate algae growth, provide water samples to Natural Resources, clear obstacles from the

herring run and disseminate information. The WASH annual meeting held via Zoom in August of 2022 included participation by nearly 90% of property owners. Most of the property owners donate to WASH annually to pay for the maintenance and costs of the Solar Bee; the presence of the Solar Bee on the pond is a daily reminder that the pond's water quality is compromised and that its ecosystem is fragile. Recent large and lengthy toxic algae blooms have restricted use of the pond and garnered heightened interest in taking care of the pond and support for this application.

Lastly, as mentioned at the meeting, the June 2022 Water Resource Services report stated that "no amount of watershed management will improve the condition of Skinequit Pond now, and the internal load must be addressed". In a letter from the Harwich Water Department attached to the CPC application, Dan Pelletier notes that "proposed remediation strategies have been incorporated into the Town's CWMP revisions project" and states, "In my opinion, the proposed Skinequit Pond Remediation Project is a great first step to improving the ponds health and will also help maintain water quality while a solution to address the nutrient source is developed."

Thank you for your consideration of the 2023-24 CPC Skinequit Pond Alum Remediation application and for your attention to this letter.

Anne Helgen
President
Watershed Association of South Harwich (WASH)

Samples from WASH emails sent to pond property owners in the last year:

1. What can we do to prevent harmful algae blooms?
 - Eliminate the use of fertilizers.
 - Use household cleaning and personal care products without phosphates.
 - Have your septic tank pumped regularly (every year or two years, depending on usage).
 - Clean up pet waste.
 - If possible, do not wash goose poop off docks/water's edge into the water.
 - Reduce watering of plants and lawns or convert to drip watering.
 - Remove dead tree branches and other debris from the water to allow water flow and prevent additional nutrients from entering the water.
 - Plant native plants, especially in areas where there is run off that leads to the pond. Allow tree canopies to shade the water to help cool water temperatures at the edge of the pond.

2. A reminder to all to forgo fertilizer on your lawn, use non-phosphate cleaning and personal care products, and have your septic tank pumped regularly. Phosphorus sticks

to soil particles, so make sure your property is well vegetated and no soil or nutrients are washed into the pond. If you can, plant shrubs and trees downhill from your septic system to act as a sponge and prevent soil erosion.