

Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association

Promoting community involvement and communication

Winter 2020 eLetter

It's not too soon to pay your 2020 dues -

please do so [online](#) or by mail

Like the rest of New England, the Outer Cape has experienced a gentle—or perhaps just a late—winter. One of the warmest and least stormy Januaries on record meant that as of this writing, there was no need for the almost annual rebuilding of the steps at Marconi Beach. Erosion never stops but the Jet Stream kept the damaging Nor'easters at bay.

A welcome sign of the changing seasons was the arrival in Cape Cod Bay of the first Atlantic Right Whales the first week in January. One of the rarest of the world's large mammals, these whales visit Cape Cod Bay every winter and spring to feed on rich blooms of microscopic zooplankton. An aerial surveillance team spotted the first two on January 6; by the 24th, the Center for Coastal Studies in Provincetown had identified 22 in the Bay. And so far there have been no reported dolphin strandings.



Photo courtesy Wildwales.org

News and notes from Wellfleet

- After years of litigation and negotiation, construction of the new Cumberland Farms--greatly enlarged and including gas pumps—is underway. Both the old Cumberland Farms and the liquor store next door have been demolished.



Cumberland Farms Construction, early February

- The first recreational pot shop on the Outer Cape, Curaleaf, opened its doors on Commercial St. in Provincetown at the end of January. While Wellfleet has entered into several “host community agreements,” the applications are still pending with the state Cannabis Commission. At least one is likely to be open by summer 2020.

- Based on preliminary state reports, Wellfleet's \$7.7M worth of shellfish

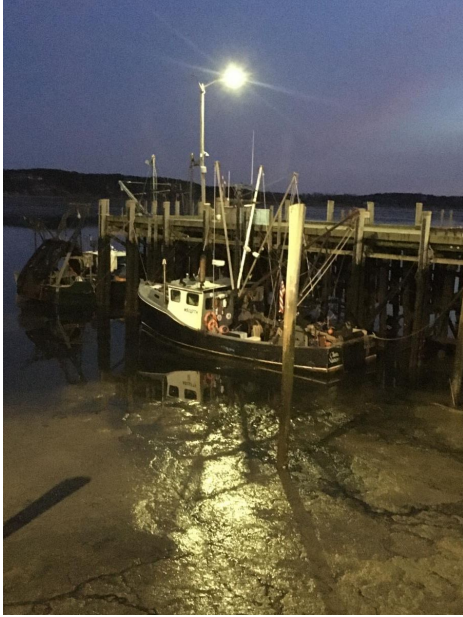


Photo by Phyllis Bretholtz

landings in 2019 were the most valuable of any town in the state. The commercial catch totaled about 1,742 bushels of oysters, 1,244 bushels of Bay scallops, 1,106 bushels of quahogs and 689 bushels of blood clams. Recreational shellfishermen and women were estimated to have caught 100 bushels of quahogs 242 bushels of oysters; that's about 73,000 oysters, which could run about \$146,000 at a raw bar.

- Town Administrator Dan Hoort is resigning at the end of June after four years on the job.
- The Beach Department has requested that Town Meeting allocate \$40,000 for portable repeaters to improve cell phone service at town beaches as part of ongoing safety improvements.
- 2,358 solar panels have been installed at the landfill and are waiting to be connected to the grid. Once connected, they will produce 140% of what the Town government uses annually. The surplus 40% will be sold to the Nauset Regional Schools at a price that will reduce their electric bill.
- In December the Town of Wellfleet submitted its [application](#) to the Cape Cod Commission for review of Phase 1 of the Herring River Restoration Project, which will restore 570 acres of severely degraded estuarine habitat, almost all of it in Wellfleet.



Photo courtesy of Herring River Restoration Project

- Annual Town Meeting will be held at the elementary school on Monday, April 27 at 7pm. Everyone is welcome, although only year-round residents can speak and/or vote. The meeting is an excellent way to hear about the concerns of residents and town officials alike. WSRA will include a report on the meeting in our spring eLetter.

Other News

Parking

In the fall of 2018, the Select Board formed a Parking Task Force (PTF) and charged it with "the study of and recommendations for parking throughout town, including beaches

and outlying areas." Since then, the eleven-member committee has generally met twice a week. (Its meetings are available for viewing via the Town's [YouTube channel](#)). The committee tackled the parking issues that are inherent in an area with increased usage and shrinking available land with the goal of helping the town to improve parking for residents, visitors, and businesses.

During 2018, it developed and analyzed surveys regarding 1) ocean beach parking for taxpayers 2) Marina parking for persons who have slips and moorings, and 3) town parking for merchants' patrons. In 2019, it concentrated on collected observational data.

On February 6, the Wellfleet Community Forum hosted a public presentation by the PTF of its findings and recommendations. The forum can be viewed in its entirety on the Wellfleet [YouTube channel](#). It includes an informative Power Point presentation which lays out survey results, observational findings, and preliminary recommendations.

The PTF is now finalizing a presentation for the Select Board, which will make recommendations to Town Meeting in April. In general, the PTF concluded that parking issues were well managed during the 2019 summer season. Longer term, it is clear that parking will always be a challenge in Wellfleet as parking spaces are lost to ocean-side erosion. In addition, the Marina parking lot will experience higher demand with the planned dredging of the Harbor.

Shark Research

Did the number of beach closings last summer mean there were more Atlantic White Sharks off the Cape in 2019? Researchers have concluded that it was the number of *sightings* that increased. Why? Simply more eyes on the water. In the past, researchers were on the water about twice a week. Last season, they were out at least five times a week. And it is not just scientific researchers. The Atlantic White Shark Conservancy's [Sharktivity app](#) notified users of about 120 shark sightings along the Cape eastern shoreline during the month of July, and August through October marks peak season for shark activity in waters around Cape Cod.

In December, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute announced that seven research projects were funded under the Sea Grant program. Two of them will address the situation in Wellfleet.

1) Gregory Skomal of the state Division of Marine Fisheries and Megan Winton, a researcher with the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy, will conduct a two-year study that will allow for near real-time "shark forecast" maps to alert beachgoers when conditions indicate a high probability of white shark presence at any particular beach on any given day.

2) Jennifer Jackman, a professor of political science at Salem State University, who researches human dimensions of wildlife, will lead a collaborative project to collect quantitative data on the views and experiences of residents, tourists, and commercial and recreational fishermen/women dealing with the rebounding population of seals and sharks on Cape Cod.

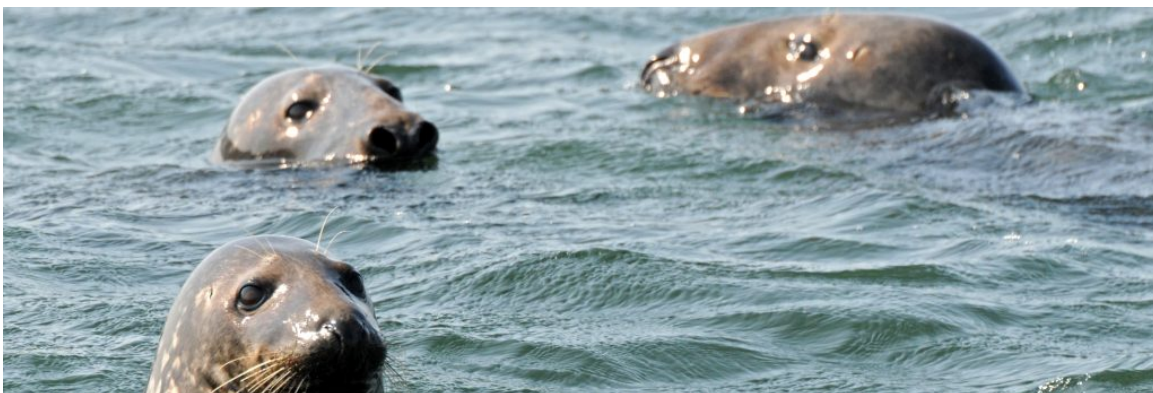
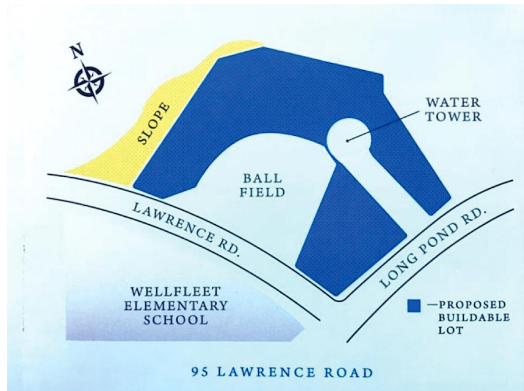


Photo courtesy of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute

Housing crisis

After a unanimous vote at the 2019 Annual Town Meeting, an eleven-member Task Force was appointed to prepare a Request for Proposals for a developer to construct up to 46 units of affordable rental housing on a 9.3-acre parcel of town-owned land on Lawrence Road opposite the elementary school. The Lawrence Road Task Force, which includes Carl Sussman of the WSRA Board, has been meeting regularly all year to draft the RFP. In January, a [community meeting](#) was held to solicit input from the public.

The RFP will go out this spring, but it will be several years before construction begins. The town will select a developer who will be responsible for coming up with a specific design and assembling financing for the project, which means winning state grants that make it feasible to rent to low- and moderate-income families.



The scarcity and cost of rental housing has become a crisis on the Outer Cape. The Eastham-based nonprofit, Community Development Partnership, placed [advertisements](#) in local newspapers to dramatize the situation. Under the headline “We can’t afford to lose the people who can’t afford to live here,” each ad profiles a local resident priced out of the housing market, including a Wellfleet firefighter and a medical assistant at Outer Cape Health Services.

The need is indisputable. Close to half of Wellfleet renters are severely cost burdened, paying more than 50% of their income for rent. At least 157 renters make less than \$50,000. Eileen McIlroy, Chair of the Housing Authority, noted that since 1990, the Town’s population of 25-44 year-olds has decreased by 62%; the number of seasonal houses has increased by 80%, and rentals have declined by 13.5%. Those market conditions push rents and home prices beyond the means of residents who provide critical services to both seasonal and year-round households.

Dues and donations, please

WSRA counts on its members to pay dues without receiving an annual invoice. Dues and individual donations are WSRA’s only sources of funding-- \$25 for a single membership or \$35 for a family/household membership per calendar year.

To join, renew or pay by credit card or paypal, use the appropriate link below:

- * [For Individual Memberships \(\\$25 dues\)](#)
- * [For Family Memberships \(\\$35 dues\)](#)
- * [To give a donation](#)

New members, [join online](#) or download the [WSRA membership form](#) and mail it with your payment to:

WSRA
P.O. Box 1323
Wellfleet, MA 02667-1323

THANK YOU!

If you would like more than one member of your household to receive email from WNRTA, please add their names and email addresses [here](#).



Winter Sunrise at White Crest, Photo by Phyllis Bretholtz
