



NEWSLETTER

June - July 2022

“The environment is where we all meet; where all have a mutual interest; it is the one thing all of us share.”

Lady Bird Johnson

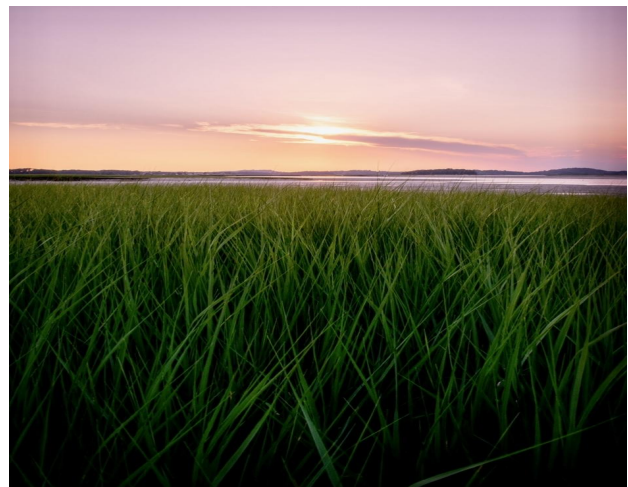
PROTECTING THE GREAT MARSH

As spring and summer unfurl their beauty, we are grateful to be living in a region so rich in natural assets, and of ecological importance to both land and ocean dwellers.

The Massachusetts Audubon states “the Great Marsh stretches from the New Hampshire border in the north, south to the Farm Creek estuary and salt marsh in West Gloucester, Massachusetts. The site is essentially co-extensive with the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and is one of the most important coastal ecosystems in northeastern North America.”

Identified threats to the health of the Great Marsh include degradation from development of abutting land in the watershed, fecal coliform runoff, invasive plants, and the impact of recreational boating.

<https://www.massaudubon.org/our-conservation-work/wildlife-research-consevation/bird-conservation-monitoring/massachusetts-important-bird-areas-iba/iba-sites/great-marsh#:~:text=The%20Great%20Marsh%20stretches%20from,uplands%20in%20seven%20different%20towns.>



In this month’s newsletter SEL is highlighting three issues of concern to the health of the Great Marsh.

All photos by Chrissie Twombly



Boat Wake Damage

Summer boat traffic on and along the Essex River is continuous, and may be harming our coast. A study conducted in the Chesapeake Bay confirms that boat wakes have erosive effects on shorelines. In addition to shoreline erosion, “boat wake impacts include vegetative damage and disruption of faunal communities.” (Parnell and Koefoed-Hansen 2001) Research shows that “wakes are most destructive in shallow and narrow

waterways because wake energy does not have the opportunity to dissipate over distance.” (FitzGerald et al. 2011) Studies show that even small boats traveling close to the shoreline can produce erosive wakes. Here is the link to the report:

http://ccrm.vims.edu/2017_BoatWakeReviewReport.pdf

Also, check out this link for local boaters with tips on caring for the marsh while enjoying the waterways of this wonderful area.

[Boaters' Guide to the Great Marsh](#)

Microplastics

Microplastic ingestion by coastal birds and fish is a frightening byproduct of our plastic choices. A recently published study is available online through the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Learn more about this at <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33639379/>.

Locally, the Great Marsh Partnership is undertaking a new research project to evaluate the extent and impact of plastic and other debris on the Great Marsh while also removing it. You can learn more about their research here:

<https://www.greatmarshpartnership.com/marine-debris#:~:text=Marine%20Debris%20introduces%20harmful%20microplastics,cause%20physical%20harm%20when%20ingested.>

Mosquito Spraying

This spring the Essex Board of Health voted to recommend that the Board of Selectmen request an opt-out of a "mosquito coalition," an agreement with neighboring towns to use mosquito larvicide and adulticide to manage mosquito-borne illnesses such as West Nile virus and eastern equine encephalitis (EEE). These applications are usually sprayed by truck or airplane, and will run off into waterways that empty into the Great Marsh. Gloucester is facing the same dilemma as Essex this year with the new SRMCB/EEA opt-out rules, but is urging residents to read up on the topic and elect to opt-out on an individual basis. Here is a link to more opt-out information:



https://www.mass.gov/doc/exclusions-from-pesticide-applications-faq/download?_ga=2.216233174.1317316632.1652224820-2006911234.1652224820

Link to Gloucester Daily Times' article on mosquito opt-out:

https://www.gloucestertimes.com/news/gloucester-no-longer-able-to-opt-out-of-emergency-eee-spraying/article_15173324-d22f-11ec-b824-af546a4d9df3.htm

Please share your thoughts on opting-out with our town officials.

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Have a wonderful and safe summer!

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