

Town hopes to get federal money for marsh restoration

By: Robert Morton-Ranney

At its Feb. 13 meeting, the Conservation Commission heard from Commissioner Carol Trocki that one of two attempts to obtain funding to restore Round Marsh was unsuccessful.

The state Coastal Resources Management Council did not approve the commission's request for funding through the CRMC's Habitat Restoration Trust Fund. Conservation Commission Chairman Christopher Powell noted that there had been a large number of applications.

The second attempt by the commission to obtain funding is on the federal level, from the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Trocki reported that conversations with a WHIP representative produced a three-step plan for restoring the marsh, which is just north of the golf course, between the Newport Bridge toll plaza and North Main Road. First, new ditching would be put in place to allow salt water to flow into areas it does not currently reach.

Second, the phragmites, invasive reeds unfriendly to other vegetation, would be mulched. Third, a "high-end monitoring" program would be instituted to follow developments in the five-acre marsh.

The expectation is that the enduring population of phragmites would be significantly reduced over a period of years, as the presence of salt water discourages their growth, Trocki said.

The commission is optimistic about funding, in part because this would be the first salt-marsh rehabilitation project undertaken by the WHIP without the use of herbicides.

Estimates put the cost to the town at approximately \$19,000, some of which could consist of in-kind contributions. The remainder of the total cost of just over \$67,000 would come from the federal program. A final decision on the application is expected within the next month, Trocki said.

In other business, the Conservation Commission heard two presentations.

Representing Save The Bay, Sue Tuxbury, a restoration ecologist, described their Eelgrass Restoration Program. Eelgrass shoots are harvested from selected donor sites, and then replanted in sites where eelgrass has grown historically but its presence has been degraded by poor water quality, Tuxbury said. Recent improvements in water quality have raised hopes of successful reintroduction, and the Save The Bay has been encouraged by results thus far, she noted.

One of the previously used donor sites is near Fort Getty. Save The Bay is seeking a letter of support from the commission to harvest from this site again, and the commission agreed to send one.

Tuxbury also described Save The Bay's proposal for a three-year study of the feasibility of a scallop restoration program. This would involve the collection of scallop spat, scallops at the larva stage of growth, from a location to be chosen around Conanicut Island, and their reintroduction elsewhere, the restoration ecologist said.

The commission asked Tuxbury to have Save The Bay send an official letter requesting a letter of support, and the matter will be considered.

In the other presentation, Pat Bolger, a former chairman of the town's Harbor Management Commission, and Susan Little asked for

the support of the commission in a move to gain the designation of Conanicut Island as a Sole Source Aquifer from the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

An aquifer is a layer of rock or soil able to hold or transmit a significant amount of water. According to the EPA Web site, the agency offers the SSA designation to areas in which a sole or principal source aquifer supplies at least 50 percent of the drinking water consumed, and in which no alternative drinking water supply could be physically, legally, or economically obtained.

The designation gives the EPA authority to review all proposed projects assisted by federal monies and having the potential to contaminate ground water in the area. State, local, and private projects would not be subject to EPA review.

Bolger and Little said that they have already spoken to Town Administrator Bruce Keiser about the matter and believe it will be taken up by the town's Water Resource Committee at its March 8 meeting. The commission decided to discuss the issue further at its next meeting.

In other business, Chairman Powell gave a status report on the Hull Cove Right-of-Way project. The plan is to construct a boardwalk similar to the one at the Sanctuary, estimated to cost no more than \$5,000.

Jamestown's Harbor Management Commission has already agreed to match funds raised to the Conservation Commission up to \$5,000, and other monies would be sought from the Trail Improvement Grant Program of Rhode Island's Department of Environmental Management.

Work is to be all-volunteer, and a scout is ready to carry out the task as an Eagle Scout project. Commissioner Roheim asked if the endeavor could be expanded to include signage, and Commissioner Driscoll wondered if the hours of the donated labor could be calculated as part of the total grant needed. Powell said he would look into these possibilities.

Commissioner Jennifer Talancy reported that it is her aim, by the next meeting, to install mesh be-

neath the wildlife observation platform in the Sanctuary, in order to prevent Phragmites from growing through the decking.

Again this year, the Commission will invite Jamestowners to celebrate Earth Day by participating in a Shoreline Cleanup on Saturday, April 21. Commissioner Driscoll will be coordinator.

Chairman Powell reported that letters have been sent to the Town Council requesting that the Conservation Commission have a representative on the Wind Energy Commission, and to the Town Administrator with a Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2008.

A letter was also sent to retiring Commissioner Tom Johnson thanking him for his years of service.

With regard to the eligibility of Jamestowners to receive property tax relief under Rhode Islands Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act, intended to conserve undeveloped

land in tracts of ten acres or more by assessing it as open space rather than for its development potential, Powell reported that the Tax Assessor indicates that there are currently 28 properties totaling 783 acres in the program. The Commission hopes owners of additional eligible properties will participate as well.

The Commission voted to reimburse Commissioner Mark Baker, who was absent from the meeting, \$120 for the cost of attending a workshop sponsored by GrowSmartRI, a public interest group concerned with natural resources and economic growth in Rhode Island.

Baker also has the final version of the new Trails Guide, to be printed by the Jamestown Press.

The next meeting of the Commission is March 13, at the Ft. Wetherill Marine Laboratory, Conference Room, 7 pm.

Tunney, Nelson wed

Carolyn Tunney and Kurt Nelson were married Oct. 6, 2006 at 4 p.m. in Linden Place, Bristol, with the Rev. Charles Flagg officiating. The reception was held at Linden Place.

The bride is the daughter of John and Jeanne Tunney of Westport, Mass. The bridegroom is the son of Cynthia and Charles Flagg of Jamestown, and John and Nancy Nelson of Durham, N.H.

The bride was given in marriage by her father, John Tunney. The matron of honor was Jennifer Del-



gado, sister of the bride. The best man was Paul Buonvino, friend of the groom. Ushers were Brandon Tunney, brother of the bride, and Frank Delgado, brother-in-law of the bride.


Ukrainian Easter egg workshop

On Saturday, March 3, at 11 a.m. at the Jamestown library there will be a workshop to learn

the art of Pysanky, creating colorful Ukrainian Easter eggs from instructor Lisa Schipritt.

This workshop has a \$7- materials fee and is for ages 9 through adult. Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult. Since this workshop is limited to 20 people, call 423-7280 to register.

For more information about library programs visit the library at 26 North Main Rd., call 423-7280, or visit <http://www.jamestownri.com/library/>.



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