

Island Opinion

• EDITORIAL •

Sole source a federal boondoggle

It was disappointing to learn this week that Jamestown has been named as a federal sole source aquifer. Here's how the Environmental Protection Agency reported it:

"The drinking water supply of Conanicut Island has been designated as a sole source aquifer. Conanicut Island is located off the coast of Rhode Island in Narragansett Bay and includes the municipality of Jamestown.

"Sole Source Aquifer designations are made to protect drinking water supplies in areas with few or no alternative drinking water sources, and where any available alternative would be extremely expensive. The designation requires EPA to review any proposed projects that received federal funding to ensure they do not endanger the water source. Under the program, EPA typically reviews projects such as highway construction improvements and large wastewater treatment facilities.

"When the designation formally takes effect later this summer with a notice being published in the Federal Register, Conanicut will be one of 16 New England locations to have a sole source aquifer designation. Other locations already designated in Rhode Island include: Pawcatuck River, Hunt-Annaquatucket-Pettaquamscutt and Block Island. A number of other island communities off New England's coast also have sole source status, including Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

"The aquifer under Conanicut Island is the principal source of drinking water for all island residents. Recharge of the water supply is primarily by infiltration of precipitation. No economically viable alternative sources exist since the Island is located in the Bay and is independent of mainland sources.

"The community has already shown strong commitment to protecting the drinking water aquifer, and this federal designation will help strengthen existing efforts."

So what does this "sole source aquifer" designation mean for Jamestown? Very little, as far as we can determine. To begin with, the EPA got the science wrong that Conanicut Island has only one aquifer. Two years ago, University of Rhode Island professor emeritus Daniel W. Urish told the Jamestown Press that Conanicut Island is comprised of not one but three aquifers.

A respected hydrogeologist, Urish had done extensive studies on Conanicut Island's water sources. He said all of our island's water comes from precipitation and recycled groundwater.

Urish cautioned against contaminating our water through pollution and overbuilding because it overtaxes the natural ability of any aquifer to recover and replenish itself.

The Town of Jamestown has done a thorough job of continuing to educate islanders about the precious and precarious state of our water supply. Conservation and common sense is foremost. The town has even stopped oiling the macadam roads because of the potential pollution to our water supply.

Our town water is rationed every summer because we don't have enough to go around. Those on well water also conserve because if they don't their wells run dry.

Maybe the EPA could send us a few brochures that we can hand out at the next financial town meeting.

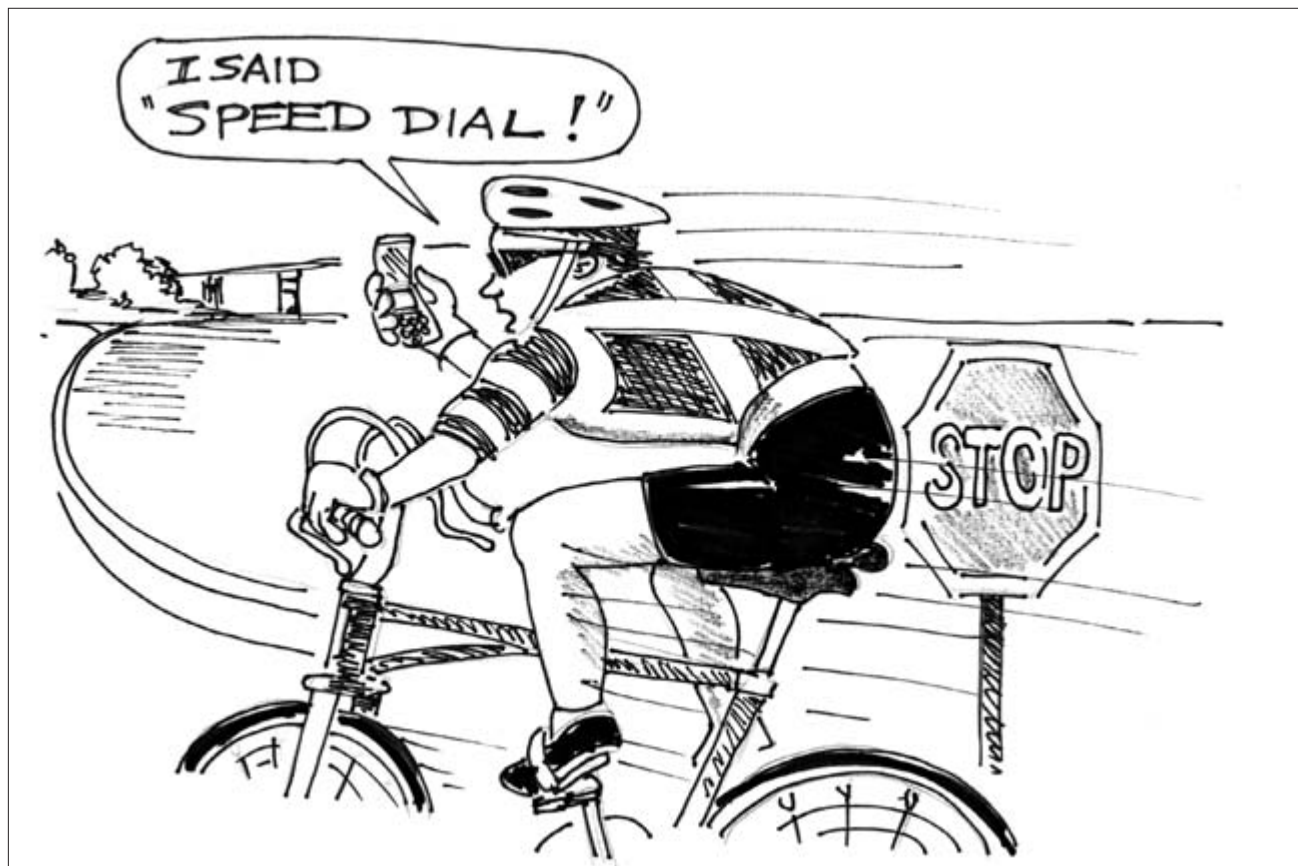
Construction of the Route 138 cross-island four-lane highway was a controversial issue in the 1990s. We battled over that road for many years. But now it has been built. Ask any island old-timer: the new highway more than likely impacted our water supply.

Where was the EPA then?

It is disturbing that we now have a new layer of federal bureaucracy to wade through. Perhaps the EPA could find some money to help us expand our water resources. A reverse osmosis water treatment plant would be nice. Or how about a tax credit for homeowners to construct water cisterns connected to their rain gutters? That could go a long way towards capturing all the groundwater that runs off into Narragansett Bay after every rainstorm.

There comes a time when we have to say enough foolish bureaucracy. Less government is better and less expensive than more government.

— Jeff McDonough



Police need compassion

On Friday, Aug. 8, my beloved, beautiful dog, Mako, suffered a fatal heart attack while swimming at Head's Beach. A neighbor immediately came to my aid. Not knowing what else to do, she called 911. The woman who answered the call was asking questions about my dog, but then the call was abruptly cut off.

After trying CPR unsuccessfully for five to eight minutes, I put my dog in my truck and called 911 on my cell phone. A woman answered, "Jamestown Police

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Department." I asked for either Cathy Gregory, our wonderful animal control officer, or Sgt. Keith Woodbine. A male voice came on the phone and demanded, "Are you the person who just called from Head's Beach?" I replied, "Yes, I am. I need help." The male voice responded, "We don't do dog calls. Don't call here anymore with your dog problems. Call the animal clinic," and promptly hung up on me. All I needed in my distress was a little help

and guidance. That officer should be ashamed of himself; he is truly not a man of feeling or honor.

I have lived here over a decade, and have worked here nearly two. I love this place, I don't have to tell any of the residents how special it is; you already know. When my tragedy happened with Mako, I couldn't face going home. I wandered around Conanicut Marina, which to me is like a second home. There was so much love and compassion from

the community who knew Mako and me that it was hard at times to be sad, but then, I have always received abundant support from countless members of our wonderful town.

The following day, a 10-year old daughter of a friend had a stray cat following her around town. Not knowing if this cat had a home, the little girl called the police. She unfortunately met with the response, "We don't do cat calls." I learned of this incident the evening after losing Mako.

I've also heard of other

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This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden

Week of August 21

100 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, August 18, 1908

There was a large attendance from here to the first day of tennis in Newport, the ferries being taxed to the utmost to transfer the carriages and automobiles. The Conanicut was obliged to leave several behind on her 10 o'clock trip from here.

From the Newport Daily News, August 22, 1908

This afternoon the Conanicut Yacht Club will hold its annual water sports at the clubhouse. These have become an occasion for the young people, and some who were younger once, to show their skill in the water and some good exhibitions may be looked for, and some fun, especially in the canoe tilting and the tub races.

75 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, August 17, 1933

(At the town council meeting) it was voted that the following bills be paid out of the State Unemployment Relief Fund: July 24 to August 12, work relief, \$415; transportation and supplies, \$ 245.76; administration, \$31.15.

From the Newport Daily News, August 19, 1933

The American Legion, Jamestown Post and Auxiliary carnival, which has been in operation during the past week, will come to a close tonight. The attendance each evening has far exceeded expectations and the financial outcome has been gratifying.

50 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, August 19, 1958

President Potter (J.H.N., President of the Jamestown Historical Society) gave a resume of the year's work of the society. He spoke of the restoration fund for the windmill on North Road, including the grant from the Rhode Island Foundation which enabled the society to proceed

with shingling the mill.

From the Newport Daily News, August 22, 1958

The Jamestown tax rate has been dropped from \$31 to \$16.20 per \$1,000 valuation as the result of the recently-completed revaluation of property, but valuations have been generally doubled.

25 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, August 18, 1983

The Jamestown Shores Association will celebrate its 35th anniversary with an open house Saturday at the Beacon Avenue Club House from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. This will be followed at 9 p.m. with a movie of the earlier America's Cup Races. The association was formed in 1948 by a group of neighbors working to improve the area. Its aims were to promote the welfare of the members and residents of Jamestown Shores, to advance and protect their interest and to create an atmosphere of neighborliness and friendship.

From the Newport Daily News, August 22, 1983

The 8th annual Fools' Rules Regatta Saturday at East Ferry Beach attracted the usual large crowd as the thermometer hovered around the 90 degree mark in the shade. ... This year there were only twenty entries, about half the number of last year. The event was sponsored by the Jamestown Taxpayers Association.

Fair skies and a gentle northwest wind made for an ideal Sunday afternoon for the 4th annual Kite Festival sponsored by the Jamestown Republican Town Committee.

15 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, August 19, 1993

The Town Council Monday in a special session voted 4-0 to spend \$160,000 to get free title to a parcel of federally-owned land at Ft. Wetherill where the town's highway barn sits now. In a second 4-0 vote, council members approved setting up a Ft. Wetherill Utilization Committee that will investigate ways the town can earn revenue from the property.

The old Jamestown Bridge was officially closed to fishermen last week when state Department of Transportation workers welded shut a broken chain-link fence on the span's North Kingstown side.

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