

Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association

Promoting community involvement and communication

Fall 2019 eLetter

**Reminder: if you haven't already paid your 2019 dues,
please do so [online](#) or by mail**



Except for two nasty nor'easters in October—one of which lashed the Outer Cape for the long Columbus Day weekend—the fall in Wellfleet was lovely. The weather was perfect for the 19th annual Wellfleet OysterFest. 18,178 tickets were sold to a crowd that bought 109,500 raw and 13,350 cooked oysters, netting the festival sponsor, Wellfleet Shellfish Promotion and Tasting (SPAT), about \$90,000 after expenses. The money will be used largely for marketing and promotion of Wellfleet oysters as a brand.

This year for the first time, OysterFest was plastic free. All vendors were required to use either compostable or reusable products. Lead organizer Michele Insley told the *Provincetown Independent*, “we want to create a festival where we have a great time but are also acting sustainably when it comes to our waste.” Following a vote at Wellfleet’s 2019 spring town meeting to ban municipal purchase of plastic bottles, SPAT organizers began working to follow suit. “I’d love to mimic festivals in Europe where when you enter you get a reusable plate, a cup, and utensils and bring them back when you leave,” she said.

Shark Report

In mid-October the Wood Hole Group released its report on [Shark Mitigation Alternatives](#) commissioned by the six Outer Cape towns, along with the



photo by Joe Mault, Orleans Camera

Cape Cod National Seashore and the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy. The unsurprising conclusion of the 200-page report: “Since no mitigation alternative can provide 100% safety, reducing the chances of unprovoked attacks on humans requires a strong commitment to education and outreach.”

Equally unsurprising: More than 51% of the 573 survey respondents said they wanted a technological solution to the Cape’s shark problem. However, the WHG consultants were clear that detection, deterrent and exclusion technologies need more research. They underscored the importance of the efforts by the towns and the Seashore to educate the public on reducing the risk of attack and to upgrade emergency communications and trauma response at beaches. [Wicked Local Cape Cod](#) has a good summary, and you can watch the first part of the presentation on [YouTube](#) and the Q&A on [Vimeo](#).

Chief Ranger Leslie Reynolds told the *Cape Cod Times*, “We know they (white sharks) are coming very close to shore,” and the problem appears to be getting worse. Reynolds said that in an average season from 2013 to 2017, the park closed beaches to swimming about a dozen times; the number doubled in 2018 and increased to 43 this past summer. Attacks on seals at our public beaches have become relatively common, and white sharks have attacked six humans in the past seven years.

The [full report](#) used effectiveness, cost, environmental impacts and 24 other criteria to evaluate 27 technologies and alternative strategies including shark tagging; visual detection by towers, drones, planes and balloons; remote detection by sonar and real-time acoustic buoys; deterrents such as electromagnetic, magnetic and scents; electromagnetic and acoustic barriers; and human behavior modification. The study also evaluated these alternatives for Cape Cod Bay beaches and Cape estuaries with similar results.

Revised Shark Smart Tips from CCNS:

Be aware that sharks hunt for seals in shallow water.

Stay close to shore where rescuers can reach you.

Don’t isolate yourself. Swim, paddle, kayak, and surf in groups.

Avoid areas where **seals** are present.

Avoid areas where **schools of fish** are visible.

Avoid murky or **low-visibility** water.

Limit splashing.

Follow all signage and flag warnings at beaches and instructions of the lifeguards.

Only four of the alternatives have proven even minimally effective when used in other places: rigid netting, flexible netting, a simulated kelp forest, and modifying human behavior through education. But the permits required, the cost, and the potential environmental impacts eliminate the netting options and the kelp forest. Seal contraception, culling of sharks or seals, use of baited hooks to catch and move great whites out to sea, and electronic shocks as a deterrent were also ruled out because they are not currently allowed under federal law; because of the risk they pose to humans and the negative impact on the environment; and because they are deemed unlikely to produce results.

“We need to sit down and digest” the report, the Chief Ranger said. “We don’t want to invest hundreds of thousands of dollars, affect other marine life and cause irreparable damage off our coast.” The supplemental budget the Massachusetts House has passed for next year includes \$195,000 for continued shark mitigation efforts across the region. Local legislators had secured \$383,000 from the state to help fund the safety measures implemented this past summer.

At its August 27th meeting, the Board of Selectmen approved a memorial bench for Arthur Medici, who lost his life in a September 2018, shark attack. Funds will be raised privately.

New Bridges

Another long-awaited [report](#) was released on October 3rd when the US Army Corps of Engineers issued a draft recommendation for a billion-dollar replacement of the Bourne and Sagamore Bridges. Built 84 years ago and intended to last 50, the spans are “functionally obsolete.” The corps, which controls the bridges, said they have reached the point where “the cost of operation and maintenance and periodic rehabilitation slowly escalates,” making replacement the most economical option. Costly repairs are scheduled in the coming decade. The Sagamore Bridge is scheduled for a \$185 million rehabilitation as soon as 2025, and the Bourne Bridge would undergo a similar, \$210 million project as soon as 2029.



The plan is for traffic to continue to use the existing bridges while the new structures are built alongside them. The structures will include four travel lanes, plus two lanes intended to allow vehicles to speed up or slow down as they merge, a median divider, and a protected lane for bikes and pedestrians.

At public meetings held around the Cape in October, response to the proposal was generally favorable in spite of the inevitable disruption the project will cause. The public comment period ends on November 15. The Corps hopes to finalize its recommendation in early 2020, allowing it to move forward.

Bike Trail Extension

Following the execution of a P&S for a small parcel of land near the Idle Times bike shop, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) will own the entire corridor on which the state proposes to build the Cape Cod Rail Trail Extension Project–Wellfleet. DCR has completed 90% of the design for the trail extension. The agency plans to hold a third public meeting in early winter 2020 at which it will present a complete design. An overview of the proposed extension is provided in this [DCR powerpoint](#).

The Concerned Citizens for a Sensible Wellfleet Bikeway submitted to the Governor a petition with over 1,300 signatures asking him to halt the planned extension of the bike trail until other possible routes have been investigated. At its meeting on October 7, 2019, the Selectboard voted 3-2 against sending Governor Baker a letter asking him to temporarily stop work on the extension. BOS member Justina Carlson explained her negative vote this way: “I did talk to [state Rep.] Sarah Peake who has to deal with realities as an elected official and she said this money might not come around again. I’d like to see what they come back with and see if our safety concerns are dealt with.”

Provincetown Independent

In the summer of 2019, a group of Outer Cape journalists embarked on an important experiment: They launched a new weekly newspaper, the *Provincetown Independent*, “a homegrown news organization for the Outer Cape Cod [for] the people who live and work in Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, and Eastham, and those who love this place from afar.”

Their vision: “to celebrate all that is good here, in a place that’s proud of its tradition of welcoming separatists and strangers. We also plan to delve into the challenges we face on the far end of this sandbar.”

One of the challenges the Outer Cape

faces, as so many other American communities do too, is the decline and in many cases disappearance of news organizations with roots in and a commitment to their local community. The leadership behind this endeavor is the editor, Ed Miller, former associate editor of the *Provincetown Banner*, and publisher Teresa Parker, both year-round residents of Wellfleet.



Reporters from the *Banner*, *Cape Codder*, *Cape Cod Times*, and talented freelancers have joined the fledgling enterprise.

The *Independent* is a hybrid; on October 10, it began publishing weekly, in print and [online](#). It has also created the nonprofit [Local Journalism Project](#) to support critical investigative reporting and public programs and to give opportunities to up-and-coming journalists.

To become a member of the Local Journalism Project or to subscribe to the paper, click [here](#).

Of course, news and opinion about Wellfleet is still available on a weekly basis in the [Provincetown Banner](#), and on a daily basis in the [Cape Cod Times](#).

News and notes from Wellfleet, fall 2019

- Wellfleet's Arbor Committee (a group independent of town government) has been working to make the town center greener. With a significant financial contribution from WSRA, it will be planting trees along Main Street over the coming year. The trees will not only add shade but also improve the appearance of Wellfleet and help in a small way to decrease the town's carbon footprint.
- After overcoming one obstacle after another, a comprehensive permit to allow Habitat for Humanity to build four affordable single-family homes on Old Kings Highway was approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals in July. A few weeks later, the project hit another roadblock when for the third time a group of abutters filed a lawsuit in Barnstable Superior Court. The Selectboard voted to vigorously defend the ZBA and Habitat. WSRA weighed in with a letter to the editor of the *Provincetown Banner*, expressing the Board's distress at the latest delay in the Habitat Project. "We are uniformly appalled at the repeated attempts by abutting property owners to derail the project," wrote Board president Susan Reverby. "We would suggest that the opposition from non-resident abutters reflects their status as abutters more than their status as non-residents."
- On September 12, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) approved the construction of a 241-foot-long rock revetment to shore up the house on the Gut between Cape Cod Bay and the mouth of the Herring River. With their 5,817 square foot house less than 25 feet from the edge of the bluff, last year the owners asked the Wellfleet Conservation Commission to allow them to build a stone seawall. The Commission denied the request and with the support of the town and the Cape Cod National Seashore, defended its decision under the town's Wetlands Protection Bylaw. That case is pending.



- The Selectboard voted to keep the exemption percentage for the residential tax exemption at 20% for fiscal year 2020. The exemption in Truro is also 20%, while it is 25% in Provincetown. For more on how this tax works, see the [Residential Exemption Fact Sheet](#) prepared by the Wellfleet Assessor in September 2018.
- Wellfleet has won a \$115,000 grant from the state Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to partner with Truro and Provincetown on the development of a comprehensive framework for managing approximately 35 miles of shared shoreline in a mutually beneficial manner.
- As you probably know or have noticed, the Board of the Wellfleet Non-resident Taxpayers Association voted to change the organization's name to Wellfleet Seasonal Resident Association (WSRA). As Board President Susan Reverby explained, "We wanted a name that reflected the seasonal nature of our relationship to Wellfleet, not just that we paid taxes even though we don't live or vote here. We wanted to be *called something*, not *be a non-something*." Please invite your neighbors, whether they are homeowners or renters, to join. And if you have the skill set, please send your suggestions for a new logo. An edible reward is on ice.

Dues and donations, please

WSRA counts on its members to pay dues without receiving an annual reminder. 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](#).



