



FRIENDS OF GEORGICA POND FOUNDATION

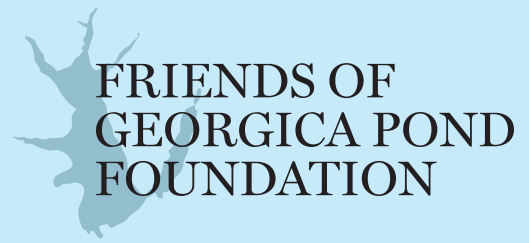
Annual Report 2020

Mission Statement:

“To preserve the Georgica Pond ecosystem for future generations through science-based, watershed-wide policy and restoration”



Letter from the President



Pandemic!

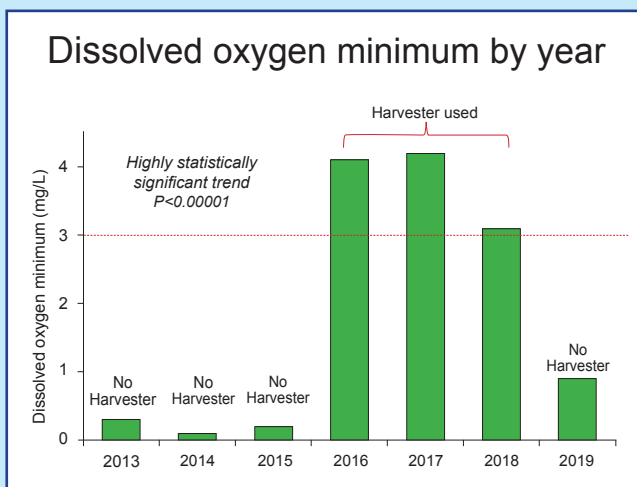
Dear Friends and Supporters,

2020 will long be remembered as the year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many people left their homes in New York and moved to their weekend homes on Georgica Pond. Experiencing the many moods of Georgica Pond year-round is a remarkable opportunity and the increased appreciation of our work and the beauty of the pond was expressed by many. **Your generous support during this very difficult year is truly appreciated.**

With restrictions on mass gatherings in place, our annual meeting was held virtually. Dr. Christopher Gobler of Stony Brook University and Science Advisor to Friends, provided an update on his monitoring and research with plenty of good news about the oyster experiment, continuing improved water quality and an expanded water quality monitoring effort in Georgica Cove.

But by late June, we knew something wasn't right in Georgica Cove-- where Sago pondweed and Cladophora, the filamentous green algae-- were growing so thick that two sailors got stuck in the pudding-like morass. With support from our environmental consultants and the East Hampton Town Trustees we applied for an "Emergency Authorization" from the NYSDEC and the Town of East Hampton to use the aquatic weed harvester. The authorization was finally granted in early August and the harvester worked for 6 days to remove what remained of the excessive growth. A major cyanobacteria bloom was averted.

Our efforts to obtain a 5-year permit for the harvester continued and its beneficial impact on the pond was communicated to regulators. In addition to preventing a pond-wide blue-green (cyanobacteria) bloom, the amount of dissolved oxygen in water increased significantly when the harvester was used.



According to Suffolk County, with more people using their homes year-round there was an increase in septic system failures. In the Town of East Hampton, old failing septic systems must be replaced with the I/A (Innovative/ Alternative) systems which can be expedited during the normal County and Town reviews. We are working with colleagues to persuade the Village of East Hampton to adopt this requirement as well. We applaud all our neighbors who have already installed these septic systems and urge the rest of you to do so immediately.

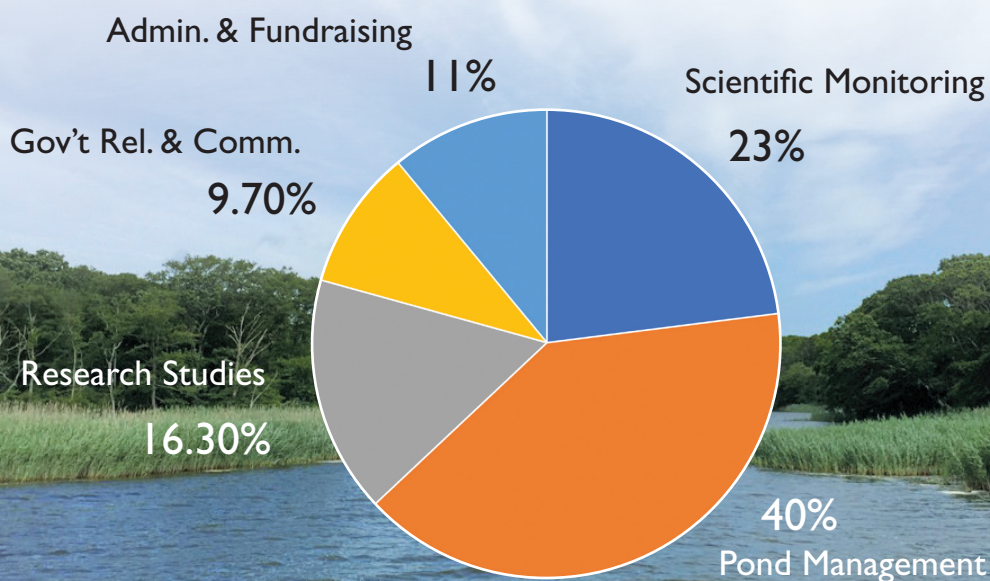
Our watershed-wide, science-based program at Georgica Pond must take a long view. The contributing watershed to the pond is approximately 4,000 acres and the pond itself is almost 300 acres. Our hardworking team and partners can take credit for some real successes, but as

we know, conditions at the pond can change quickly and new threats can emerge. The pandemic did not stop any of our major initiatives, but some were slowed and some new projects were temporarily suspended. We are now back at full strength and excited to share our progress with you.

Please enjoy our 2020 Annual Report and keep in touch with us. We want to hear from you and are happy to answer any questions. I'll see you at the beach!

Piselle Rabbizzi White
President

2020 Expenses by Category



Category	Scientific Monitoring	Pond Management	Research Studies	Communications & Gov't. Rel.	Administration & Fundraising	Total
Amount	\$101,370	\$174,595	\$71,421	\$42,376	\$48,056	\$437,818
Percentage	23%	40%	16.30%	9.70%	11%	100%

Dredging the Bottlenecks at Georgica Cove

Dredging fine sediments from the pond bottom is a costly and major undertaking but very effective in removing the phosphorous and nitrogen contained in pond bottom sediments. In addition, dredging deepens the pond, keeping it cooler and improving water flow. This was the goal of a limited dredging project designed for the upper bottleneck of Georgica Cove.

When the project began, almost all access to the rest of Georgica Cove was blocked by a thick growth of *Phragmites australis*, the invasive common reed grass. Prior to dredging the *Phragmites* was cut and then two techniques, harvesting and suction dredging, were used over two seasons to remove fine sediments from the bottom and a mat of *Phragmites* roots. Sediment was piped into a Geotube (a mesh bag which allowed the water to flow out) and when the sediment was fully de-watered, it was removed.

In 2021 the lower bottleneck was dredged by the East Hampton Town Trustees. These two efforts will help better flush Georgica Cove and we are eager to see if water quality in Georgica Cove is improved.

The site will be monitored annually. Friends wishes to thank the East Hampton Town Trustees and the Village of East Hampton for their cooperation and making the de-watering site for the Geotube available.





2020 Donors

Blue Heron - \$50,000-\$99,999

Anonymous (2)
Janine & Jeff Yass

Osprey - \$25,000-\$49,999

Anonymous (1)*
Anne & John Hall
Susannah & Peter Kagan
Lenore & Sean Mahoney
Cynnie & Tom Ogden
Joyce Menschel
Elin & Michael Nierenberg
Ashley & Sid Perkins
Janet Ross
Candace & Jon Wainwright
Priscilla Rattazzi Whittle & Chris Whittle
Anita & Byron Wien

Oystercatcher - \$10,000-\$14,999

David Gallo*
Sima & Morad Ghadamian
Sasha & Aaron Hsu
Susan & Mark Morris
Suzanne Peck & Brian Friedman
Katharine Rayner
Rick Reese

Piping Plover - \$5,000-\$9,999

Susan Fraker
Patty & Harvey Karp
Samrita & Sanjiv Mehra
Kate Noble & Aaron Sawchuk
Jane & Alfred Ross

Least Tern - \$1,000-\$4,999

Betsy Battle
Ellen Chesler & Matthew Mallow
Stacy Fredericks
Mary Petrie
Emilia Saint-Amand
Jane & James Weigley
Rita & Walter Weil

Sanderling - \$1-\$999

Sara Davison
Carolyn Logan Gluck
Meghan Magyar
Perkins Family Tomato Stand
Lynn P. Tishman

*Denotes a multi-year pledge

As of Dec. 30, 2020

A great year for Blue Crabs!

One of Georgica Pond's signature species is the Blue Crab, *Callinectes sapidus*. A magnificent swimmer and predator, it has attracted families to the pond for generations. Crabs were in super abundance by the end of the summer in 2020 and the pent-up public were there to harvest them. At times, the crowds stayed late into the night and many crabbers were not aware of the regulations controlling the harvest of blue crabs. The East Hampton Town Trustees installed educational signs and the Town Marine Patrol helped keep order under COVID restrictions.

You must have an East Hampton Town Shellfish permit to harvest crabs.

When harvesting crabs please obey the Town Code regulations:

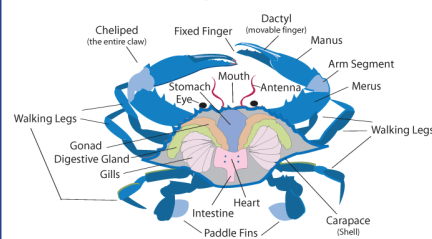
1. No female crabs with eggs may be harvested.
2. Holders of a commercial license have no limit on the number of crabs harvested/day. You must be a Town resident to acquire a commercial license.
3. Holders of individual permits may harvest 50 crabs/day.
4. All harvested crabs must be 5 inches across the carapace.
All smaller crabs must be put back.

In addition, the New York State Department of Health warns people to never eat the Tomalley/Hepatopancreas or the cooking liquid of crabs harvested from Long Island waters.

To acquire a Town Shellfish license, contact the East Hampton Town Clerk's Office at 631-324-4142.



The Anatomy of a Blue Crab



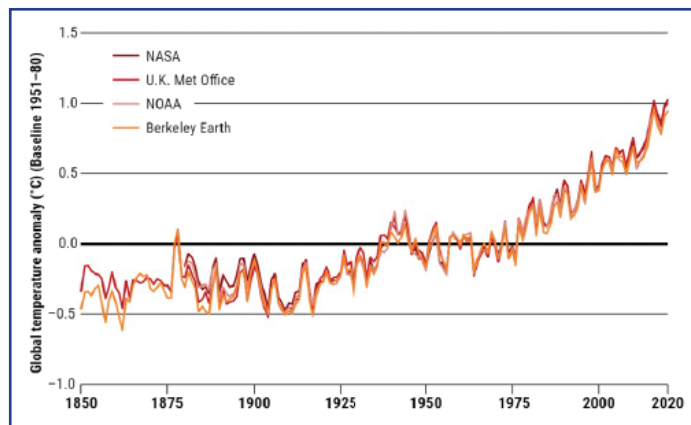
The Fierce Urgency of Now

Dr. Christopher Gobler,
Endowed Chair of Coastal Ecology and Conservation
School of Marine and Atmospheric Studies (SOMAS)
Stony Brook University

Does anyone remember the ‘silver lining’ of the COVID pandemic when major city centers across the globe had clear skies due to the prevalence of ‘stay-at-home’ orders? It was predicted this would mean lowered levels of atmospheric pollution and, in a perfect world, lower greenhouse gases and maybe even lower temperatures.

Last week, planet earth set a new record for the levels of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere, 420 parts per million, a level not seen for more than 25 million years. And for all of 2020, planet earth set an all-time record for temperatures since accurate records began in the 1800s. And while these patterns of global climate may seem to be ‘out of sight, out of mind’, the local signals of climate change in our waters are unmistakable.

During the past two decades, water temperatures during summer and fall have significantly increased by nearly three degrees Fahrenheit. This spring, there was a desperate search for blue mussels, *Mytilus edulis* among baymen and local regulatory agencies. During the first decade of this century, the geographic range of the blue mussel has retreated from the Carolinas to Delaware. A continued retreat north is expected and it may not be long before this cold-water species bids New York farewell. The window of opportunity for many types of harmful algal blooms, including those that have plagued Georgica Pond, have increased as our summer water temperatures have increased. For example, while regional waters never got warm enough for ‘rust tides’ – a fish killing algae – most bays, estuaries, and pond are in the ideal temperature range for this species for much of July and August. And while the news on reducing carbon emissions on the east end, and in New York, and even across the US is hopeful, as many states and municipalities seek to become carbon-neutral in the next few decades, these actions will be more than offset by the 1.75 billion people in China and India who are lacking the means to develop and implement such a plan.



I state these facts not to spread gloom and doom, but to share a reality: if we are to protect Georgica Pond against future climate change, **our most powerful means will be to reduce nitrogen pollution from antiquated septic systems in the more than 2,000 homes in the Pond’s 4,000-acre watershed.** And if the link between septic nitrogen and climate change seems far-fetched, excessive nitrogen loading represents **the** trigger that intensifies algal blooms that threaten water quality, fisheries, aquatic life, and, in some cases, public health. Excessive nitrogen loading also degrades salt marshes that protect waterfront homes from flooding. Climate change is a co-conspirator in many of these woes as well, for example, causing lower oxygen levels, stressing aquatic life, and promoting sea-level rise. But there are innumerable obstacles to assuring that intensive climate change will be mitigated in our lifetime. This leaves local action in the Georgica Pond watershed to upgrade septic systems as our most powerful ‘tool in the toolbox’ to ensure the resilience of this beautiful ecosystem against future climatic change. And given the rate of change I end this essay with an apt quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

“We are now faced with the fact that *tomorrow is today*. We are confronted with the *fierce urgency of now*. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action.”

~ Martin Luther King Jr., August 28, 1963

Install a Low Nitrogen (I/A) Septic System

We would like to offer a hearty round of applause to all the homeowners who have already upgraded their septic systems. As of this writing, 26 antiquated systems have been removed from the Georgica Pond two-year travel time. With traditional passive septic systems, nitrogen is not removed from the wastewater entering our groundwater. The new I/A systems remove approximately 15 pounds of nitrogen/year. This is nitrogen that is no longer entering Georgica Pond. Excessive quantities of nitrogen trigger Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) including toxic Cyanobacteria blooms. **This is the single most important thing homeowners can do to improve the water quality of Georgica Pond.**

Significant funding incentives (\$40,000 in most cases) are still available and permitting is streamlined to encourage homeowners to start the process today.



Once installed, I/A septic tanks are barely visible and the parts that remain above ground can be hidden by tall grasses or shrubs.

Who We Are

Priscilla Rattazzi Whittle, *President*
Anne Gilchrist Hall, *Vice President*
Jonathan M. Wainwright, Esq., *Treasurer*
Anna Chapman, MD, *Secretary*
Katharine Rayner, *Board Member*
Sara Davison, *Executive Director*
Larry Cantwell, *Government Relations Advisor*
Addavail Coslett, *Director of Strategy & Partnerships, Chapman Perelman Foundation*



Photo Michael Hansen

From left to right: Anna Chapman, Priscilla Rattazzi Whittle, Anne Hall, Jon Wainwright, Kathy Rayner

School of Marine & Atmospheric Sciences (SOMAS), Stony Brook University

Christopher Gobler, Ph.D, *Endowed Chair of Coastal Ecology & Conservation, Science Advisor to FOGP*
Michael Doall, *Associate Director of Bivalve Restoration, the Gobler Lab*
Bradley Peterson, Ph.D & Stephen Heck, *Marine Community Ecology, Peterson Lab*

Partners

Our work at Georgica Pond would not be possible without the support and collaboration of the local governments who have jurisdiction over the pond and the other NGOs whose broader missions inform and help direct us. We are also very grateful to the special team at the **School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at Stony Brook University** and the **New York State Center for Clean Water Technology**.

Non-Governmental Organizations:

East Hampton Village Preservation Society
Group for the East End
Peconic Land Trust
Perfect Earth Project
The Nature Conservancy, Long Island Chapter
Surfrider Foundation, Eastern Long Island Chapter

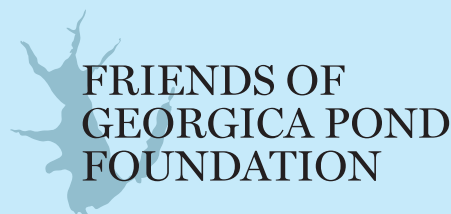
Governmental:

East Hampton Town Trustees
State of New York
Suffolk County, Reclaim Our Water Program
Town of East Hampton
Village of East Hampton

Unless otherwise noted, all photos by Priscilla Rattazzi



Please join our mailing list today
friendsofgeorgicapond.org/contact/
P.O. Box 1393 • Wainscott, NY 11975
Email: info@friendsofgeorgicapond.org
631-324-9034



Pondfront Saved!

One of the biggest stories on the pond in 2020 was the purchase the former Il Mulino property. This 1.4 acre property fronts on Talmage Creek and is at a key intersection of Montauk Highway, Wainscott Stone Road and the rest stop. Thanks to a generous gift from Katharine Rayner, the Peconic Land Trust (PLT) was able to protect the property from continued restaurant use or further development. The restoration of the site will include removing the building, all paving and the large septic tank, grease trap and related leaching fields. In such close proximity to the pond, this antiquated waste treatment system contributed to the degradation of the pond's water quality. Native vegetation will be planted and environmental monitoring will begin. With the protection of this land, the only non-residential land-use on the pond has been removed.

"I am privileged to be able to give back to a place that has provided me with so much joy and beauty. Having lived on Georgica Pond for forty years I have witnessed its deterioration, and this project to protect the Pond comes from the heart." Katharine Rayner.

Friends salutes Katharine Rayner for her generosity and vision and the Peconic Land Trust for making it happen.