



MARCH 2026

SAVE THE DATE: Annual meeting-Sat, June 6, 2026; 10 am at the Harwich Community Center!

Hope you all made it through the blizzard! Spring is just around the corner as we plan to expand our pond education and advocacy! Our participation in Pond testing is an important component of our advocacy and protection of Harwich ponds.

Additionally, please be on the lookout for Town of Harwich communications regarding Town Meeting which is scheduled for Monday, May 4. There will be several citizen petitions and other articles on important environmental issues that you may find interesting. The Town of Harwich will be releasing the details of the warrant articles in advance of the meeting where you can learn more about them.

Pond Testing

We will be reaching out to confirm our volunteers for our PALS testing which will start in late April. Additionally, we are looking for volunteers to support APCC's expanded cyanobacteria testing in Harwich ponds – thank you to those who have signed up so far! Here's a quick summary of what we test for:

- **PALS (Ponds and Lakes Stewardship) testing** – this is now done twice a year; in late April and late August.
 - Volunteers collect samples in order to measure nutrients (nitrogen, phosphorus), pH, alkalinity, oxygen, temperature, and water clarity.
 - Analysis is performed by [SMAST](#). (School for Marine Science and Technology at UMASS Dartmouth).
 - 7 ponds were identified for testing last year although West Reservoir's water quality was so poor that they were only tested once (Hinckleys, Bucks, John Joseph, Skinequit, Aunt Edie's, Sand Pond, West Reservoir).
- **APCC Cyanobacteria testing** – this is a new request from APCC and we are still working out the details of how many and which ponds.
 - Testing is completed biweekly for cyanobacteria blooms, using visual observation and laboratory analysis based on sample collection.
 - Testing begins in May and will go through October.
 - Key components analyzed by APCC and SMAST include assessing water quality, measuring cell density, and identifying potential for toxins to categorize risk.

- Results are shared on an interactive map on APCC's website.
- **How is Harwich doing?** While we have been more fortunate than some of the other Cape towns reported on last summer, we still had some issues that some of you may be familiar with.
 - Bucks Pond was closed for several weeks last year due to cyanobacteria.
 - Seymour Pond (which we share with Brewster) was closed for several weeks due to cyanobacteria.
 - West Reservoir, as mentioned above, was in bad shape for most of the summer. You may have seen the green scum which indicates a cyanobacteria bloom. The Town departments (Conservation, Natural Resources and Board of Health) have submitted a budget request for a diagnostic assessment of West Reservoir.
 - Hinckleys Pond experienced a cyanobacteria bloom in December 2024 which was **very** unusual so late in the season so there is a funding request through the town to study this more closely.
 - We are excited to expand our efforts with the APCC testing to stay in front of this growing issue across Cape Cod ponds.

More to come on Pond Testing! Volunteers, we will reach out to you individually to confirm testing and training dates. If anyone reading this wants to volunteer, please let us know! Feel free to respond to me directly and we'll be sure to loop you in!

What Can We All Do to Protect our Ponds?

We had a follow up question after last month's newsletter – ***what exactly IS a Cape Cod lawn and how do I create one?*** The following resource links are on the website www.harwichwaters.org but worth sharing here as a direct link.

- 1) **Pond Buffer Guidance** - This link is from the Cape Cod Commission's guidelines on pond buffer guidance for those of you living on or near a pond.
[https://www.capecodcommission.org/resource-library/file/?url=/dept/commission/team/projects/Project%20Files/MULTI-TOWN/Freshwater%20Initiative/Pond%20Buffer%20Guide/Pond%20Buffer%20Guide%20Final%20Doc%20and%20In%20Design%20Files/CCC Pond Buffer Guide 2024 sm.pdf](https://www.capecodcommission.org/resource-library/file/?url=/dept/commission/team/projects/Project%20Files/MULTI-TOWN/Freshwater%20Initiative/Pond%20Buffer%20Guide/Pond%20Buffer%20Guide%20Final%20Doc%20and%20In%20Design%20Files/CCC%20Pond%20Buffer%20Guide%202024%20sm.pdf)
- 2) **Native Plants and a Cape Cod Lawn**
https://apcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/FINALGuidelines_Website_PP_-PDF-compressed.pdf?blm_aid=2301106177

The *Guidelines* gives homeowners steps they can take in the design and maintenance of their properties that will support pollinators and birds, manage stormwater, conserve water, and protect the Cape's water quality. This 40-page booklet is beautifully

illustrated by [Marcy Ford](#) with content that is easily digestible and supported by numerous resources for additional learning.

We will continue to highlight resources and suggestions for creating healthier ecosystems for your yards and their impact on the fragility of Cape Cod's waters.

Several of you have already accepted the challenge for creating more environmentally friendly landscapes. We would love to highlight some of them at our annual meeting on June 6. If you have a yard that you would love to share with us in pictures or video, please let us know and we can make arrangements to highlight you and your yard at the annual meeting! Please remember that transitions take time so even if it's a part of your "Cape Cod lawn" that has transformed to environmentally friendly, that is an important message to share!

Reply to this email and we will be in touch to coordinate how best to share your success story!

Till next month!