



## **Chilmark Pond Foundation and Great Pond Foundation Join Forces to Restore the Ecological Health of Chilmark Pond**

The boards of directors of the Great Pond Foundation and Chilmark Pond Foundation today announced a collaboration to develop a science-based ecological restoration plan for Chilmark Pond.

Once a thriving fish and shellfish habitat, Chilmark Pond is suffering from a host of ecological stressors. The Commonwealth closed its fishery decades ago and the Town of Chilmark has closed the Upper Pond at Lucy Vincent Beach to swimmers for years. This past summer marked the third consecutive summer of confirmed toxic cyanobacteria (also known as “blue green algae”) blooms in the Pond and the first time a recreational user suffered serious symptoms consistent with cyanotoxin exposure. Periodic openings to the ocean help reduce the pollutant load of the Pond but are insufficient to address the compromised health of Chilmark Pond.

The Chilmark Pond Foundation (CPF) was established in 2018 to improve the ecological health and restore the Pond’s native fish and shellfish habitat. Loosely modeled on the Great Pond Foundation (GPF), it has submitted an application for a permit to deepen various channels in Lower Chilmark Pond to improve circulation when the Pond is opened to the ocean.

Since 1998, Great Pond Foundation has focused on science-based conservation of Edgartown Great Pond, now considered a restoration success story. GPF is a leader in estuary science on Martha’s Vineyard, fostering learning and expertise, and developing tools to promote ecosystem health. The solution to protecting our ponds is neither singular nor static; restoration is a continual process of adapting to the changing needs of a living system. Elevated nitrogen and phosphorus levels, rising temperatures, and other challenges associated with climate change are problems for which every pond on Martha’s Vineyard must prepare.

“Our ambition to restore the ecological health of Chilmark Pond has become even more urgent with the now regular occurrence of toxic cyanobacteria blooms. We are encouraged and grateful to be able to learn from the Great Pond Foundation and its team,” said Allan Holt, CPF President. “We know it will be a long-haul effort and we are committed to seeing it through so Chilmark Pond can once again support fish and shellfish and all our kids and future generations can play safely in its waters.”

“The Great Pond Foundation’s work over decades, in conjunction and in close coordination with the Town of Edgartown and its leadership, continues to show good returns in maintaining the water quality of Edgartown Great Pond,” noted that Foundation’s Chair, AC Greer, before continuing, “The Great Pond Foundation is fortunate to be able to lend a hand to the Chilmark Pond community and share our knowledge and experience so gained.”

“The Island’s Great Ponds are ecological treasures. Because of the twin challenges of climate change and development in the watershed, it is essential to protect these natural resources and reduce the likelihood of future algal blooms through scientifically informed watershed-wide restoration,” stated Emily Reddington, GPF Biologist & Executive Director. She added, “Beginning in 2021, the GPF will expand its scientific scope with the launch of a Cyanobacteria Monitoring Program.”

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