



## PILGRIM LAKE CONSERVATION AREA

### ■ Introduction

The original beach property and the herring run were Town owned properties before 1950. They were put under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission in 1968 after the purchase of the first of the four other properties that make up the Pilgrim Lake Conservation Area.

At the regular meeting of the Orleans Recreation Commission held in the Town Offices Friday, November 8, 1968, it was voted unanimously to ask that this property be turned over to the Orleans Conservation Commission for administration, control and maintenance, subject to the understanding that the Orleans Recreation Commission will be permitted to use 100 feet of frontage on the property just purchased from Herbert and Isabel Snow to put a bathhouse and storage area. Other features mentioned for the new property were benches and a nature trail. The letter from the Selectmen to the Conservation Commission outlines the recreational usage they expect on the new property including a comfort station and boat storage facilities and if necessary to use the sanded beach area adjacent to the Town's beach facilities. The Conservation Commission accepted the property with the provision that the Recreation Department was responsible for upkeep of the buildings and policing the area.



The Town of Orleans acquired the following four properties next to the Town owned beach on Pilgrim Lake between 1968-1972. The total acreage of the Pilgrim Lake Conservation Area is now 9.06 acres.

1968, Herbert and Isabel Snow, 1.38 acres

In 1968, 1.38 acres comprising the property at Map 62, Parcel 92 was purchased from Herbert and Isabel Snow for \$17,500.00. A Self-Help Grant was applied for but not received. The comfort station is presently on this property.

Article 51 of the Annual Town Meeting held March 11 and 12, 1968, states: standing vote, For 176, Against 54, motion carries 2/3<sup>rd</sup> that the Town accept as a gift, acquire by purchase or take by eminent domain under the provisions of Chapter 79, for beach and recreation purposes a parcel of land, now or formerly owned by Herbert E. and Isabel M. Snow bounded northwesterly by land of the Town of Orleans, a distance of One Hundred Forty-three (143) feet, more or less, northeasterly by other land of said Snow et ux a distance of Three Hundred Sixty (360) feet, more or less, and southerly and westerly by the waters of Pilgrim Lake (a great pond) a distance of Five Hundred Seventy-Seven (577) feet, more or less, and being shown as Lot #34 on a plan recorded in the Barnstable County registry of Deeds in Plan Book 124, Page 89, and raise and appropriate the sum of Seventeen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$17,500.00) therefore and authorize the Selectmen to take any and all action necessary thereto.

1970 In 1970, two other properties were purchased to the north and east of this site. To the north, .61 of an acre, at Map 55 Parcel 55 was purchased from Zula Burgess for \$ 9,500.00. \$2,500.00 was appropriated at Town Meeting and used together with \$7,000 from the Conservation Fund to purchase this property. To the east, 3.19 acres, at Map 55 Parcel 42 was purchased from Herbert and Isabel Snow for \$2,500.00 which was appropriated at Town Meeting The total purchase cost of both these properties was \$12,000.00. A Self-Help Grant was applied for in 1970 and the Town received \$6,000 for the 3.8 acres in the Burgess and Snow Properties. This money was proposed to be returned to the Conservation Fund.

1970, Zula Burgess, .61 acre

Article 23 of March 9 and 10 town Meeting states: Voted, voice vote unanimous but one, that the Town authorize the Conservation Commission to purchase and/or accept in the name of the Town for conservation purposes as set forth in section 8C of Chapter 40 of the General laws, a parcel of land described as follows: Southwesterly by Pilgrim Lake, a distance of 250 feet more or less; Northwesterly by land of Delbert M. Johnson et ux, a distance of 250 feet more or less; Northeasterly and easterly by land of the Town of Orleans at the Herring Brook, a distance of 540 feet, more or less; and being shown as Lots #6,

#7, a portion of Meadow lane and a portion of Lot #8 on plan recorded in the Barnstable County Registry of Deeds in Plan Book 85, Page 149. And to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) to be used together with monies from the Conservation Fund for said purposes. 50% of the purchase price to be reimbursed by the State, said reimbursement to be returned to the Conservation Fund.

1970, Herbert and Isabel Snow, 3.19 acres

Article 24 of March 9 and 10, 1970 Town Meeting states: Voted, voice vote, unanimous but one, that the Town authorize the Conservation Commission to purchase and the Selectmen, upon written request of the Conservation Commission to take, by eminent domain procedure, to clear title, in the name of the Town, for the purposes of Section 8C of Chapter 40 of the General Laws, all or any portion of a parcel of land described as lots 40 and 41 as shown on Assessor's Map, Sheet 12 and comprising 3.19 acres, fronting on the northwesterly side of Herring Brook Way approximately 812 feet, and to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for said purposes.

1972, Herbert and Isabel Snow, 1.38 acres

In 1972, a 1.38 acre property at Map 62 Parcel 91 was purchased from Herbert and Isabel Snow for \$ 15,000.00. This property was adjacent to the property bought from the Snow's in 1968. One half of the funding \$7,500.00 was appropriated at Town Meeting. The other half was transferred from the Marsh Acquisition Account to the Conservation Fund and paid out of the Conservation Fund. A Self-Help Grant was applied for in 1972 and the Town received \$7,500 for this property that went in to the general funds.

Article 59 of April 12, 1972 Town Meeting states: Voted, voice vote, carries 2/3 vote, that the Town authorize the Conservation Commission to purchase, and the Selectmen, upon request of the Conservation Commission, to take by eminent domain procedure to clear title, in the name of the Town, for the purpose of Section 8C of Chapter 40 of the General Laws, all or any portion of a parcel of land described as Lot 35 as shown on Assessor's Map Sheet #12 and comprising 1.38 acres described as follows: Northeasterly by Herring Brook Way (Town) a distance of 153 ft. more or less; Southwesterly by Lot #34, land of the Town of Orleans, a distance of 359 ft. more or less; Southeasterly by waters of Pilgrim Lake, a distance of 183 ft., more or less; Northeasterly by Lot #36, a distance of 350 ft. more or less. and to take from available funds the sum of Seventy Five Hundred Dollars (\$7,500.00) to be used together with funds transferred from the "Marsh Acquisition Account" to the Conservation Fund for the Acquisition of said land, upon reimbursement of Fifty Percent (50%) of purchase price, under the States "Self-Help Program" the reimbursement to be returned into the Town's General Funds.

## Management

- The Orleans Conservation Commission is responsible for the overall management of the property, including periodically reviewing usage, issues and problems and recommending improvements.
- The Orleans Parks and Beaches Department provides routine operational maintenance, such as seasonal pruning, cleanup and trash removal and, if funding is available, life guards.
- The Harbormaster is responsible for the herring run. Currently the “Keeper of the Run” is Scott Johnson.
- The Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services is the State agency that regulates the care and use of land purchased for conservation, open space, and recreational purposes.



## ■ Site Description

**Pilgrim Lake** Conservation Area is sited on a large, 39 acres, freshwater lake. The lake is fairly shallow with a maximum depth of 28 feet/8.5 meters and has a thick layer of decomposed plant material on the pond bottom which helps support dense colonies of emergent vegetation including water lilies, *Potamogeton* spp., and *Elodea canadensis*. Occasionally large floating masses of *Elodea* have formed in the pond. The shoreline is surrounded by residential development but a buffer of native vegetation remains along the shoreline for the most part. A herring run with steps for the fish out of Kescayogansett Pond in Pleasant Bay enters the lake through the Conservation Area on the east side. On the south side water is removed for a cranberry bog. There is a vegetated island in the lake.

**The Entrance** to Pilgrim Lake Conservation Area is at the end of Herring Brook Way with the gravel parking area to the north. There is a blue sign for Pilgrim

Lake at the junction of Herring Brook Way and Kescayogansett Road. From this junction Pilgrim Lake Conservation Area runs along Herring Brook Way on the northern side of the road to the lake shore. There are private residences on the south side of the road and no parking is permitted on that side. There is parking for 50 vehicles in the 90' x 140' gravel parking area. The parking lot slopes down gently to the north to keep run-off from the roadway and beach area and is bordered with landscape ties on the other 3 sides. The parking area was expanded by 10' to the east and south under an RD in 1982.



The large sandy **Recreation Area** directly to the west of the parking lot is handicapped accessible. There are two **handicapped accessible** walkways from the end of the roadway. The concrete walkway to the south leads up to the comfort station and has pipe hand rails. The plastic wood walkway to the north built under an Order in 1998 separates the beach and picnic areas and then continues to the water on the north side of the beach. There is a bench associated with the walkway. The beach area was gently graded to the water for 25' along the lake shore to assist with handicapped access.

A storage building that is posted with several signs including a parks regulation sign and a sign signifying American Legion Memorial Beach sits next to the parking lot at the beginning of the picnic area. The storage building was erected on a 9' x 12' slab in 1986 under an RD and expanded with an 8' x 10' addition in 1998.

The picnic area shaded by several large oak trees and some tupelos has three picnic tables and two benches. Across the roadway to the south is the comfort station. There is another bench toward the water in front of the comfort station. There are two trash receptacles during the summer months.

The bathing beach extends for 125' along the lake shore with naturalized vegetation on either side of the open beach area. A string of buoys defines the swimming area. The American Legion funded placement of sand on the beach and into the swimming area in the 1960's.



### **Naturalized Areas and Wildlife**

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife have issued a draft study of the Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts. Two of these communities are clearly represented at this site, Pitch Pine-Oak forest and Red Maple swamp. On the southern section of the Conservation Area beyond the comfort station is a wooded area with **oaks and pitch pine** and tupelos near the shoreline. There is a narrow faint trail to the southwest corner. The understory is largely sweet pepperbush toward the shore and fairly open with some large patches of black huckleberry, catbriar and Pennsylvania sedge. Common birds in these forests are towhees and pine warblers.

In the north section of the Conservation Area is a large wetland that has been used as a cranberry bog but has reverted to a **red maple swamp**. This swamp is connected to the herring run and has a series of ditches. Other trees in the swamp besides red maple include tupelo, pitch pine, birch, white cedar, and poison sumac. There is a well developed shrub layer including sweet pepperbush, swamp azalea, high bush blueberry, winterberry and arrowwood. This swamp is a popular overwintering site for birds. Large flocks of robins and woodpeckers and sparrows have been seen in the swamp in the winter.



The mouth of the **herring run** has a concrete structure that can be closed if not enough water is available to allow the herring to make it back to the bay. River Herring (blue back herring and/or alewife) use the herring run to spawn in Pilgrim Lake. Protection of the herring run comes under the Harbormaster. There is a "Keeper of the Run" who removes branches and debris from the water. In 2004 the fish stairs at the beginning of the run by Kescayogansett Pond were repaired.

From the mouth of the herring run the **shoreline** extends 250 feet north and 525 feet south before it turns to the southeast for another 400 feet. Excluding the 125 foot beach area there are many emergent pond shore species such as *Decodon verticillatus* and rushes and sedges along the shore. Native woody species are also prevalent on the shoreline including: sweet pepperbush and pussy willow.



## ■ **Land Uses, Limitations and Prohibitions**

Conservation-managed lands are purchased for a variety of active and passive ***recreational uses***

The Beach Landing area features:

- Swimming (guarded in season)
- Picnicking
- Fishing
- Scenic viewing
- Occasional launching of small rowboats, canoes and kayaks

At this area, there are ***limitations*** on hours of use and launching/use of boats as follows:

- areas are closed from sunset to sunrise. (Fishermen may fish before and after these times.)
- no one may operate any internal combustion engine, except for the express purposes of aiding and rescue or other emergency situations or for scientific purposes (in accordance with the Orleans Waterways Regulations for great ponds, Section 159-7. Operation. A. (3))

In addition, certain activities ***are prohibited*** at all areas under the management of the Conservation Commission, including:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Littering
- Domestic trash disposal
- Unrestrained dogs (*Note*: Dogs are not allowed on any Town beaches from the Friday before Memorial Day to Columbus Day.)
- Open fires and cooking
- Storing of small boats
- Erection of tents or camping
- Use of soaps, detergents or shampoo
- Discharge of firearms
- Damaging any structure or landscape
- Harassing wildlife

### **Recommendation:**

Prohibited activities and hours of use should be detailed and informational signs posted at this area.



- **Management Issues and Other Recommendations**

**Lack of funding reducing facilities**

Pilgrim Lake is a handicapped accessible property and should be kept up to the standards of ADA regulations.

**Recommendation:**  
Access accommodation for persons with disabilities should be routinely reviewed and inspected by the Commission on Disabilities.



**Conservation Area Boundary Delineation**

Pilgrim Lake Conservation Area is currently not well defined where it abuts private property. There is a woody naturalized area between the properties but no boundary markers.

**Recommendation:** The boundary of the property should be marked in the field with some type of simple, permanent identifying symbols.

### **Invasive Plant Species and Habitat Restoration**

There are some invasive species on this property including bittersweet and autumn olive on the edge of the parking lot and beach.

**Recommendation:** All the bittersweet should be cut off the trees and treated. Invasive plant management is substantially less expensive and less intrusive when invasions are managed early.

### **Lack of a Trail System**

There is no trail system on this property. The north side of the property is wetland and a trail system would be difficult here. The south side of the property has faint trails for fishermen and larger trails may disrupt the current use of this site.

**Recommendation:** No additional trails at this site.



### ■ **Implementation Actions**

#### **Action Required:**

- Maintenance of parking and beach areas
- Town budget funding for routine maintenance and seasonal sanitary facilities
- Routine inspection for access accommodation

#### **Party Responsible:**

Parks Dept.  
TA/BOS  
Comm. on Disabilities