



**THE WATCH HILL CONSERVATOR**  
222 Watch Hill Road  
Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891

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THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010 VOL. 3 NO. 2 WATCH HILL, R.I.

## BACK TO THE FUTURE

### WATCH HILL UTILITY PROJECTS: Update May 2010

#### Water Line Replacement & Utility Undergrounding

An early postcard of Watch Hill showing the noticeable lack of utility lines



Two years ago, the *Conservator* reported that the Watch Hill Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District would soon begin the process of burying utility wires in the Village. Funding for preliminary planning was in place, but the economic downturn of late 2008 threatened to slow the fund-raising process. Obtaining permits and approvals moved slowly as well. What would this mean for the projected time-line of this enhancement project?

In early 2010, the project was jump-started by the unanticipated emergency need for the Watch Hill Fire District to replace and relocate the water line that serves Fort Road properties after the original line had been accidentally ruptured. The Conservancy decided that if Fort Road were to be torn up for the water line project, it would make sense to join forces with the District and make a single excavation to hold the water line and the duct bank, which will carry the underground utility lines. The two organizations sprang into action, in a matter of weeks preparing the necessary construction plans for the joint project and securing the necessary approvals. Following receipt of competitive bids, contracts were signed with East Coast Landscaping and Construction, Inc. of Portsmouth, R.I. Given the emergency nature of the primary project (the water line installation), permits were obtained in record time, and the necessary funding was secured in the same time-frame.

Phase 1 of the utility undergrounding, a Watch Hill Conservancy project funded to date by private contributions, is the first part of a larger initiative to remove utility poles from the entire Watch Hill Village area. Phase 1 area includes Fort Road and part of Larkin Square. Phase 1 is being completed in two sub-phases, straddling the busy summer season. Phase 1A (current construction) includes the installation of a duct bank, transformer pads, protective bollards, restoration of the Larkin Square alley-way passage, and a base course of asphalt on Fort Road. Phase 1B (probably after Labor Day) will require additional permitting and will include setting and screening of transformers, pulling cable through conduits, activating the new services, and pulling down the overhead transformers, wires, and poles. The topper coat of roadway paving on Fort Road will be installed in the spring of 2011.

As of this writing (mid-May), the relocated water line from the Watch Hill Yacht Club to the Yacht Club cabanas and the Misquamicut Club Beach Club is already complete and operational. Phase 1A of the Watch Hill Conservancy's undergrounding of electrical, telephone, cable TV, and fire alarm utilities is also complete, with the duct bank (concrete-encased conduits for cables) in place from Larkin Square to the Misquamicut Club gate. (Please see photos #1 and #2 on page 2.) Work in Larkin Square is on track to be completed by the end of the month.

Taking place in conjunction with the rebuilding of the Watch Hill Yacht Club cabanas and the Water Line Relocation Project of the Watch Hill Fire District, this initial phase of the Conservancy's project will provide a new uncluttered panorama of the ocean and Fishers Island Sound from Bay Street, the Village Park, Watch Hill Harbor, and Fort Road. Just as significantly, because of the vulnerable location of Watch Hill, in a floodplain subject to periodic flooding throughout the year and, historically, to devastating hurricane and other storm damage, the project is recognized as important for its potential to mitigate the impact of natural disasters. Consequently, the project has the support of various state agencies, including the RI Emergency Management Agency, which are supporting applications for federal funding of the full project.

The overall project, which includes the one mile loop of Fort Road, Larkin Road, Bluff Avenue, and Plimpton, is awaiting funding for costs estimated at \$8 million. The current opportunity to start making progress at a fraction of the cost will enhance the core of Watch Hill and provide a chance to show what the entire project can accomplish for the community. To date the \$1 million in funds for the project design and Phase 1 implementation have been raised from private sources.

Continued p. 2

#### THE WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY

222 Watch Hill Road  
Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891  
(401) 348-6540

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For information about community events, lectures, concerts, nature walks, educational programs for children, and others, see the Conservancy's website at [www.thewatchhillconservancy.org](http://www.thewatchhillconservancy.org).

**The Watch Hill Conservator**  
Joan Youngken, *Contributing Editor*  
Design by Wendy A. Bolster,  
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## ANNUAL MEETING

The 2010 Annual Meeting of the Conservancy will take place Saturday, August 14th, at 10 a.m., at The Misquamicut Club (Golf Club), 60 Ocean View Highway, Watch Hill. Prentice K. Stout, retired Marine Education Specialist at URI's Graduate School of Oceanography, noted lecturer and the author



of the highly-regarded history and natural history of Rhode Island's Point Judith Pond and the Harbor of Refuge, *A Place of Quiet Waters*, will be the speaker. The recipient of the 2000 Distinguished Naturalist Award of the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, Stout will focus his remarks on the ecology of the coastal ponds and the shoreline. The meeting is open to Conservancy members and the public.

Photo by Patty Stout

Conservancy Chairman Frederick B. Whittemore hailed the commencement of the long-awaited project as “a tremendous benefit for Watch Hill and the whole town of Westerly.” He noted that Town officials, including the Town Council, the Town Manager, and the Water, Utilities, and Engineering departments, have been very supportive of the project.

*Chaplin B. Barnes, Executive Director, Watch Hill Conservancy*



Photo 1. Looking out Fort Road toward the Misquamicut Club Beach Club. Concrete-encased conduits in trench, ready to be back-filled.



Photo 2. Looking down Fort Road from the Misquamicut Club Beach Club gate toward Larkin Square. Concrete-encased conduits in trench.



Photo 3. Placing conduits and forming for concrete to be poured around the conduits. This results in a protective “duct bank.”



Photo 4. Back-filled water line trench in front of WHYC cabana construction, awaiting additional excavation for other utilities.

*As you look at the photos to the right, picture the Yacht Club cabanas completed, the roadbed restored and the poles and wires gone!*

*Photos by Ruven Liebhaber, Project Development Manager*

### **Westerly Ambulance Corps' Westerly Emergency Regional Dispatch Center Goes High-Tech**

Photo by Richard C. Youngken



Michael Brancato of WAC at console of the new Dispatch Center.

Thanks to a new state-of-the-art dispatch system, the Westerly Ambulance Corps (WAC) and the five towns and twelve local fire and emergency response departments in two states in its network can now respond to 911 calls more quickly and accurately. New equipment and intense training allow dispatchers to identify not only precise street locations but coordinates of helicopter landing zones, building plans, and hydrant locations. The system also provides photo images of locations and automatically indicates the number and nature of vehicles – fire, police, ambulance, etc. – required to meet the emergency.

WAC is the only regional dispatch center in Rhode Island, covering Westerly, Hopkinton, Charlestown, and Richmond, R.I. and Pawcatuck, Conn. Replacing its antiquated paper-based system (just a year ago the center was manually recording more than 8,400 annual emergency calls) with the newest in electronic programs allows them to respond in record time, making the difference between life and death in emergencies of all types, from construction site accidents to car crashes, near-drownings at the beaches to river rescues, fires to natural disasters. The historic flooding this spring generated a huge volume of calls that was handled efficiently thanks to the new technologies. “In the past,” explains Dwight Reese, Treasurer and Network Administrator of the WAC, “dispatchers had to work from huge sheets of paper and white boards, but now they can tell by looking at the computer where roads are out and direct responders accordingly. It saves a lot of time.”

This response time is especially vital in a summer resort community where so many people depend on cell phones when they are hiking, boating, or on the beach. All calls to the state’s 911 center that require response from the Westerly region are immediately downloaded to the WAC’s system. “This is a groundbreaking event in RI,” explains Reese. “We are the first [dispatch center in the state] to get data directly from Rhode Island 911. This includes our dispatchers being able to instantly locate on a map the location of a cell phone making a 911 call. The callers don’t have to know where they are; we know where they are.”

Symposium Technologies of Toronto, Ontario, the firm which supplied the system, is enthusiastic about how the change will impact WAC’s response time and effectiveness. According to the company, “what this means is that dispatchers will for the first time have one point of instant access to all relevant information about an incident...Dispatchers will be presented with customized response recommendations based on each department’s rules and call types, and will have the ability to notify responders and share information in real time as the incident progresses and the situation develops. The result will be faster, safer, and more effective incident notification, response, and management for the responders and citizens of every community served by the Westerly regional dispatch.”

The change-over to this system was made possible by a leadership grant from the Alfred M. Roberts, Jr., Charitable Foundation, which donated \$120,000 over a two-year period.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

*The Watch Hill Conservancy is a not-for-profit organization. Your membership supports the protection of the natural and cultural resources of Watch Hill, a variety of programs, and educational publications, including this newsletter.*

Member name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

INDIVIDUAL: \$25

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS: \$75

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

FAMILY: \$100

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPORTER: \$250 - \$499

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

SPONSOR: \$500 - \$999

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

PATRON: \$1,000 - \$2,499

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

BENEFACTOR: \$2,500 - \$5,000 or more

No: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER CONTRIBUTION Total: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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222 Watch Hill Road  
Watch Hill, R.I. 02891

Please include names of family members 18 and under. If you are making gifts of memberships, please include the names and addresses of those to receive these gifts.



## NAPATREE NATURALISTS PROGRAMS FOR ALL AGES

Join our naturalists on Saturday mornings May 22 – Sept. 11 for beach walks. These weekly walks start at 9:00 a.m. (unless otherwise noted) from the entrance to Napatree Point Conservation Area near the Misquamicut Club Beach Club. All are led by Napatree Naturalists, with guest leaders for the following special programs:



Photo courtesy the Napatree Naturalists

On June 19th, the walk will be led by Steve Ceresimo from Granite Photo in Westerly along with a Napatree Naturalist. Steve will teach attendees tips and tricks for wildlife photography while a naturalist answers questions about the wildlife. The walk is scheduled at low tide so hopefully there will be plenty of shorebirds for us to test our skills! This free program will run approximately two hours.

On July 31st, a special walk at 8:00 a.m. will be led by Dr. Peter Paton, ornithologist and Chair of the Department of Natural Resources Science at URI, known for his research projects concerning migratory shorebirds. This walk coincides with the low tide and promises to be very informative.

For more information on these and other Naturalist programs, please e-mail [napatreenaturalist@live.com](mailto:napatreenaturalist@live.com).

### WATCH HILL CONSERVANCY PUBLICATIONS

**Watch Hill Through Time**  
*Chaplin B. Barnes*

**Watch Hill Style**  
*Richard C. Youngken*



*Please mail order forms & payments to:  
The Watch Hill Conservancy, 222 Watch Hill Road, Westerly, Rhode Island 02891, or fax order (with credit card information) to: 401 348-6541.*

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\_\_\_\_\_ I will pick up my book(s) at the office of The Watch Hill Conservancy, 222 Watch Hill Road, Westerly, Rhode Island. *For pickup please call 401 348-6540 in advance.*

\_\_\_\_\_ Please mail my book(s) to the address listed above.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Watch Hill Through Time** (hardcover, 240 pgs.) book(s) at \$80 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
+7% sales tax for pickup/delivery in Rhode Island (\$5.60) per book \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
+ shipping/handling fee of \$5 per book to be mailed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Watch Hill Style** (paperback, 56 pgs.) book(s) at \$25 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Call for orders of 25 or more books)*  
+7% sales tax for pickup/delivery in Rhode Island (\$1.75) per book \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
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Total Due \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Payment is enclosed. Please make check payable to *The Watch Hill Conservancy*.

\_\_\_\_\_ Please bill my credit card account: \_\_\_\_\_ MasterCard \_\_\_\_\_ VISA

Name on card \_\_\_\_\_

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. \_\_\_\_\_ Security code (last 3 digits on signature strip) \_\_\_\_\_

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## The Return of the Plovers

Here on the beach, one of the many wonderful things about the coming of warm weather is the return of so many of our birds! As you learned on our walks last summer, Napatree is an important location for lots of bird varieties. So far, ospreys (the large fish-eating raptors) have returned to their nesting pole down by the lagoon. Also, it looks like the brilliantly colored (black and white with a long, red-orange beak) American oystercatcher may be nesting on Napatree. Plus, our "stars" (and the bird on the Conservancy logo!) the piping plovers are well on their way to another season of nesting and raising their fluffy little chicks. Last season, Napatree and our neighbor East Beach had more plover chicks than all other parts of Rhode Island combined!

### Did you know?

- Plovers lay about four eggs in a typical nest. The eggs are not much bigger than a gumball and are very hard to see.
- Plover chicks are able to walk around and feed themselves just an hour after they hatch!
- A plover nest is little more than a dent in the sand. Napatree nesting areas are often roped off to protect them from someone accidentally stepping on them.



Photos courtesy of the Napatree Naturalists

## Winter at Napatree

When the fun of our twice-weekly summer walks ended, most of you went back to school, where you had many other things to occupy your mind. But of course, the cold months don't keep things from happening at Napatree! Here are just a few of the things we did while you were in school:

We set up a mammal tracking program. That involved using a box with bait in it to lure mammals. We used a powdery substance and sticky paper with the bait at one end of the box. When the critter walked across the powder (like you might across mud), it would leave footprints on the sticky paper (like you might on the carpet)! The results of the survey are still ahead, but it made for some interesting adventures!

Another way your favorite naturalists kept busy was by repairing lots of dune fencing! Because there were so many storms between September and April, many of the fences we had put up had fallen and, in some cases, were completely ruined. As you might remember, dune fencing is an important tool we use to help keep the dunes in good shape. They guide people to only certain parts of the beach, which allows the ammophila (dune grass) to grow, and the dune grass helps hold the sand in place during those heavy storms. There was a lot to do to replace those fences!

**The Watch Hill Conservancy:** 222 Watch Hill Road, Watch Hill, Rhode Island 02891  
Email: [thewatchhillconservancy@yahoo.com](mailto:thewatchhillconservancy@yahoo.com) • Website: [www.thewatchhillconservancy.org](http://www.thewatchhillconservancy.org)



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INDIVIDUAL: \$25

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FAMILY: \$100

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*So ends another issue of the Investigator! We hope you'll join us on the beach this summer, and look for another Investigator coming soon!*

Editor—Hugh Markey

*The Watch Hill Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District operate summer educational programs at the Napatree Point Conservation Area in Watch Hill. The Napatree Investigator is a publication of the Watch Hill Conservancy.*

## News & Notes

### Toward a safer Ocean View Highway

Watch Hill Vision 2012, the document that guides much of the Conservancy's planning efforts, calls for advocating for alternative transportation to relieve the congestion in and near the Village during the busy summer season, and to make the roads and streets of Watch Hill safer and more accommodating to bicyclists, pedestrians, and joggers. The Conservancy is implementing that goal through a feasibility study that seeks to develop measures to make Ocean View Highway safer for all, including motorists. Still in the preliminary phases, the study is the effort of historic preservation planner Richard Youngken and planner and cartographer Mary Hutchinson. According to Youngken, "Safe bicycle and pedestrian travel on Ocean View Highway has been a concern of many residents for some years now. It is time to take action. The straight, level, and seemingly wide, paved surface of the roadway encourages speeding, while at the same time the roadway is used by residents to cycle, jog, and walk to the beaches, the Misquamicut Club, and into the Village. Many residents and Ocean View property owners feel a tragic accident could be just waiting to happen." Youngken and Hutchinson are exploring ways to make the road safer for all while maintaining its beauty and character. The *Conservator* will keep you informed as the Conservancy reviews their findings and Ocean View Highway residents have a chance to become involved.

### Napatree Plan revisited

The Conservancy's exemplary programs on Napatree are one of the outcomes of a 2005 report by the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, which presented an assessment of and recommendations for the Point in light of its unique environment, its significance as a stop-over for migratory birds, its potential as a venue for education, and other considerations. Now, five years later, it's time to re-visit that assessment and see what impact our programs have had on the Point and its wildlife. The Conservancy and the Watch Hill Fire District (together the managers of the Napatree Point Conservation Area) have asked the RINHS to convene a group of scientists for a day-long visit and panel discussion in mid-summer, to be followed by a new report. The *Conservator* will report on the events of the day and the recommendations that follow. Stay tuned!

### Beach clean-up

The flooding rains of March washed considerable debris onto the shores of Napatree Point, including a large sailboat, three Providence Gas Company meters, and hair curlers from a local hair salon! During the annual beach cleanup on April 3rd, volunteers hauled several trailers of trash off the beach just in time for our returning shorebirds to establish their nests.



### Welcome to new Conservancy staff and fellows!

The Napatree Naturalists will be joined on the beach this summer by Katherine Hallal and Kathryn James, URI Coastal Fellows who will help with water quality testing for the URI Watershed Watch. The data they gather will allow researchers to evaluate water quality and detect changes. The students will also participate in the horseshoe crab survey and tagging for Project Limulus, a study being conducted by scientists at Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Conn. (Volunteers are invited to join naturalists and fellows to observe when the crabs come ashore to spawn during the high tides around the new or full moon. For more information, contact [Napatreenaturalist@live.com](mailto:Napatreenaturalist@live.com).)

Juliana M. Berry, who holds a B.S. degree in Environmental Science and Management from URI, has joined the staff as Environmental Projects Coordinator, and Timothy Twohig, a 7th grade Life Science teacher in the Bellingham, Mass., school system, who also holds a B.S. degree in Environmental Science and Management and an M.S. in Environmental Sciences (both from URI), will become a Napatree Naturalist.

### Where do the plovers go?

Do you ever wonder where our plovers spend the winter? A recent study by the Prairie and Northern Wildlife Research Centre of Environmental Canada involved banding piping plovers in order to track their seasonal migration. By early May, several birds that had been banded on Andros and Grand Bahama Islands in the Bahamas were spotted on Moonstone Beach in South Kingstown and East Beach in Watch Hill. Others have been seen in Massachusetts, New York, and Connecticut. Fifty-seven birds were banded; it's expected that more will be seen on Rhode Island beaches as they migrate back here for the summer. Remember that these birds are protected by state and federal law. If you see banded birds, contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at Kettle Pond Refuge in Charlestown (401) 364-9124.

### Record numbers of right whales in Rhode Island waters

Call it what you will: a school, pod, gam, or herd. Whatever you call it, 98 right whales, more than 25% of the entire North Atlantic population, appeared in Rhode Island waters around April 20, and left less than two weeks later. This is a record number, and it's unclear why that number is so high. Right whales typically migrate through the area, stopping where food is plentiful, but scientists are not yet sure why there may be an unusually large number of copepods (microscopic shrimp-like creatures) to attract so many. "Hopefully we'll get some answers as to why the whales have aggregated there, but the oceanographic processes that are at work there are pretty complex," Tim Cole, a fisheries biologist with the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), explained to the Boston Globe on April 24th. "It's going to take a while to put the pieces together and figure out what happened this year that is so different than in the past."



Photos by Janice Sassi



Photo: NOAA

## ALFie Returns to Watch Hill for celebration this summer

ALFie, an American LaFrance fire engine, is the not-so-little engine that could. Originally placed in service by the Watch Hill Fire Department in 1917, following the devastating October 18, 1916 fire, which destroyed much of the Village between Bluff Avenue and Bay Street, it was, according to Rich Froh of the Groton Long Point Volunteer Fire Department, both Watch Hill's and Westerly's first piece of motorized fire apparatus. "Westerly's Ahrens Fox [engine] is indeed a beautiful example of 'industrial art'," he notes, "but Watch Hill led the way for the town of Westerly in acquiring motorized fire apparatus with the order and delivery of this piece." ALFie pumped a then-remarkable 750 gallons a minute.

ALFie was retired to reserve status after several decades of valiant duty fighting fires at hotels, businesses, and private homes. Following its retirement, it led a peripatetic life, moving from an antique auto museum (from which it was loaned for parades) to the Groton Long Point Volunteer Fire Department, then sold to a private individual, then acquired once again by the Groton Long Point Fire Company in the late 1980s, this time by donation.

ALFie rolled in the Groton Long Point 4th of July parade in 1987, but not under its own power. Not yet fully restored, it was towed behind a pumper. Two years later it was running again, but body restoration continued until 1993. Since then, it has been transported to parades and other events in its own trailer.

Typically, ALFie has a busy summer. Froh explained, "It is at the Noank and Mystic Memorial Day parades, and the Groton Long Point July 4th parade. We also drive it around for 'exercise', and I hope to pose it in front of the old fire station location in Watch Hill [where it was received for service in 1917]." [Note: the first firehouse is no more; the site is now the location of the security booth at the entrance to the Watch Hill Fire District parking lot, at Bay Street and Fort Road.] Weather permitting, ALFie is scheduled to be featured at the Ocean House Community Open House, May 30th, along with original documents from its earliest days in service.

At 93 years old, ALFie has demonstrated real staying power, but not without the dedicated efforts of Froh and his fellow volunteers who have spent countless hours ensuring the preservation of this remarkable artifact of Watch Hill's past. Is it worth the effort? Froh enthusiastically insists it is. "Every minute of effort spent throughout the years in procuring, running, maintaining, restoring, housing, displaying, and transporting ALFie has been repaid a hundredfold with smiles of delight, and even a few tears of joy and remembrance."



Photos: courtesy Rich Froh, Groton Long Point VFD



## Community Calendar

**June 25, 6-9 p.m.** Watch Hill Conservancy's Celebration of Summer. Misquamicut Club Beach Club. Call Conservancy office for reservations.

**June 29 – August 31, 6-8 p.m.** Tuesday night concerts in the Village Park, Bay Street. Rain dates are the following Thursdays. See [visitwatchhill.com/calendar](http://visitwatchhill.com/calendar) for full schedule.

**July 10, 9:30 a.m.** Watch Hill Fire District Annual Meeting, Watch Hill Firehouse.

**July 15, 7:15 p.m.** Smokey the Bear Parade

**July 20, 5-6 p.m.** Special Conservancy Lecture: Historian Robert Suppich will speak on "Napatree Point, Fort Mansfield, and the Defense of Long Island Sound." A rare opportunity to learn about a fascinating, brief, and little-known moment of local history. Hosted by the Watch Hill Conservancy and the Ocean House at the Ocean House.



Coast Artillery unit on Napatree Point (from Clement A. Griscom's "Fort Mansfield")

**August 4, 6-8 p.m.** Fire Prevention Night, at the firehouse, 222 Watch Hill Road

**August 14, 10 a.m.** Watch Hill Conservancy Annual Meeting. Misquamicut Club, 60 Ocean View Highway. Guests welcome. Speaker, Prentice K. Stout, Marine Education Specialist.

### Watch Hill Memorial Library and Improvement Society Programs and Events

**July 4, 4:00 p.m.** Children's Bicycle Parade

**Library hours:** July 5 – September 3, 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. daily

**Story time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, July 6 – September 2, 10 a.m.

**August 6-7** Summer Boutique, Ocean House

### Watch Hill Lighthouse Museum—newly restored and expanded!

**July and August,** Open Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 - 4 pm.

### Watch Hill Chapel

**June 20 - September 12.**

**Sundays 8:30 a.m.** Roman Catholic Mass

**10 a.m.** Non-denominational "Union" Service

**July 25, August 29, 5 p.m.** Hymn sings

**Please check the Conservancy website for the latest information.**



NAPATREE INVESTIGATOR NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010 VOL. 2 NO.1 WATCH HILL, R.I.

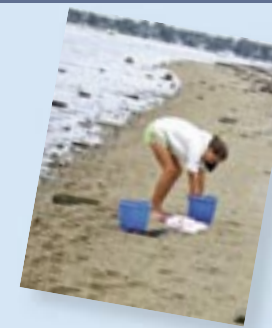
Spring 2010

### JOIN The Investigators this summer!

If you're planning on visiting Napatree this summer, we hope you'll come with us on our weekday beach walks! Every Tuesday and Wednesday, Conservancy Naturalists Steve, Hugh, Jan, and Tim will be taking kids ages 8 – 14 out to explore the wonderful world of Napatree Point. If you didn't come last year, here's some of what you missed:

- Using a seine net to scoop up fish for identification;
- Testing the water around Napatree for chemical content and health of the water;
- Learning about plant and animal life in and around Napatree;
- Enjoying sunshine, fresh air, and cool breezes;
- Searching for natural treasures on our annual scavenger hunt!

We had a terrific time wandering around exploring the beach environment. Whether you came last year or not, we hope you'll consider coming out with us to learn and play at one of the most beautiful beaches in the country!



## The Rain, The Dunes, and Curlers?

What were your experiences with the massive rainstorms we had back in March? Some families in Rhode Island and Connecticut found themselves wading through lots of water in their cellars, while others escaped with their homes staying dry. Did you know the rains and other storms had an impact on Napatree as well?

When you return to the beach this season, you may notice some of the changes in the landscape that happened as a result of the storms. The storms eroded parts of the beach on the bay side (Little Narragansett Bay, as it's known), leaving mini-cliffs where the dune grass ended, instead of a gradual slope to the water as we saw last year. And that's a good lesson in the importance of dune grass, called *ammophila*. Because you've been careful to stay only on paths marked in the dunes, the *ammophila* was strong enough to hold much of the sand in place during the torrential rains.

Where the *ammophila* had not been planted, the erosion exposed parts of the beach that had been covered by sand for quite a while. At our annual beach cleanup in April, naturalist Jan Sassi made what might be the most unusual find of the day: hair curlers! "I was mystified about why there would be curlers on the beach until I read a news article about a beauty parlor being washed into the water during the floods," Sassi reported. Could these have been the remains of the salon?

