Great Hill Pond Community Meeting Recap

October 29, 2026 at the Portland Library

Introductions - Rick Benson introduced attending members of the Friends of Great Hill Pond Working Group, and guests Russ Melmed from the Chatham Health District ,and Greg Bugbee from the Connecticut Agriculture Experiment Station's Office of Invasive Aquatic Species

The Algae Bloom –

Rick led off by acknowledging that the pond had experienced a significant bloom of Cyanobacteria during August and September. Some areas of the pond were more heavily impacted than others.

Rick then reintroduced Russ who has many years experience dealing with Cyanobacteria blooms from a public health perspective.

Russ pointed out that Cyanobacteria is a native species and that blooms typically occur when an imbalance occurs between nutrients available in the water and the plants that use them. He talked about the many factors that could contribute to a bloom, including runoff from fertilized lawns and natural woodlands due to heavy rains, geese and other animal droppings, hot weather, and die-back from water plants.

Russ went on to point out blooms had occurred in several lakes in our area including Lake Pocotopog, and for the first he could remember in Marlborough's Lake Terramuggus.

Next Russ explained why the Health District and other State agencies no longer used spot tests to determine the relative health risks associated with a bloom. Essentially it is because the Cyanobacteria moves, sometimes up or down in the water column or along the water surface due to wind and other weather conditions. In its place a sight examination is now used. Scum on the surface should be avoided as should bright green water. Russ showed some slides of Lake Pocotopaug's bloom to illustrate his point. He also said that personal judgement should be used when the water is very cloudy.

Russ brought out some of the tools he uses do his sight examinations and did a short demonstration.

His segment of the meeting ended with a fairly lively question and answer period. These covered specific health risks, and does the Cyanobacteria die after a bloom (yes, it does), and others.

Treatment plan for 2027 – Rick's talking points

- As described, the Plan is pretty straightforward. But we felt it is important to also explain some of the alternative approaches that were considered and why they were eliminated.
- One thought was to not treat the Curleyleaf at all.
    - Despite spring treatments in 2024&25 the Curlyleaf did germinate from it's turions (seeds) in late 2025 and by this past spring of 2026 had grown considerably before being treated.
    - Left untreated the Curlyleaf would have grown to the point where it would have again rendered portions of the pond unusable, and **would have allowed the weed to plant new seeds thus erasing the progress we have made in three years toward reducing the seed bed.**

- Also there have been very little unintended effects attributed directly to the Curlyleaf treatments. No Algea blooms. Maybe some short term cloudiness. Perhaps a little foam. But, all clear for peak swim season.
- For these reasons we believe it critical that we continue treatment of the Curlyleaf.
- **But,** before actually doing the treatment it is essential that an updated survey be done to determine exactly where the Curleyleaf still is. We will request CAES to do the survey in early spring.

- Regarding the Fanwort
  - We also discussed not treating the Fanwort like in 2025. However, in 2025 it came back strong and rendered large portions of the northern and northeastern parts of the pond un-useable. Also, in 2026, in the deliberately untreated conservation zones, it was thick and matted.
  - Where treated, the limnologist saw little or no growth.
  - Unless we treat that northern half of the pond it will become swamp like and the Fanwort will spread South.
  - We then discussed treating earlier in the summer when the growth would be less. This would possibly reduce the decaying biomass thus reducing nutrients that might feed the algae. This idea was set aside as it risked potentially affecting more of the summer season.

Ultimately we settled on treating after Labor Day when the water would be cooler making it less conducive for algae, and if there were a bloom if wouldn't be until mid to late September.

A question was raised about how long we would have to keep treating the weeds. Rick asked Greg Bugbee, the CAES scientist, to offer his insights. Greg reiterated that the Curlyleaf grows each year from turions (seeds) it had deposited from prior infestations. By killing the weed's current year growth before it produces more turions you continually reduce the amount of turions in the seed bed. This can take up to 5 Years. After that, much smaller spot treatments may be necessary. The Fanwort grows from its roots, spreading tubers, and also spreads from fragmentation. CAES has conducted tests at Bashan Lake in E. Haddam of fall Fanwort treatments. These have been relatively successful. Greg cautioned that each lake is different thus direct comparisons are difficult. Continued treatments will eventually reduce the weeds root system, but predicting how long it will take is very difficult to predict.

Water Quality Testing –

Frank Galicia briefly explained by testing and recording nutrient and other attributes of the water at various parts of the season and after certain events it will help inform decision making. Tests will be conducted by members of the Working Group as well as Chatham Healths and an independent lab.

Communications –

With time running out Dave Modzelewski explained that he and others from the Working Group are updating our communication systems to better align our email lists, Facebook and website and to allow for more community feedback.