



PRESS RELEASE

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Westport Fishermen's Association merging with the Buzzards Bay Coalition

Since 1983, the Westport Fishermen's Association (WFA) has been advocating for a healthy Westport River, especially for its marine habitat, at the grassroots level. Now 35 years later, the members and Board of the WFA determined that it was time to find a strong ally to continue and strengthen its legacy work. Because the WFA has had a long history of partnering with the Buzzards Bay Coalition (BBC) and the two organization mission are well aligned, it seemed like a natural fit. So when Jack Reynolds, WFA Board President approached Mark Rasmussen, President of the BBC, the idea of a merger was met with an enthusiastic yes. Negotiations proceeded smoothly, culminating in unanimous approvals by both Boards last week.

As Jack Reynolds noted: "The needs of the river as far as water quality and habitat issues are no less than when we started and will continue to be an ongoing challenge as the town builds out and pressure increases. Combining efforts with another similarly focused organization will provide greater impact, increase capacity and ensure sustainable advocacy and solutions are brought to bear on the river's problems."

In turn, the BBC has pledged that its advocacy, science, natural resource restoration and watershed land protection work in Westport will remain focused on nitrogen pollution reduction, primarily from residential wastewater and improvement of anadromous fish restoration and protection (river herring, salter brook trout) and habitat quality in the Westport Rivers and its tributaries.

Buzzards Bay Coalition President Mark Rasmussen commented, "Over the past thirty years, the Buzzards Bay Coalition has worked hand-in-hand with the Westport Fishermen's Association on advocacy efforts to clean-up pollution sources, protect wetlands, and preserve native fish habitat. We are honored to carry-on their legacy of action and willingness to take on the tough challenges facing the river."

As part of the merger, WFA President Jack Reynolds will join the Buzzards Bay Coalition Board of Directors for a 3-year term and two other WFA Board Members will be appointed to the BBC's

Leadership Council in the coming year.

In addition, the Coalition will assume responsibility for “manning” and caring for the historic Horseneck Point Lifesaving Station (LSS) adding the site to its network of educational centers and conservation reserves across the watershed. The LSS helps tell a very important story about the treacherous entrance to Buzzards Bay and the history of oil spills and accidents that have driven recent successes in environmental protection on the Bay.

In addition to its permanent presence at the LSS, the Buzzards Bay Coalition will continue the WFA’s traditional winter Oyster Stew Supper and traditional Fishermen’s Clambake next fall.

For more information, contact Mark Rasmussen at 508-999-6363 x.201 or Jack Reynolds at 508-636-5002.

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