

The Power of One Drop

Every year the NERRS holds annual work meetings, comprised of several days of strategic planning and professional sharing of new initiatives, techniques and resources. There is also the invaluable time spent with colleagues from around the country who deal with the same or similar issues. I always look forward to the meetings even though I come back exhausted and with an increased work load. This year there was an extra bonus, a glimmer of hope regarding the challenges of doing a better job managing stormwater.

One morning at the conference, I was up early putting the finishing touches on a presentation that I had to give later that day. When I finished, I went to breakfast. It was still pretty early and the hotel cafe was empty except for the staff getting ready for the soon-to-show-up crowd. Matt, the chef on duty at the omelet station, was in a talkative mood and we struck up a conversation. He wanted to know about the NERRS, so I explained who we were and what we did. As he thought about this for a minute, he offered up an observation.

Matt told me about a recent experience he had had while visiting a favorite local river, a place he had an obvious connection to and that had meaning in his life. He told me about walking along the river during a light rain. He noticed that when a drop of water coming off a bridge hit the water below, he could see a colored sheen on the surface. As each drop hit the water, the sheen would appear then slowly dissipate and he wanted to know if I knew what it was. His observation and telling of the story struck me. I explained he had witnessed the number one water quality problem in our country – polluted runoff. And with this he was awestruck.

I explained that what he was seeing was any number of fluids and chemicals coming out of and off of cars and trucks that drove over the bridge and on our roadways. We talked about some of the issues of stormwater management and how difficult it is to deal with these issues even though we have a good understanding of the issues and how to solve them. He clearly understood the broader ramifications of his observation, the connection to clean water for drinking, the connection to fish and sea food, as well as general environmental health.

Later, while at the meeting, I shared this interaction with a few colleagues and the power of Mathew's observations struck us all. This simple observation clearly connected Mathew with the nation's number one water quality issue and it connected me with Matt. During the week, we chatted almost daily, and I regretted that I never got a chance to walk his river

Coast to Coast

So Long Partner

I can't tell you when I first met Peter Wellenberger but I know it was when I was the Program Director at the Seacoast Science Center. I'm sure it was at one of the ever constant local meetings regarding an environmental issue. But it was not until I took the CTP position at GBNERR in 2002 that I actually worked with Peter. Of course I should say "worked for" but "worked with" is really a more true sense of what it is like working for Peter. Peter has been a great boss, he never micro manages. He hired you to do a job and expects you to do it, and he has the good sense to know that as long as you understand the limits of the resources that you have to do the job – it is your job to do.

One of the characteristics I admire most in Peter is his willingness to work through issues and help his employees become better at their jobs. He did this for me in meaningful and important ways, and I will always appreciate it. Thank you Peter. I wish you well in all your new endeavors and hope we will continue to work together to improve the environmental health of the NH seacoast to the benefit of its people and wildlife.

~ Steve Miller

with him. The power of a drop of water, clearly seen, had made the very connections that I, and my colleagues, so often struggle to make to the public and decision makers on a daily basis.

Steve J. Miller
CTP Coordinator, GBNERR

© KORNWA / DREAMSTIME.COM

Hard to Say Goodbye

As editor of Great Bay Matters, I am quite guilty of waiting until everyone else has given me their material before I submit mine. Classic procrastination. This time however, I haven't been able to really write this piece because ever since Peter Wellenberger told us he was retiring (and that has been several years now), I have been in denial.

Like Peter, I have been with the Fish and Game Department for over twenty years, but it was in 1998 that I received a phone call from him telling me about the education position at the Reserve. After hearing about the tremendous program at Great Bay, I transferred from another wonderful Fish and Game Division, Public Affairs, to the Marine Division and the Great Bay Discovery Center. Betsy Stevens had been the Director prior to my arrival and under her direction, the Discovery Center was fully launched into a well-respected, and highly sought after location for school field trips and visitors.

I recall getting a letter from Peter welcoming me to the job and telling me that I quite possibly had the best job in the Seacoast area and likely the best office too! Both of which have turned out to be more than true, largely because of him. What a wonderful, uplifting way to begin a new career – “classic Peter”.

What immediately became obvious to me was that Peter was the ultimate team player and had a trusting zest for almost everything I suggested to him. At times I, or other staff members would present an idea and he would often give

an immediate “no”. With the proper approach and re-approach, it was usually possible to get Peter to see a different point of view, and many times, he would then become your best advocate for the idea. This is a rare quality in a boss, and one that has made my job such a joy.



Peter's broad interests and ability to support and understand the different sectors within the Reserve System; Research, Education and Stewardship, has made him a versatile and effective manager both within Great Bay and throughout the National System. Serving on many national and local committees, Peter has made a tremendous impact within the Great Bay Estuary and far beyond.

Under the leadership of the late John Nelson, Peter transformed a ramshackle old house into the Sandy Point Discovery Center and over time, evolved the Reserve into the robust program and facilities that it is today. Working hard

to expand positions, and capacity, Peter maintained his persistence despite an often nebulous and confusing state and federal process. Starting as a staff of one, Peter leaves us with 5 full-time and three part-time staff members as well as a solid cadre of dedicated volunteers.

Some of the highlights of my time with Peter include a trip to Ireland to create a Sister Reserve, celebrating the 10th and 20th anniversaries of the Great Bay NERR and working together with Peter to build the Hugh Gregg Coastal Conservation Center and the installment of the many new green design features on the campus. Of course travelling around the country for national meetings at the various Reserves with Peter meant we would often see him as “NERRS Auctioneer” in costume that sometimes included women's clothing, working hard to sell NH Fish and Game “Break For Moose” bumper stickers” to rookies for upwards of \$40 a piece! Peter just has a way of getting people to do things...

He has always been the ultimate environmentalist and I am sure that reputation will follow him well into the future. I will miss Peter for many of the reasons above but also because he is just so easy to like. I wish Peter all the best in his new endeavors and will continue to work hard to ensure his vision for the Reserve well into the future. Good luck Peter!

*Kelle Loughlin
Education Coordinator, GBNERR
Director, Great Bay Discovery Center*