

The Lands We Hold in Common

A few months ago I took my five-year-old son, Henry, clamming in Hallocks Bay for the first time. The water ran clear and cool in the shallows as we waded out beyond the prickly cordgrass



and the mussels that hold the bank. I lowered the scratch rake to the bottom and began digging, listening for the clunk a clam makes amidst the rattle of stones.



Minutes later we had a chowder. Henry reached in past the rake's teeth and grabbed it. "We're going to eat this one, Dad," he told me excitedly as he wiped mud from its shell. Under a bright June sun, my eyes refocused and I caught sight of our reflections rippling below—silhouettes on the surface of the bay.

I have given a great deal of thought to how we hand down Southold and its rich heritage for the next generation to find itself reflected in these waters. There are many fine local books in our libraries. The historical societies and their exhibits are thoughtfully curated and wonderful, too. In fact, I still remember my Oysterponds Elementary School trips to the Oysterponds Historical Society. When my turn came to hold the scrimshawed sperm whale tooth, I stood transfixed, peering into the rigging of a ship that a boson long ago had scribed with needle and ink.

And yet, there is something far more powerful and enduring about our town's "common lands" and waters. They beckon us into the deeper story of place and community. When I was Henry's age, my father took me out of school for the opening day of scallop season. The Narrow River boat launch bustled with young families and old timers eager to get on the water with scap nets and homemade look-boxes. The day was proof enough to my young eyes that we hold these lands in common.

Our waters and wetlands continue to unite us as Southolders. Whether you are fishing, clamming, or enjoying a sunrise, to enter the world along our shores is to move from learning *about* our natural and cultural heritages to experiencing them directly.



It is for the future of our common lands and the promise they hold for the next generation of Southolders that I have decided to seek public office as a candidate for Southold Town Trustee. Our Trustees play an



important role in our town. They are charged with administering the codes that protect our waters and wetlands for the community today and the years to come. As your Trustee, I plan to strengthen our town's commitment to improving water quality, ensure access to our waters, and educate so that together we can better advocate for Southold's environmental and economic future.

In the months leading up to Election Day, November 2nd, I'll proudly share my family history of public and community service and what qualifies me to steward our common lands. I also look forward to getting to know your story and the environmental issues you

care about here in Southold. But today, I ask only that you fully enjoy our shores with friends and family and have a safe and healthy Fall.



Eric Sepenoski, PhD

Candidate for Southold Town Trustee

eric@southoldforward.com