

Southern Coonamessett Pond Parcels, Hatchville

Human history and natural history intertwine in the open space along the Coonamessett River and the south side of Coonamessett Pond in ways that are emblematic of Falmouth. What we think of as the northern section of Coonamessett River, north of Hatchville Road, is a man-made ditch dug in early historic times to connect the Coonamessett River to Coonamessett Pond. Someone went to all that work in the hope of increasing the population of herring by allowing them to spawn in Coonamessett Pond. Herring were an important resource to the town, and increasing the stock of herring was seen as a public good. In more recent times the town land along that channel and adjacent to the weir at the pond was named in honor of Matt Souza, long-time game warden and conservation officer. Mr. Souza had been devoted to herring all over town, and worked in many ways and at all hours to help the herring flourish, despite difficulties which here include a channel that is at about the level of the ground water, and thus sometimes dry.

Each of the pond-front parcels has its own history: farm, local fishing spot, summer place, edge of the golf course. These histories parallel the cultural change from fishing and farming to a more varied economic base that produced leisure time, and catered to the leisure of people from the city. The town bought the cranberry bogs just to the south some years back. The land between the Souza area and Sandwich Road was acquired recently by the town with the help of Land Bank funds and The 300 Committee. The 300 Committee also owns an abandoned cranberry bog and the woods and wetlands along the power line south of Hatchville Road. Together, these 120 acres of woods, bogs, and pond frontage preserve something of the sense of Falmouth's historic character and maintains a traditional access to Coonamessett Pond.

Just south of Hatchville Road is a water treatment facility that was built by the Air Force to clean up groundwater contaminated by various activities on the Massachusetts Military Reservation. The plumes of contaminated water have traveled from their source spills or disposal areas on the MMR, down the groundwater gradient into Falmouth where the water comes to the surface in the ponds and streams. This plant is treating the polluted groundwater here and re-injecting the clean water, gradually reducing the contamination. This is as much a part of Falmouth's history as the areas of woods, wetlands, and cranberry bogs.

This area is historic, but it is also beautiful, and well worth a visit—for boating on Coonamessett Pond, walking the lovely woodlands, and enjoying the varied wetlands and river frontage. This area was the site of the Cape's first-ever BioBlitz, sponsored by The 300 Committee in June of 2010. In 24 hours a large group of scientists and other volunteers identified more than 850 species on these lands. You may not encounter them all in an afternoon, but you will not run out of things to see.

You can launch a small boat on the pond at the Souza access at an unpaved landing. Trails lead to various corners of this attractive area. To visit the southern section with its woods, wetlands and the town-owned cranberry bogs, park near the water treatment plant and the power lines on the south side of Hatchville Road just east of the intersection of Sam Turner Road. The Matt Souza access is the unpaved road on the north side of Hatchville Road a hundred yards east of the treatment plant. This unpaved road crosses the upper section of the herring run on its way to Coonamessett Pond and intersects a couple of trails; there are several parking areas along the way.

A trail map of this site will help you find your way. Such a map can be downloaded and printed from The 300 Committee's website at www.300committee.org. Maps for 24 other sites in Falmouth are there, too.