



CAPE COD
COMMISSION

Developing a Communications Plan for Water Quality Management Planning on Cape Cod

CAPE COD COMMISSION
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Introduction

In response to a solicitation for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding, the Town of Yarmouth requested technical assistance from the Cape Cod Commission to develop a communications plan framework to involve and engage the community in water quality management planning.

Yarmouth entered into a Community Compact agreement in May 2016, with Transparency around municipal spending and budget information as an adopted Best Practice. This communications plan framework builds upon the work done to date around transparency and supports the Community Compact goal of using technology to improve citizen engagement for wastewater infrastructure project implementation.

The Town of Yarmouth has worked with the Commission previously on increasing access to information, both for Town staff and the public. Yarmouth partnered with the Commission on online permitting (Accela), financial reporting (OpenGov), and zoning portal (Open Counter) initiatives. The Town is proactive in reaching a broad audience to educate constituents about infrastructure needs and potential costs, leveraging the Town website, printed collateral, social media, and more to expand their reach.

Although requested by Yarmouth, this framework is designed to be flexible and compatible with the water quality management processes in all fifteen towns on Cape Cod, giving local policymakers the ability to adapt it to their outreach needs based on resource availability, capacity, and progress to date. This document provides recommendations for towns that operate via a town meeting form of government. For this reason, some of the recommendations may not apply directly to the Town of Barnstable which operates under a Town Council form of government.

The framework is modular, distinguishing between towns that do and do not have an existing local water quality plan in place where appropriate.

RECOMMENDED GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following are recommended goals for the local water quality plan communications plan:

1. **Increase stakeholders' knowledge of regional** and local water quality issues, as well as the contents, costs, and benefits of local water quality plans.
2. Increase local recognition for the need for consistent and predictable municipal funding for local water quality plans.
3. Build trust, confidence, and buy-in for local water quality plans with an open and transparent engagement process.



The following are recommended objectives for the local water quality plan Communications Plan:

1. Town staff should hold an internal meeting (a) to disseminate local water quality plan **talking points and encourage the “one voice” from the town**; (b) to establish protocol for engaging with the public on the plan, and (c) to grow support for a communications plan.
2. Town staff should develop and share online communications materials on local water quality issues and potential solutions.
3. Town staff should hold in-person meetings and workshops with external stakeholders that address local and regional water quality issues, possible solutions, and funding opportunities.
4. Town staff should meet one-on-one with key stakeholders to discuss local water quality management issues and pursue mutually-beneficial scenarios that promote collaboration and cost-saving opportunities.
5. Town staff should share educational information on municipal financing to describe how programs and projects, like those in local water quality plans, are funded.
6. Town staff should provide estimates of household costs for local water quality plan options under the various financing options available to the **town’s** elected officials.

SUGGESTED COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FRAMEWORK

The following is a suggested framework for a water quality management communications plan. Note that activities listed within each month are not chronological. Each town should prioritize the order of in-person meetings with stakeholder groups and key influencers based on local conditions and needs.

Four to Five Months before Town Meeting

- *Meetings/Briefings:*
 - Internal staff meeting to review [Talking Points](#), communications plan [protocol](#), and establish a media point person, share social media policy on public engagement
 - Schedule one-on-one meetings with stakeholder groups, prioritizing key influencers and major stakeholder groups early
- *Public Workshops*
 - Begin planning [public workshops](#) for residents: invite attendees and speakers and develop presentation materials
 - Schedule meeting spaces for coming months
 - Recruit public workshop attendees through social media, e-newsletter, town website, community access television, flyers/mailings (as budget allows)
- *Resource Development*



- Set up dedicated email account to collect and record stakeholder feedback (see [Email Address](#))
- Establish communications [protocol](#) and social media guidelines
- Create a dedicated water quality planning page on the town website; include links to Plan drafts and any existing resources, related news updates, and e-newsletter and social media sign ups
- Develop a general presentation on water quality management that can be tailored for a wide array of uses (see [Platforms for Engagement](#) for suggested topics to include)
 - *Towns with an existing Plan*: Develop summary of the Plan (e.g. contents, resources addressed, phases, costs and funding) to share at public workshops and stakeholder meetings; **if they don't currently exist**, estimate household impacts under various financing scenarios to share with local decisionmakers
- *Online Communications*
 - Create accounts on social media websites and resource websites as needed, become familiar with the requirements and content types for different platforms (see [Social Media](#) section and [Resources](#) appendix below)
 - Create a schedule of upcoming events, meetings, and public workshop that will need to be advertised through social media
 - Share links to the CWRMP website on Facebook, Twitter, and in the newsletter
 - Recruit/invite subscribers to the e-newsletter and attendees to public meetings
 - Establish a new newsletter *or* a new section of the town [e-newsletter](#) dedicated to CWRMP-related news; include relevant news articles, upcoming events, request feedback, and recruit public workshop attendees

Three Months Before Town Meeting

- *Meetings/Briefings*:
 - Continue one-on-one meetings with key influencers and stakeholder groups; recommended content in [Stakeholder](#) section below
- *Public Workshops: Introduction to the Problem and Water Quality Management Solutions*
 - Introduce goals and objectives of public workshop (what do you want them to learn, what you want to learn from them); review the problem, including sources and impacts of nitrogen; review water quality management planning broadly, including the new adaptive framework planning option, why a Plan needs to be created
 - *Towns with an existing Plan*: Share full content of the Plan and a brief summary for their review at their own pace of what it covers, over what time period/phases



- Survey **stakeholders'** knowledge and motivation to address wastewater problems (establishes baseline conditions)
- Solicit feedback on questions to address before Town Meeting, and opportunities and challenges of water quality management
- Recommend **citizens' establishment of local [Friends Of](#)** group(s) if none exist
- *Resource Development*
 - Continue refining and tailoring general presentation for public workshops, stakeholder meetings
 - Begin developing [Interactive Maps](#) around water quality planning (e.g., existing wastewater success stories, ongoing projects, or problem areas with excess nutrients or insufficient infrastructure)
 - Draft press release on upcoming public workshops
 - Collaborate with local cable access station and/or schools to conduct and record videos of [interviews](#) with municipal officials involved in local water quality planning; topics could include the nature of the problem, the Plan and its contents, costs and benefits, and available funding options
 - *Towns with an existing Plan:* continue to draft and share summary of Plan to share at public workshop, stakeholder meetings
- *Online Communications*
 - Social media pages, e-newsletter, relevant town webpage updates: public workshop attendee and e-newsletter subscriber recruitment, relevant news articles, upcoming events, presentations
 - Collect and respond to stakeholder feedback via dedicated email as needed throughout the outreach process

Two Months Before Town Meeting

- *Meetings/Briefings*
 - Continue one-on-one meetings with key influencers and stakeholder groups; recommended content in [Stakeholder](#) section below
- *Public Workshop: Costs of a Water Quality Plan*
 - Review introduction to the problem from previous meeting; review questions brought by stakeholders that need addressing
 - *Towns with an existing Plan:* Also review costs of the selected Plan, compared with alternatives, other towns, Cape-wide costs, traditional technology only – place costs in context
 - Discuss why the town is acting now and the costs of no action, regulatory consequences of no action and loss of control (especially over costs) to state agencies, Conservation Law Foundation lawsuit (more on CLF [here](#)) and 208 Plan
 - Solicit feedback on financial barriers to planning/implementation, and opportunities for action on water quality projects



- *Resource Development*
 - Continue refining and tailoring general presentation for public workshops, stakeholder meetings
 - Complete development of [Interactive Map](#)
 - Plan and schedule public review of Town Meeting article
- *Online Communications*
 - Social media pages, e-newsletter, relevant town webpage updates: public workshop attendee and e-newsletter subscriber recruitment, relevant news articles, upcoming events, presentations
 - Collect and respond to stakeholder feedback via dedicated email as needed throughout the outreach process
 - Develop and share online materials around fertilizer management (on town website, in e-newsletter, on social media)

One Month Before Town Meeting

- *Meetings/Briefings*
 - Host a follow-up internal meeting to review talking points, public meetings, collected stakeholder feedback
 - Continue one-on-one meetings with key influencers
- *Public Workshop: Financing and Affordability of the Plan*
 - Review costs introduced at previous meeting
 - Discuss regional collaborations and intermunicipal agreements; pursuit of grants; how a Plan makes the town eligible for low- or no-cost loans from the State; commercial sector sharing the cost burden and the importance of growing the tax base (and wastewater infrastructure expanding economic development opportunities)
 - Share estimated household financial impacts, and show decreases in costs associated with grants, collaborations, SRF loans, etc. (see [208 Resources](#))
 - Survey **stakeholders'** knowledge about nitrogen issues, motivation to address them (and compare with previous survey from the first workshop)
 - Ask stakeholders to attend Town Meeting and the public review of the warrant
- *Resource Development*
 - Tailor general presentation for public workshop
 - Press release/invitation on public review of the warrant
- *Online Communications*
 - Social media pages, e-newsletter, relevant town webpage updates: public workshop attendee and e-newsletter subscriber recruitment, relevant news articles, upcoming events, presentations
 - Present and seek stakeholder input on [Interactive Map](#) – what information and visuals can stakeholders provide to help tell the story?



One to Two Weeks Before Town Meeting

- *Meetings/Briefings:*
 - Continue in-person follow-up meetings with influencers and stakeholder groups
 - Host a public review of the Town Meeting articles (see [Public Meetings](#) section below); share the recorded meeting on social media, the town webpage, and community access television channels
- *Resource Development:*
 - Press releases related to Town Meeting
- *Online Communications*
 - Social media pages, e-newsletter, relevant town webpage updates: e-newsletter subscriber recruitment, relevant news articles, upcoming events, presentations
 - Include the Town Meeting date in as many communications materials as possible (at public meetings, in the e-newsletter, on social media and the Town webpage) to encourage residents to attend and vote on the Town Meeting articles

Following Town Meeting

- *Evaluation*
 - [Evaluate](#) communications plan results against set goals/objectives
- *Online Communications*
 - Maintain online resources on town website (such as recorded interviews and meeting presentations) as reference information



Communications Framework Background

THE PROBLEM

Nitrogen is impacting Cape Cod's coastal water quality. Much of the nitrogen entering the Cape's watersheds is from on-site septic systems that treat wastewater throughout the region. Too much nitrogen in coastal embayments deteriorates water quality, leading to excess algal growth, low oxygen, and degraded habitat for fish and shellfish. Indirect impacts of degraded water quality include losses in coastal property values and a weakened tourism industry.

These water quality issues are well documented on Cape Cod by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), the Cape Cod Commission (the Commission), and the Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. MEP **Reports document the impaired water quality in the Cape's watersheds, and ecological damage** due to nitrogen loading. The research was used to develop appropriate Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) by watershed, a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant (in this case, nitrogen) that a waterbody can receive and still meet water quality standards. TMDLs approved through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for specific water bodies establish enforceable nutrient limits. If exceeded, communities contributing to the excessive nutrient load may be required to develop and implement strategies to achieve the established TMDL.

In addition to the environmental impacts of excess nitrogen in embayments, the lack of wastewater infrastructure limits the ability of towns to develop areas designated for economic growth. Each community has a unique set of challenges as well, related to existing infrastructure, environmental characteristics, development patterns and demographics.

DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

Cost has been a major impediment to wastewater planning on Cape Cod. Local and regional **progress towards solving Cape Cod's water quality issues has** been made in recent years. The Cape Cod Areawide Water Quality Management Plan (the 208 Plan) redefined the approach to reducing nitrogen; giving municipalities greater flexibility and more funding options to address the problem. The 208 Plan was certified by Governor Charlie Baker and approved by the EPA in 2015.

The 208 Plan provides new opportunities for communities to manage nitrogen impacts, including the concept of nitrogen credits. This allows towns to negotiate financial or other arrangements to have with neighboring communities that share watersheds to cover some or all of a portion of their nitrogen responsibility.

Several towns have developed local water quality plans, or other similar local plans, to address nitrogen issues locally (referred to throughout the document as **"the town's Plan"**). Annual



updates to the 208 Plan [Implementation Report](#) review the challenges each town faces, development of local plans, and the progress made towards meeting TMDL goals.

This communications plan framework (the Framework) is designed to be scalable for different communities based on their progress towards TMDL compliance, whether they have existing local water quality plans or not.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

In response to a solicitation for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding, the Town of Yarmouth requested technical assistance from the Commission for development of a communications plan framework to involve and engage the community in water quality management planning. This framework was developed such that all 15 towns in Barnstable County can implement it based on locally-available resources and municipal needs.

A communications plan will help towns streamline their outreach processes, increase the likelihood of meeting stakeholder needs, identify and manage risks to local water quality planning and implementation, and build trust and confidence in Town management through an inclusive and transparent outreach process.

Commission staff initially developed a version of this plan in 2017 for the Town of Sandwich. It was designed to help town staff explain its recommended financing approach and build consensus for consistent municipal funding for the **town's** Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan. The Commission leveraged the research and successes of that communications plan and applied best practices and lessons learned from the 208 Plan process to develop this resource.

This document presents a communications plan **framework (the Framework) around Cape Cod's** water quality management issues. **It outlines the Commission's recommendations for goals and objectives, approaches, audiences and resources to engage, and key communications messages and channels to help provide consistent information and messaging for water quality solutions.**

The Framework is designed to be scalable for different communities based on their progress towards TMDL compliance. Recommendations are made for:

- all communities;
- communities without local water quality plans;
- and communities with existing local water quality plans that are seeking municipal funding for implementation.

Where possible, recommendations were prioritized in favor of high-impact, low-effort approaches to best leverage limited town staff resources dedicated to communications.



COMMUNICATIONS PLAN PROTOCOL

This framework is designed to be anticipate stakeholders' needs and result in a campaign that helps decisionmakers make educated choices for themselves and their town. There are several guiding principles that will help municipal staff clearly and effectively communicate with local stakeholders on water quality planning issues.

1. Centralize coordination. Select one person to serve as the main media contact around the outreach plan (and local water quality plans, when in place); this person could also be responsible for coordinating, planning and/or posting social media updates, e-newsletters, and town website updates (see [Platforms for Engagement](#) below). It also helps **ensure the 'one voice' from the town.**
2. Act collaboratively and proactively. Meet early and often with key influencers and stakeholder groups to help municipal staff anticipate major concerns with the development and implementation of a water quality management plan.
3. Use multiple channels. Delivering a consistent message through multiple channels **(e.g. the town's website, newsletter, social media, and public workshops) will ensure a** broader audience reach for building awareness around water quality issues and planning. Making information available online, in multiple formats where possible, also increases **the information's accessibility.**
4. Be transparent. Be transparent about the contents and consequences of any proposed water quality management plan to build trust with stakeholders. Share data sources and analyses and visualize relevant information whenever possible.
5. Share relevant information. Build the communications plan around the information stakeholders need to make better decisions for themselves and their town on water quality issues. This is achieved by knowing your audience (see [Stakeholders](#) below), listening to their concerns, and tailoring messages as needed to different community groups based on their knowledge levels and experience.

PLAN EVALUATION

Town staff should compare the [Goals and Objectives](#) to the outcomes throughout the **Communications Plan's implementation.** By judging the effectiveness of messages and communications strategies periodically, municipal staff can adapt and adjust their techniques and messaging to better meet these goals.

One recommendation below is to conduct [stakeholder surveys](#) to gauge awareness around water quality issues. Staff could conduct a baseline survey early on to gauge local support from stakeholders, for example, and share the survey following the Communications Plan implementation to measure any changes in awareness and record any new concerns. Questions can be adapted to reflect **towns'** more specific goals.



Goals and Objectives

DEVELOPING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Any communications plan should be organized around broad goals and specific objectives. The goals describe what the plan will try to achieve; objectives define how the goals will be met. These goals and objectives should align with the local and regional planning context.

GOAL RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL TOWNS

- **Increase stakeholders' knowledge of regional and local** water quality issues, as well as the contents, costs, and benefits of local water quality plans.

Towns should focus communication plans on educating residents, local business owners, elected and appointed officials, and other key constituencies (see [Stakeholders Section](#) below) on the need for and the costs of local water quality plans. Residents should be provided with information necessary to make informed decisions about such plans.

For Towns that do not have local water quality plans in place, staff should focus communications on the nature of the problem and potential solutions available to towns. Resources developed for the region, such as CCH2O (<http://www.cch2o.org/>), can help educate residents on how water quality issues impact where they live, and how degraded water quality leads to economic impacts.

Towns that are seeking funding for local water quality plan implementation should increase outreach efforts in advance of Town Meeting when funding-related articles are placed on the warrant. This can include broad strokes education around municipal finance, as well as specific cost and benefit aspects of the local water quality plan.

Recommended components of public outreach are listed under stakeholders' [Key Messages](#), [Talking Points](#), and the [Platforms](#) section below.

- Increase local recognition for the need for consistent and predictable municipal funding for local water quality plans.

Cost remains one of the biggest hurdles to wastewater planning on Cape Cod. Towns should conduct outreach that educates constituents about municipal financing broadly, as well as available financial options and the need for a predictable municipal funding source for local water quality planning and implementation. Concepts such as economies of scale, "the cost of doing nothing," and an explanation of broader economic development goals and existing capital needs should be included.



Towns with existing local water quality plans and available household cost estimates should recognize the level of additional financial effort residents and system end users can expect. For example, in the Town of Sandwich, the draft Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan identified an additional \$3.37 million in annual revenue to support debt service and programmatic spending in support of the plan. To the extent that these costs have been apportioned and the effects on different users are known, they should be acknowledged and available as part of the outreach.

TOWNS WITH EXISTING LOCAL WATER QUALITY PLANS

- Build trust, confidence, and buy-in for local plans with an open and transparent engagement process.

By proactively reaching out to constituents to explain local water quality plans, the expertise that went into developing them, and the local and regional needs addressed, Towns should see growing confidence in proposed local water quality plans. Ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions goes a long way to ensure support for financing of existing plans. For example, in some towns, it has been clear that there is a divide between those residents who support sewers and those who support non-traditional technologies. Knowing this ahead of time can shape implementation decisions, including the type and timing of deploying various parts of the plan so that both groups see progress at the same time.

OBJECTIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

ALL TOWNS

- Town staff should hold an internal meeting (a) to disseminate local water quality planning talking **points and encourage “one voice” from the** town; (b) to establish protocol for engaging with the public on water quality issues, and (c) to grow internal support for a communications plan.

Towns should kick off outreach plans with internal meetings to review water quality management [talking points](#), share existing resources, prioritize communications needs, and to establish protocols for stakeholder engagement.

Towns should select one person to serve as the main media contact around the outreach plan (and local water quality plans, when in place); this person could also be responsible for coordinating, planning and/or posting social media updates, e-newsletters, and town website updates (see [Platforms for Engagement](#) below). A general social media policy should be shared at these meetings as well (e.g., when and how to engage with constituents, using personal vs. professional social media accounts, ensuring that confidential information is not disclosed, respecting applicable copyright and privacy laws). The Barnstable County social media policy is attached as [Appendix B](#) as an example.



Sharing existing resources and prioritizing which ones need to be developed and by whom will be critical to leveraging limited resources and internal support.

- Town staff should develop and share online communications materials on local water quality issues and potential solutions.

Suggested online content includes:

- The impacts and sources of excess nutrients on local water bodies;
- Environmental and economic impacts of excess nutrients;
- Local water quality plan progress updates: regional collaborations, grant opportunities, accomplishments by both the town and stakeholders;
- Alignment of water quality management planning with regional and local goals (especially the 208 Plan, Local Comprehensive Plan (LCP) or other town-wide planning documents);
- Public meeting and event information; and
- Relevant news articles on wastewater planning in the town or region.

Online content should be fact-based, be straightforward, and should stand alone without narrative explanation. Sharing information-rich primary sources (especially local water quality plans, if in place) on town websites and on social media increases transparency in the decisions that shaped the plans and provides information to constituents to make informed decisions on their own. Town staff can also engage directly with constituents online, including correcting misinformation as appropriate (see [Appendix B](#) for the social media policy for Barnstable County employees as suggested guidance).

Online channels maximize content exposure and will help grow awareness of local water quality plans. Partner agencies and collaborating organizations can also share these resources with their constituents, greatly expanding audiences.

Online communications should include town website updates, social media posts, and an e-newsletter to residents and other interested parties. This process should begin immediately following internal kick-off meetings and be pursued throughout the duration of the communications plan.

For towns that have completed development of local water quality plans, an effective online communication method has been interviews with municipal officials and experts who helped shaped their plan.

- Town staff should hold in-person meetings and workshops with external stakeholders that address local and regional water quality issues, possible solutions, and funding opportunities.



All towns should proactively reach out to residents and other stakeholders on water quality issues and make themselves available to civic, business, social and other organizations for meetings, presentations, and workshops. In-person meetings are crucial to educating stakeholders and providing decision-making resources.

Educational materials should be informational and support the decision-making process for stakeholders. One of the recommendations in the [Platforms for Engagement](#) section below includes developing a comprehensive presentation that can be adapted for different audiences and needs. Additional materials that the Commission developed for the 208 Plan process that are relevant on a local scale are linked in [Appendix C](#).

Towns that do not have a local water quality plan should focus on the high-level need for a plan – what are the current and future impacts of nitrogen on water quality, what is the cost of not acting, and how is Cape Cod economically impacted by degraded water quality.

For towns with existing local water quality plans, these meetings should cover not only local water quality issues, but also the contents, goals, costs and benefits of local plans, and the need for consistent municipal funding for wastewater. Messaging should cover the evaluations that went into development of local plans, how any decisions may have limited the financial exposure of the Town and building **what's necessary to meet environmental and economic** goals.

Stakeholder groups and key messages for each are described in further detail in the next section, [Stakeholders](#). This process should begin concurrently with online outreach and be pursued throughout the length of the communications plan.

- Town staff should meet one-on-one with key stakeholders to discuss water quality management issues and pursue mutually-beneficial scenarios that promote collaboration and cost-saving opportunities.

Some local stakeholders need additional resources and attention because of their ability to influence wastewater-related decisions. This may be related to their positions as elected or appointed officials, their role on boards or commissions, or their work in economic development or environmental protection.

For these “key influencers,” one-on-one meetings to discuss local water quality plans, the potential impacts of these plans, and any collaborative or mutually beneficial opportunities to provide information and answer questions are highly recommended. They should be engaged early in the planning and implementation process to understand any concerns or reservations they may have, establish trust, and encourage shared ownership over the planning process.

These influencers and discussion points are described in further detail in the next section, [Stakeholders](#). This process should begin concurrently with the online and in-person approaches and be pursued throughout the length of the overall communications plan.



- Town staff should share educational information on municipal financing to describe how programs and projects, like those in a local water quality plans, are funded.

General information on community financing processes should be shared to help educate voters in advance of the Town Meeting and/or election days.

Community Finance education pieces can be built off existing resources at the regional and state level. Some of these guides are listed below in the [Resources section](#).

TOWNS WITH EXISTING LOCAL WATER QUALITY PLANS

- Town staff should provide estimates of household costs for local water quality plan options **and under the various financing options available to the Town's** elected officials.

Providing upfront and easily accessible estimates for project costs, phases and financing options for local water quality plans would ease “**sticker shock**” in towns sensitive to high taxes. Contextual information should be presented about project funding options and the effects of each to adequately prepare decision makers. This information can be shared with Select Boards, Town Council, and other officials who engage with constituents to use as talking points in local water quality plan discussions.



Stakeholders

Targeted outreach messages and methods are based on the needs and interests of stakeholder groups. These groups should broadly include:

- people directly involved in water quality management planning and implementation;
- those who will enjoy the benefits and/or bear the costs of local water quality plans;
- potential collaborative and partner agencies and organizations; and
- governance bodies responsible for deciding and enforcing related policies and regulations.

For the [208 Plan](#), the Cape Cod Commission ensured that the Working Groups representing each watershed included the following general representation:

- Local Elected Officials
- Wastewater Committee Members
- Town Professional Staff
- Local Business Owners/Operators
- Local Environmental Organizations
- Civic Group Members
- Alternative Technology Interests
- Development/Real Estate Community
- Interested/Concerned Citizens

This chapter gives examples of stakeholder groups that would fit these categories across Cape Cod. Town staff should modify outreach to fit their local context, and ensure all viewpoints are heard throughout the process.

The Commission issued a [press release](#) at the beginning of the 208 Plan Update process about seeking stakeholders to participate in its development (available on the Commission website under the [Wastewater page](#)). The press release helped build transparency in the process, explain their role **in the 208 Plan's update, and opened the stakeholder process up to a wider breadth of perspectives and representation.**

It may be helpful to prioritize stakeholder groups based on their level of influence and/or interest they may have in water quality management (Figure 1 on the following page). Some individuals or groups need to be informed broadly about the planning process, or local water quality plans and their contents; others may warrant proactive consultation and collaboration. Cross-



promoting communications materials with other agencies will help town staff build and expand audiences.

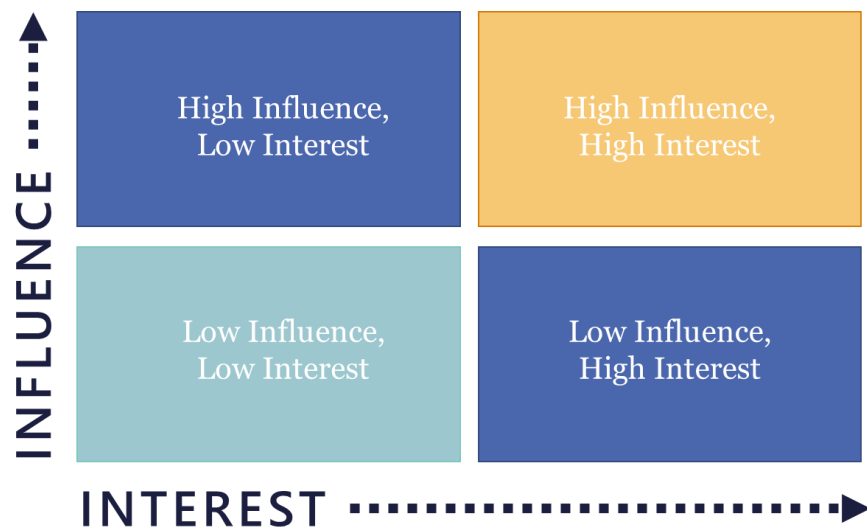


Figure 1. Influence/Interest Matrix. Adapted from Mendelow, A.L. (1981) *Environmental Scanning: The Impact of the Stakeholder Concept*. ICIS 1981 Proceedings, 20.

The following is a list of anticipated stakeholders common to each town that may be affected by or somehow contribute to local water quality management planning.

SELECT BOARDS/TOWN COUNCIL

Structure and Role

Select Boards are the chief policy-making bodies and executive boards for most towns on Cape Cod and set guidelines for the preparation of annual budgets. Select Boards are also responsible for setting Town Meeting warrant articles.

In the Town of Barnstable, the Town Council is a 13-member elected body that serves as the legislative and policy-making branch of town government, developing, adopting, and enacting policies, ordinances. The Town Council also approves all municipal budgets in the Town of Barnstable.

The Select Boards and Town Council serve as the top elected officials for their respective communities



Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

The Board of Selectmen and Town Council members can help municipal staff anticipate CWMP challenges and constituent concerns, so they can anticipate and proactively respond to these questions and concerns.

Key Communications Messages

Towns with existing local water quality plans should present clear and simplified information covering (a) the contents of the Plan, (b) why this particular Plan was chosen; (c) funding options available to the town; and (d) financial impacts of these funding options on households.

RESIDENTS

Structure and Role

Cape Cod has approximately 214,000 year-round residents, with an influx of summer residents and visitors that more than doubles the population in the summer months. The number of people living on Cape Cod year-round has increased over the past several decades (Figure 2).

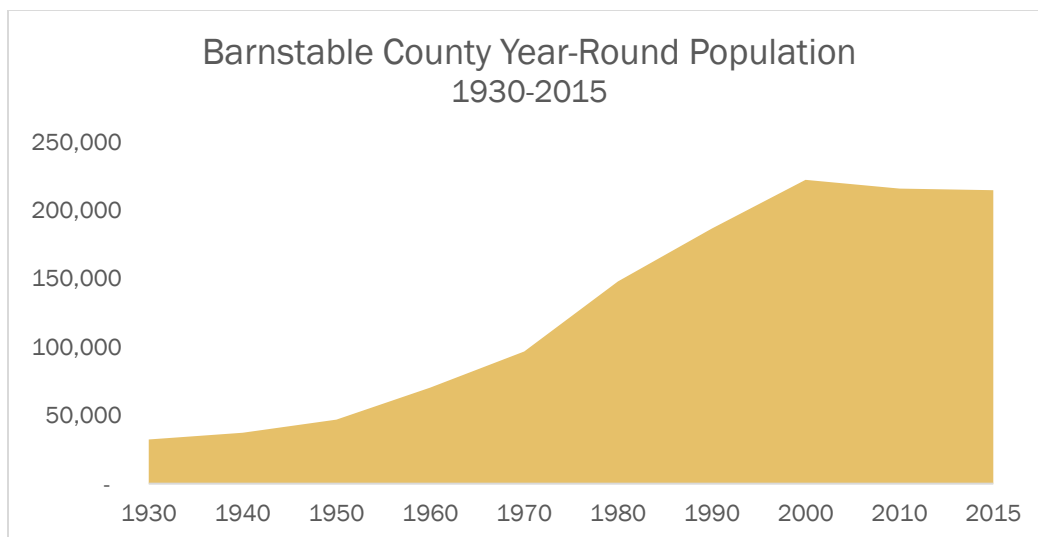


Figure 2. Barnstable County Year-Round Population, 1930-2015. US Census.

Approximately one-third of the housing stock on Cape Cod is seasonal, with seasonal residences concentrating along the coast, and the summer population more than doubles the year-round population.

Towns with an open Town Meeting (such as Sandwich and Yarmouth) means that all voters are open to participate. To pass articles relative to taxation or borrowing at Town Meeting, 2/3 of those in attendance must vote in support of such measures.



Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Conducting outreach to residents should be a significant component of any local water quality communications plan (see [Public Workshops](#)). Residents have decision-making roles around local water quality planning and funding, either through Town Meeting votes or through voting on Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusions related to project financing.

Where there is an existing local water quality plan, town staff should host a series of presentations that walk residents through the Plan and respond to questions and concerns. Content should be comprehensive but high-level, and residents should have the opportunity to provide meaningful feedback on the plan whenever possible. Towns need to explain the nature of the problem, such as watershed jurisdictions and nitrogen sources, and the environmental and economic impacts of degraded water quality.

If there are particular areas of a town that may be more heavily impacted than others, additional targeted outreach in those areas may be beneficial. Town staff could also engage broader audiences through organized groups of residents:

- Civic groups (e.g., Kiwanis, Rotary)
- Ponds groups
- **“Friends of” groups**
- Civic and Neighborhood associations
- Yacht club members

Town staff should employ both online and in-person approaches to reaching out to residents.

Key Communications Messages

For all towns, outreach targeted at residents should include:

- Information on the sources and the economic and environmental impacts of excess nutrients on water quality;
- Potential consequences of taking no action to address these issues;
- Municipal funding options for implementation, including costs and benefits to each and implications for homeowners (both on and off sewer); and
- Opportunities for residents to participate in resolving this issue, including fertilizer management, ensuring septic systems are operating properly, and organizing efforts to support local water quality plan implementation.

Towns should determine what feedback would be most helpful to collect at the public workshops, such as the feasibility of support for different financing options and ways to encourage residents **to reduce their home’s impact on towns’** water resources.



Towns with an existing local water quality plan should focus outreach on the contents of the Plan, including what research and expertise was leveraged to develop it.

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Structure and Role

According to the 2017 Housing Market Analysis conducted for Barnstable County, the largest employment sectors on Cape Cod are in Health Care and Social Assistance (17.4%); Accommodation and Food Services (16.6%); and Retail Trade (16.2%) (Crane/EPA 2017). The combinations of these sectors in the four different subregions of the Cape change based on local needs, demographics, infrastructure, and the seasonality of the population.

The tourism industry is a major driver for Cape Cod's economy, and the seasonality of each town's population impacts the nature of the businesses that locate there.

Only 3% of the parcels on Cape Cod are on sewer – some commercial parcels are on sewer, though far more use traditional septic systems.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Commercial businesses will eventually share the cost burden of a local water quality plan with the town in which **they're located**. Additionally, investments these entities make into innovative and alternative wastewater technologies or commitments they make to reduce fertilizer use also benefit towns. These actions could amount to significant changes in local nitrogen reduction responsibility.

Outreach to local businesses may require more time and effort because of their decentralized nature. Local Chambers of Commerce, Main Street organizations, or other business associations may be able to assist town staff with outreach to local businesses, either through membership directories, e-mail lists, sharing flyers/mailers, or by hosting staff for one or more in-person meetings.

Key Communications Messages

For towns with existing local water quality plans, local businesses and commercial property owners should be given opportunities to provide meaningful feedback on the Plan contents, its implementation, and financing approaches.

Local business owners and commercial property owners will need a general overview of the sources and impacts of degraded water quality, the costs and benefits of planning and implementation, regulatory impacts and costs of taking no action, and links to economic development opportunities. As they will be impacted by Plan implementation, they should also be made aware that new and upgraded infrastructure may be a major impetus for commercial growth.



TOWN COMMITTEES AND BOARDS

Structure and Role

Several of town committees and boards will play important roles in the local water quality planning process.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

A Finance Committee's primary statutory responsibility is to advise and make recommendations to Town Meeting on the budget and other financial matters. The Finance Committee reviews the proposed budget submitted by the Town Manager/Administrator and forwards it to the Select Board with its recommendations.

Barnstable's Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee provides financial advice to the Town Council regarding the yearly operating and capital budgets for all town agencies.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE

Capital Improvement Planning Committees (CIPCs) study proposed capital projects and improvements involving major tangible assets and projects; considering the relative need, impact, timing, cost, and funding methodology of these expenditures, and the effect that each will have **on the town's financial position**; and preparing an annual report and capital budget, forecasting forward five years.

PLANNING BOARD

The Planning Board is responsible for hearing applications to subdivide property, site plans from commercial development, and several types of special permits.

The list is not exhaustive; additional committees are detailed throughout the Stakeholder section.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Towns should seek the support of Finance Committee members when proposing financing local water quality plans. Committee members could serve on the local water quality committee. Finance Committees make recommendations on individual Town Meeting warrant items in advance of the annual Town Meeting. They also have the technical knowledge and ability to add value to the evaluation of which financing option(s) would work best for the town.

Additionally, the Finance Committees could help engage and educate stakeholders, both on how municipal financing works and how local water quality plan projects may be funded. Committee members could be invited as speakers at public workshops, for example.

Town staff should engage the Planning Board in any discussions during development implementation of the CWMP, particularly if any zoning changes are proposed as part of the Plan. They can also reach out regarding aligning Plan goals (especially around infrastructure) with the **town's LCP and other long-range plans**.



Committee and board members should be apprised of key information through online communications, and Town staff should remain responsive to requests for information and presentations. Some members may also take a more proactive role by acting as a liaison to the [Water Quality Committee](#).

Key Messages

Town staff should meet with committee and board members to educate them on the problems and causes of water quality issues, the consequences of no action, proposed solutions and financial implications of selected Plan alternatives. Members can help Town staff anticipate local water **quality planning challenges and constituents' concerns, so they can anticipate and proactively** respond to these questions and concerns.

Town staff should meet with the Finance Committee to discuss municipal financing options available for local water quality planning and implementation, emphasizing that financing infrastructure that improves water quality and supports LCP land use goals is beneficial for the long-term fiscal health of the community. Committee feedback and input would be invaluable and legitimizing for future financing discussions.

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Structure and Role

Public schools belong to School Districts, governed by elected or appointed school committees or boards. Each is responsible for managing and maintaining their own facilities and properties. The committee or board forms the policies pursuant to the responsible management of this infrastructure.

School districts on Cape Cod are either town-specific or regional (Cape Cod Regional Vocational Technical High School, Upper Cape Regional Vocational Technical High School, Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District, Nauset Regional School District).

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Coordination with special districts, including regional school districts, would be beneficial in the local water quality planning and implementation process.

The local water quality planning process provides an opportunity to evaluate the lifespan of existing infrastructure under the control of a separate local government entity and look for mutually beneficial solutions.

In Sandwich, for example, three schools have wastewater treatment facilities (WWTFs) that are approaching the end of their design life; the estimated cost to upgrade and/or replace them is approximately \$30 million. Sandwich's CWRMP recommends that the Forestdale School WWTF and the Oakridge School system be connected to a new advanced WWTF; and the Oak Ridge



School WWTF be connected to the existing Sandwich High School WWTF, which would be upgraded.

School Districts could support water quality management planning as they advocate for coordinated, town-wide wastewater solutions that could result in substantial cost savings to both the District and the town.

Key Communications Messages

In addition to identifying potential shared infrastructure opportunities, Special Districts will need a general overview of local water quality plans, the sources and impacts of degraded water quality, its costs and benefits, regulatory impacts and costs of taking no action, and mutual goals and **connections between the Town's and District's infrastructure needs.**

If and when interests align, districts could be strong natural allies for towns, and could potentially serve as resources for broader outreach and engagement (e.g., sharing educational resources and online communications with constituents).

WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE

Role and Structure

Water Quality Committees advise the Select Boards and coordinate efforts with Town Committees, Staff, and abutting communities to protect and enhance groundwater, surface waters, watersheds, and estuaries.

Committees are made up of key individuals from local boards, often including members from Boards of Health, Planning Board, Water Districts, Select Boards, and other community leaders.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Towns without existing local water quality plans should closely engage these Committees in the plan development. In Sandwich, the local Water Quality Advisory Committee provided significant effort and input into the CWRMP planning process and recommended the plan that CWRMP sets forth.

Because of the knowledge and background of the Committee members, these individuals could be a helpful resource for conducting community outreach, such as speaking about the CWMP development and content at public workshops.

Key Messages

Water Quality Committees can be passively informed about water quality planning milestones and progress through online channels, such as the town website and e-newsletter.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Structure and Role

An Economic Development Industrial Corporation (EDIC) is a corporation established by a municipality for implementing local economic development projects in accordance with an economic development plan. Typically, EDIC activities are linked to industrial and manufacturing development projects. There is no dedicated funding associated with EDICs under state law; they must receive funding from the municipality, or else generate it through some other mechanism.

There are four EDICs on Cape Cod, in the towns of Falmouth, Mashpee, Bourne, and Sandwich. They may be alternatively called a Financial Development Corporation or Economic Initiative Corporation. More information is available about EDICs in the Barnstable County [Economic Development Resource Guide](#).

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

EDICs could liaise with local businesses and the development community on water quality management issues and helping to build the audience for outreach.

Key Communications Messages

Towns with existing EDICs should meet to communicate local water quality issues and their potential impact on the local business community, discuss mutual goals, and connections between water quality planning and economic development.

Town staff could suggest ways the EDIC can engage local businesses and developers that would build the outreach audience, while providing materials and informational resources that can be disseminated in the community.

WATER DISTRICT BOARD

Structure and Role

There are several water districts on Cape Cod, each with its own elected Board of Water Commissioners. These include:

- Bourne Water District
- Buzzards Bay Water (Bourne)
- Mashpee Water District
- North Sagamore Water (Bourne)
- North Sagamore Water (Sandwich)
- Sandwich Water
- Barnstable Fire
- Centerville-Osterville Fire
- Hyannis Fire District



- Cotuit Fire District
- West Barnstable Fire

Water Districts provide clean and safe water for the population in its District from wells, facilities, and a distribution system. The District Board members are elected and have separate annual meetings and separate revenue sources.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Water Districts should be engaged in water quality and infrastructure discussions during the water quality planning process. There may be limited opportunities to disseminate informational materials around water quality more broadly, though this will be District-dependent.

Key Messages

Town Staff should meet with the Boards of Water Commissioners to better understand how members view the board's role in the local water quality plan process, and to seek collaborative opportunities where district expertise can be leveraged to grow support for the **Plan's** development and implementation.

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Structure and Role

The Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce represents all 15 towns on the Cape. It hosts networking and tourism-oriented events, advocate for and market local businesses, and serve as a resource center for new and potential businesses.

Local Chambers market the towns broadly to tourists, connecting them to local businesses. They also support, recruit, market, and promote existing and potential businesses to help grow economic development opportunities for the towns.

Local and sub regional chambers on Cape Cod include:

- Brewster Chamber of Commerce
- Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce
- Chatham Chamber of Commerce
- Dennis Chamber of Commerce
- Eastham Chamber of Commerce
- Falmouth Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Hyannis Chamber of Commerce
- Mashpee Chamber of Commerce
- Orleans Chamber of Commerce
- Provincetown Chamber of Commerce
- Sandwich Chamber of Commerce
- Truro Chamber of Commerce
- Wellfleet Chamber of Commerce
- Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

There are opportunities through all Chambers to engage the local business community and promote the link between wastewater planning and economic development. Towns could give educational presentations to Chamber members and seek mutually-beneficial projects that meet both local water quality plan and local or regional economic development goals.

Towns should develop and share educational resources (e.g., flyers, presentations) for the Chambers on local water quality plan content and need, costs and benefits, and opportunities for engagement (e.g. attending public meetings, following on social media, subscribing to the e-newsletter) that can be shared more broadly with Chamber networks.

Key Messages

Outreach directed towards the Chambers should cover the need for a local water quality plan, the sources and impacts of degraded water quality, and review what opportunities implementation creates for economic development (as well as Plan contents and phases if one is in place). For example, there may be targeted areas in town that would be more amenable to growth once new and/or upgraded infrastructure is in place.

Town staff should communicate to the Chambers how the commercial sector would share the Plan's costs.

The Chambers can help town staff anticipate local water quality plan challenges and local business **owners' concerns** to anticipate and proactively respond to these questions and concerns.

LOCAL DEVELOPERS

Structure and Role

Developers play a key role in economic development, and long-term plans such as the LCP, Long-Range Plan, and the local water quality plan provide guidance to developers on how and where to invest their resources. Town staff should engage any organized groups of developers in the outreach process when possible (e.g. the Home Builders & Remodelers Association of Cape Cod, Inc.).

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Town staff should ensure that developers are aware of the water quality issues impacting the town and potential planning solutions, as they can impact their long-term financial outlook and decisions.

Some municipal officials have also suggested public-private partnerships as a method of reducing local wastewater costs. o

Key Messages

Outreach directed towards developers should give a general overview of the need for the Plan and its contents, and the sources and impacts of degraded water quality, and review what



opportunities its implementation creates for economic development. For example, there may be targeted areas in town that would be more amenable to growth once new and/or upgraded infrastructure is in place.

Towns should communicate to developers how the commercial sector would share the plan's costs.

REALTOR GROUPS

Structure and Role

The Cape Cod & Islands Association of Realtors, Inc. is “the voice of real estate” for Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard, and Nantucket. It’s a 501(c)6 organization that is governed by a 13-member Board of Directors elected from its membership. There may also be locally-focused Realtors groups in each town.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Real estate, as with economic development, is closely linked to water resource protection. Large-scale infrastructure projects may affect the tax rate for all residents but may also affect homeowners that will be located on or near sewer infrastructure.

Key Communications Messages

Outreach efforts to Realtor groups should include in-person presentation(s) that focus on the nature of the problem (especially how Title 5 systems contribute to the issue) and how water quality impacts real estate values (e.g., the Cape Cod Commission's Three Bays study).

If a town has a local water quality plan in place, outreach should also include a broad overview of the Plan, and how it addresses water quality issues. The Realtor groups can help towns anticipate local water quality plan implementation challenges and homeowners concerns to anticipate and proactively respond to these questions and concerns.

“FRIENDS OF” POND GROUPS

Structure and Role

"Friends of" groups are non-profit organizations established to preserve, protect, and enhance natural resources, often conducting fundraising activities and supporting research to further their mission.

There is a region-wide group, the Cape Cod Pond and Lake Stewardship (PALS) program, developed by the Cape Cod Commission to coordinate pond-related activities among citizen groups and non-profits working towards water resource protection. PALS plays a role in tracking water quality on Cape Cod, providing data that informs water resource planning efforts.



Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Independent “Friends of” groups could be assets during local water quality plan implementation and with water quality issues more broadly. Along with raising awareness of local and regional water quality issues, such groups could provide a local, but external review of town and citizen actions.

Town staff could recommend that stakeholders who attend the public workshop meetings who are interested in deeply engaging with water resource protection opportunities join or begin a **“Friends of” group in town.**

Key Messages

Town staff should provide information resources for individuals or groups who are interested in water resource protection.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Structure and Role

Massachusetts’ Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. Towns can create a local Community Preservation Fund that creates a community-wide property tax surcharge of not more than 3% for a local Community Preservation Fund that can qualify for state matching funds.

CPA communities create a local Community Preservation Committee, a membership board that makes recommendations on CPA **projects to the community’s** legislative body.

As of November 2018, all 15 communities on Cape Cod adopted CPA.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

Towns should work collaboratively with Community Preservation Committees to align open space and water resource protection goals.

Discussions with this Committee may be sensitive, however; town officials may consider options **for wastewater funding that would impact the Preservation Committee’s funding** (as was the case in Sandwich).

Key Messages

Town staff should meet with the local Community Preservation Committee to discuss the contents of local water quality plans, municipal finance options available to the town, mutual resource protection goals, and opportunities for goal alignment during local water quality plan implementation.



MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Structure and Role

MassDEP is the state agency responsible for ensuring clean air and water. It has regulatory oversight through its MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act) unit over comprehensive wastewater management plans.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

MassDEP recently began issuing watershed permits, which allow multiple towns to work towards water quality improvement. Watershed permits provide greater flexibility to achieve nitrogen reduction using non-traditional nitrogen management strategies, and communities with a watershed permit in place may be prioritized for State Revolving Fund financing.

Key Communications Messages

MassDEP staff should be apprised of key information through online communications, and town staff should remain responsive to requests for information and presentations.

US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

Structure and Role

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the federal agency responsible for protecting **human health and the environment. The EPA's responsibilities** include developing and enforcing **environmental regulations, giving grants to other organizations to further the EPA's mission,** studying environmental issues, and more.

Local Water Quality Plan Opportunities

The EPA was party to a 2014 settlement agreement with the Conservation Law Foundation requiring specific actions by other agencies, including MassDEP and the Cape Cod Commission, regarding development of the Section 208 Plan Update. Its interest in the success of the new regulatory and technology options remains high. Its regulatory role in the CWMP process is in the issuance of a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for any proposed WWTF.

Key Communications Messages

EPA staff should be apprised of key information through online communications, and town staff should remain responsive to requests for information and presentations.



Recommended Talking Points

Fact-based talking points allow the town staff and municipal officials that interface with stakeholders to present a **“united front”** on any water quality management issue or plan and **ensure consistent message delivery to constituents**. The talking points don’t need to be communicated verbatim but should consistently inform outreach and engagement with all stakeholders.

This list can serve as the basis for educational outreach to residents, media and interested citizens; be used to anticipate and respond to common concerns and questions about water quality management planning; and frame decisions that the Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting members, and Town Council members will be asked to make relative to a local water quality plan.

These should be refined and shared throughout the implementation of the communications plan.

WHY DO WE NEED A LOCAL WATER QUALITY PLAN?

- **Local water quality plans comprehensively address a town’s responsibilities for water quality** and suggest potential solutions to address environmental compliance issues based on state and federal regulations
- An approved local water quality plan is required to access low-interest loans from the Massachusetts Clean Water State Revolving Fund (SRF). The SRF is a state-wide funding source for wastewater-related infrastructure.
 - *Note: When engaging with stakeholders, town officials and staff should focus on the need for a **plan and its benefits**, not the ‘one answer’ on how to accomplish wastewater compliance.*

WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DO NOTHING?

- MassDEP and the EPA can require compliance, which will be more expensive and out of the **town’s control**.
- Environmental and economic impacts of degraded water quality affect tourism and shell fishing industries. Property values may decline around embayments with degraded water quality.

WHY ARE WE ACTING NOW?

- Alignment with regional plans (e.g., 208 Plan, LCP)
- Mutual benefits with existing, planned, or much-needed infrastructure projects
- Proactive approach to increasing economic development and expanding local tax base
- Avoiding loss of control to the EPA and MassDEP



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF A LOCAL WATER QUALITY PLAN?

- Economic: More funding opportunities available with a Plan in place. Reduced cost due to regional solutions and opportunities for alternative technologies.
- Good Government: Building a local control solution, rather than wait for outside forces to impose one; Alignment with local and regional environmental and economic development goals; Adaptive management process
- Environmental: Relieving nitrogen impacts to coastal waters.
 - *Note: Town staff should emphasize that the adaptive management structure made available through the 208 Plan means that adjustments can and will be **made throughout the Plan's implementation to keep costs down and ensure water quality standards are being met.***

WHAT ARE THE COSTS OF THE LOCAL WATER QUALITY PLAN?

- MEP reports calculate nitrogen contribution by town for the watersheds on the Cape; costs can be shared among municipalities that contribute to the nitrogen load when working on a watershed level
 - *Note: Towns with an existing water quality plan should be clear, consistent, and up front about planning and implementation costs as they are made available.*

WHAT COSTS WILL HOMEOWNERS BE RESPONSIBLE FOR?

- Depending on their location, some homeowners may need to pay to hook up to new sewer infrastructure
 - *Note: Towns with an existing water quality plan should be clear about funding **needs and homeowners' cost shares for each phase of the Plan** and who they will be shared with, as this information becomes available*

HOW WILL THE PLAN BE PAID FOR?

- Town residents vote at Town Meeting (and during election years, on the State ballot) on municipal funding to pay for local water quality plans
- Town staff will pursue grants and low- or no-interest loans from state and federal sources that will reduce impacts to local taxpayers
 - *Note: Towns with an existing water quality plan should focus their outreach on providing resources to residents so that they can make the best-informed decisions possible; this includes how costs will be spread among residents and other stakeholders and over what period and the benefits of providing consistent municipal funding for these projects*



HOW AND WHERE CAN I PROVIDE FEEDBACK?

- Comments and feedback will be collected at public workshops and presentations
- A project-specific email address gives stakeholders the opportunity to provide feedback at any time
 - *Note: Stakeholders should feel like their concerns about local water quality plans are being addressed and should understand there is still flexibility and adaptability built into the planning process. Town staff may wish to highlight key questions on which they are seeking input to focus conversations on any flexible portions of a plan, where **stakeholders' suggestions will be most useful and impactful.***

Towns with an existing water quality plan in place should also include specific details around:

- What are the costs of the local water quality plan? Who will share the costs and when?
- What are the phases of the suggested plan? Why was this particular plan suggested and what are its benefits over other suggestions?



Platforms for Engagement

The following is a list of potential communications channels for engaging with the stakeholder groups recommended above, prioritized based on the most high-impact, low-effort initiatives.

TOWN WATER QUALITY PLANNING WEBSITE

Towns should dedicate a webpage on the town website to its water quality planning efforts. The webpage should include background information on the nature of the nitrogen problem; a download link to the water quality plan if it exists, either as one document or in separate chapters; information about upcoming events and presentations; a link to sign up for future updates and event information (e.g. the e-newsletter), and an email link to provide feedback on the plan.

208 WEBSITES

The Cape Cod Commission has a 208 Plan-focused webpage created during the Plan's development, available at www.capecodcommission.org/208. Page visitors see (a) a video overview of Cape Cod's nitrogen problem, and how the 208 Plan addresses the impacts of excess nutrients; (b) recent news articles and presentations on the 208 Plan; (c) download links for the Plan and Implementation Report; and (d) links to related websites where they can find out more about implementation, ongoing projects, and past conference proceedings.

E-NEWSLETTER

Residents that are already engaged or interested in local issues may be interested in attending meetings about or providing feedback on water quality planning-related topics. Town staff may want to add a dedicated section to the **town's newsletter**, and include local events and presentations, website updates, and educational materials in its updates.

Alternatively, towns may consider a water resource-specific e-newsletter, perhaps quarterly. Additional information that could be shared as time and resources allow include links to related news articles, interviews with key influencers, and planning progress and updates. Town staff should weigh the costs and benefits of starting a subscriber list from scratch, in this instance.

In either case, town staff can encourage visitors to sign up through social media, on the home page of the town's website, and by bringing newsletter sign-up sheets to in-person meetings.

DEDICATED EMAIL ADDRESS

Town staff should dedicate a monitored, general email address as a simple method for collecting stakeholder feedback throughout the water quality planning process. The email address should be shared or linked on the town website, on social media, and in the e-newsletter, as well as in the public workshops. As time and resources allow, town staff should reply to comments and concerns



and share these responses in online communications channels as appropriate. Feedback may be addressed individually or collectively, for critical arguments or frequently asked questions.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is one of the most popular low-cost, high-impact communications approaches available. Municipalities can communicate and engage with their constituents on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and more.

Many Cape Cod towns already have official municipal pages on Facebook; others have YouTube channels for sharing video content (interviews with municipal officials and community members, special town meeting announcements, etc.).

FACEBOOK

Facebook is the most popular social media site, with nearly 80% of all online Americans using Facebook. Seventy-six percent of users in the U.S. log in daily, making Facebook a convenient option for connecting to many people at once.

Suggested content for water quality-related information includes:

- Event information for public workshops;
- Recordings of Board of Selectmen/Town Council meetings and interviews with local officials (see [Recorded Interviews](#) below), or other short videos on water quality-related topics;
- Public service announcements about ways residents can reduce their household impacts on wastewater, such as minimizing fertilizer use;
- Educational materials created throughout the outreach process; and
- Sign up opportunities for the **town's** e-newsletter

The goal for Facebook should be to encourage your followers to engage with your content, through liking, commenting, or reposting it to their personal page. This engagement grows your potential audience and amplifies your message.

Municipal staff that engage with people on Facebook need to be cautioned against users that are deliberately disruptive, however. Having set responses in place (e.g., the recommended [talking points](#)) is helpful, but some users are set on acting provocatively regardless of the response. It's important to pre-emptively set guidelines around social media use for both Page Managers and Followers (e.g., no discriminatory or hate speech) that can be enforced if the need arises. Above all, avoid public, emotional arguments with users and adhere to fact-based information in your social media engagement.



TWITTER

Twitter is known for its short-content format ("tweets", up to 280 characters per post) and is often considered a source for breaking, up-to-the-minute news updates.¹

On town's official Twitter pages, information can include meeting, election, and closure reminders, information about traffic and parking impacts, and ways to share feedback on municipal plans. Twitter and Facebook accounts can be linked such that content shared on Facebook can be automatically shared to Twitter.

Recommend water quality planning-related content to share on Twitter includes:

- Event information and links to event and newsletter sign-up forms;
- Updates to the e-newsletter and town website;
- Informal polls of your followers to gauge their response to different topics
- Links to wastewater-related news articles for Sandwich and elsewhere on the Cape

Twitter followers generally engage more readily with posts that have associated multimedia – links, photos, infographics, or videos.

NOTE: HASHTAGS

Hashtags are keywords or phrases that make it easy for users to find relevant content by placing content into searchable, relevant categories. Hashtags can be used on both Facebook and Twitter, and each post can use more than one hashtag.

Town staff could choose a hashtag to associate with the water quality plan, so that all content shared by the town and/or reposted by users can be linked and easily found by clicking on the hashtag. There are no set rules to creating one, but useful ones are generally short, unique to the topic, and easy to remember.

NOTE: MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA

Many towns have limited time and resources to devote to social media management, so a set of protocols, ground rules and expectations around its use should be set early on. Town staff should decide on some basic rules governing social media use, such as, whether one person or multiple people will be responsible for sharing content. The Social Media Policy for Barnstable County staff is included as [Appendix B](#) and can be used as suggested guidelines in this area.

Importantly, social media manager(s) **should always ensure that 'official' accounts for the town** are used to share content (not personal accounts), and each town must maintain an archive of post. Social media communications fall under the State and local public records laws.

¹ American Press Institute, 2015. <https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/publications/reports/survey-research/how-people-use-twitter-in-general/>



Social media can be planned and scheduled in advance through tools like Hootsuite and Buffer, which can help social media managers be more efficient and deliberate in their postings. (Note: subscriptions to some of these sites may require a paid account, depending on needed features.) Preparing posts ahead of time can also help managers break complex topics into manageable components.

NOTE: EVALUATING SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media websites provide information and data points on engagement with your content. To understand the effectiveness of online engagement, it may be useful to track simple metrics such as **the number of followers on Facebook and Twitter, the number of “impressions” on social media posts** (number of people who have seen your content), and the number of e-newsletter subscribers or visitors to the **town’s** dedicated water quality webpage, if one exists. These numbers can be compared at the beginning, middle, and end of the communications plan to evaluate how much town staff has built their audience, and how their interest levels in water quality-related topics have changed over time.

MEDIA OUTREACH

Town staff should periodically produce and distribute press releases, op-ed pieces, and letters to the editor related to water quality planning progress, including pilot projects, grants awarded, and important document releases.

Some of the main media outlets include:

- Cape Cod Times – Daily Newspaper, www.capecodtimes.com
- Local newspapers
- Cape Cod Broadcasting – Radio news (WFCC, WQRC, Cape Country 104, Ocean 103, CapeCod.com)
- iHeart Radio – WXTK, WCOD, WCIB
- WCAI – Cape Cod NPR Radio
- Public Access Television

Town staff should also track relevant media coverage to appropriately respond to any criticism or misinformation in a timely manner.

Media coverage will likely be the primary source for residents and voters to learn about the local water quality planning process. Ensure educational materials and source material, such as the Plan itself and supporting documents are available and easily accessible on the town website. Along with anticipating general coverage of the planning process, coverage should be expected as part of its regulatory review by boards with oversight or other types of formal or informal review. Schedules for regulatory review and other presentations should be developed and shared with the media as well.



Individual meetings or an announced media availability are an effective way to ensure information is reaching media outlets, and to review the concepts and details associated with local water quality plans. Questions from such sessions can be used to adjust materials and information for other constituencies.

GENERAL PRESENTATION

Town staff should develop a comprehensive presentation on the local water quality planning that can be tailored for various audiences.

Contents that can be reused in multiple presentations include:

- General background on the town (demographic information, watersheds, existing development and infrastructure);
- The problem being addressed (the impacts of nitrogen and phosphorus on salt and fresh water, respectively) and its causes (the source(s) of nitrogen and phosphorus that are affecting **Cape Cod's** environment)
- Environmental and economic impacts of excess nutrients;
- TMDLs and MEP reports that assign **the town's 'cleanup' responsibility**;
- The consequences of no action – what the EPA and DEP could require of Sandwich;
- What solutions have been attempted in the past (e.g., Title 5), and why they are insufficient and/or failing now;

If the town has a local water quality plan in place:

- How the Plan presents a path forward (adaptive plan; regional collaborations, only **building what's necessary to meet environmental and economic goals, etc.**)
- How it aligns with regional and local land use and planning goals;
- The Plan evaluation process: what plans were considered during development, how decisions were made that limit the **town's** financial exposure, and other factors the authors considered in selecting one (e.g., household impacts);
- The cost of the Plan and financing options available, including household cost estimates.

This general presentation can be tailored for meetings with different stakeholder groups and broken down into subsections for the public workshops recommended in the spring and fall.

For presentations on municipal funding options for wastewater, town staff should describe:

- the purpose and benefits of a dedicated and predictable funding source outside the tax levy for wastewater infrastructure,
- the costs of doing nothing and possible enforcement consequences from regional, state and federal regulators, and,



- the benefits of a holistic, long-term solution to funding wastewater infrastructure projects.

If the presentation can stand alone without dialogue, it can be uploaded online (e.g., on a website like SlideShare) so that the general presentation can be shared on multiple platforms.

For presentations that need narration, one “quick-fix” option would be to use either the audio recorder built into your presentation design program, or to use a screen-and-audio recorder such as Camtasia to convert your presentation into a video. Town staff could also reach out to the local community television stations or schools to collaborate on producing an overview video.

In addition to its own Plan, those developing the presentation can also tap into the [resources created for the 208 Plan Process](#) and the contents of the [regional plan](#) itself.

PUBLIC WORKSHOPS

Town staff should host one or more in-person meetings in town to educate people about the nitrogen problem, the water quality management planning and implementation process, and to solicit feedback on a targeted list of questions. The presentation described above can be simplified or can be broken down into sections so that it can be shared over time with manageable amounts of information.

Public meetings will be an important part of increasing transparency around the planning process and growing grassroots support for local water quality plans. **They also fortify the “one voice” approach, especially if the presentation is repeated in multiple forums. It’s in towns’ best interests to pro-actively reach out to and seek stakeholders that may be impacted by Plan implementation.**

208 PUBLIC OUTREACH PROCESS

For the 208 Plan stakeholder process, the Commission held meetings to introduce stakeholders to the Plan and its contents. The process began with Cape-wide listening sessions, followed by two sub regional public meetings in each of the four Cape subregions – one to introduce the Commission and its planning partners and the outreach process, and another to introduce information about the affordability of infrastructure and discuss what people are currently paying for water and wastewater infrastructure.

The Commission then met with watershed working groups that represented a broad range of stakeholders (similar to the [list](#) above). Working at the watershed level allowed meeting attendees to discuss water quality issues within the jurisdiction of the problem. These groups met four times, discussing (a) the baseline information in each watershed (including land use, nitrogen related water quality impairments, pond water quality, and existing and proposed infrastructure), (b) technologies and approaches that might be used on the Cape, and (c) the process for applying technologies and approaches in each watershed.



After the watershed working group meetings, the Commission met sub regionally with stakeholder groups to discuss topics under the categories of (a) scenario planning, (b) regulatory, legal, and institutional issues, and (c) implementation.

Although covering a much broader geographic scope and carried out over a longer time scale, the 208 Public Outreach process may give some guidance and suggestions for topics to address with Sandwich stakeholders, as stakeholder engagement was key to the success of the 208 Plan. Best practices that can be applied to the communications plan are asking stakeholders for targeted, meaningful feedback in public workshops; leveraging a third-party facilitator, as funding allows, to guide contentious public meetings; and thinking collaboratively, seeking partnerships, and emphasizing mutual benefits throughout the outreach process.

PUBLIC REVIEW OF TOWN MEETING ARTICLES

Before Town Meetings where residents are voting on water quality related items, it may be especially useful to host a public review of the Town Meeting articles. The review could put water quality planning in context with other town spending. If recorded, it can also be shared on social media, the town website, and on cable access television.

COMMUNITY FINANCE EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

Towns should share educational materials on municipal finance in public workshops and through online channels. This information could be in the form of a presentation, handout, or recorded and shared as a video.

Topics to cover in the overview include:

- Glossary of common terms
- Local governance structure
- What is Town Meeting/Town council? **What does it decide? What's open vs. representative Town Meeting?** How are members elected? When is the Town Meeting? Who can attend, and who can vote? What is a quorum for the town?
- Does the majority always rule in Town Meeting?
- What is a warrant? How can I read it/where and when is it available? Who creates it? What are articles, and who can add/insert them?
- What is the Town Budget? Where, when, and how is it considered?
- What is the process for developing municipal budgets, and the role of the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Town Meeting, etc.?
- Where does the money in the Town Budget come from? Where is it spent?
- How can citizens give input into the Budget process? How do I vote at Town Meeting?
- Overview of Town Boards and Committees
- What is Proposition 2½? How does that affect municipal finance?



A community finance overview should include local-specific information wherever possible (e.g. using previous budgets as examples).

It would be beneficial for towns to develop an interactive online tool or calculator to educate constituents on financial impacts of a local water quality plan. For example, the Town of Harwich has a tool on their town website that projects that cost to residents per year, based on the assessed value of their residence (available here: <http://www.harwich-ma.gov/wastewater-support-committee/pages/wastewater-costs-calculator>). A Fiscal Impact Model was also developed as part of the 208 Plan process, to estimate potential impacts of water quality planning to Cape Cod households (see more information in [Appendix C](#)).

Municipal finance education may be a high-effort project, but it would likely also be high-impact because it places water quality plan costs in context of towns' **other capital needs and spending**.

RECORDED INTERVIEWS

Town staff should leverage any local cable access television channels in the production recorded interviews with municipal officials on the water quality planning process. These interviews can then be cross-posted to other channels listed above – Facebook, Twitter, the newsletter, and the town website.

The Town of Sandwich successfully created a series of YouTube videos on their local CWRMP as part of their communications plan, covering topics like “What is the CWRMP?”, “Why do we need to do something?”, and “How much will it cost the average taxpayer?” The [videos](#) can be viewed on the Town’s YouTube channel and website.

INTERACTIVE MAPS

One way to share place-based information is to develop and share interactive map-based webpages/applications, such as Esri Story Maps. Town staff could develop a water quality management Story Map that lets residents see what projects are being proposed and where, or to indicate areas of greatest need for infrastructure.

There are various levels of complexity to Story Maps; essentially, users add geo-tagged links, pictures and/or videos to a map that people can walk through on their own, or that town staff can use in a presentation. Stakeholder can also be invited to contribute pictures and text to the Story Map, a constructive way to collaborate with and collect feedback from the community

Town staff will first need to create an ArcGIS Online account to develop and share their project. To create a Story Map, choose an application template that fits the project needs (for example, some scroll through text with few pictures, others share pictures with shorter captions). Each template provides a tutorial and best-use description that explain how to add content.



The following links provide additional resources and guidance on creating Esri Story Maps:

- General resources and FAQs: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/resources/>
- Story Map templates: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/app-list/>
- Story Map Best Practices: <https://blogs.esri.com/esri/arcgis/2016/10/11/10-essential-steps-story-map-success> and <https://blogs.esri.com/esri/arcgis/2013/10/04/best-practices-story-maps/>

During the 208 Plan process, the Commission created a [Story Map of Water Quality Improvement Projects](#), where each Project included a picture, description, and a map pin. The Story Map also links to further reading on each project. It is available on the Commission's [208 Plan page](#), under Ongoing Projects.

PRINT MARKETING

Due to **towns'** limited resources, it will be important to leverage partnerships and collaborations with other local and regional agencies to help reach a broad range of stakeholders. One way to facilitate information sharing is to develop one or more flyers or brochures that they and other organizations can disseminate through their own channels. These print materials can answer frequently asked questions, point stakeholders to more information (e.g. on the town website and the e-newsletter), and invite them to attend public workshops. They can also be saved as PDF files and posted to the **town's and others' websites**.

ONLINE SURVEYS

Town staff can conduct online surveys to gauge stakeholder reactions and feedback. They can be conducted formally (e.g., gathering a statistically significant subset of the population) or informally. Informal surveys with limited questions can give quick snapshots of knowledge levels **and opinions but shouldn't be extrapolated to larger groups or used in any policy-making contexts**.

Surveys can be used ad hoc and as needed to collect information from stakeholders (e.g., during or after Public Workshop meetings). They can also be useful for identifying issues, objections, and support for the Plan.

There are many options for creating surveys online, two common websites are Survey Monkey and Google Forms (see [Resources](#) below).



Appendix A: Resources

The following is a suggested (not prescriptive) list of resources that can assist town staff in the implementation of a water quality management communications plan.

SOCIAL MEDIA WEBSITES

- Facebook (www.facebook.com)
- Twitter (www.twitter.com)
- YouTube (www.youtube.com)
- Flickr (www.flickr.com)
 - Picture-hosting website
- WordPress (www.wordpress.com)
 - Blog-hosting website
- SlideShare (www.slideshare.com)
 - Presentation-hosting website
- Buffer (www.buffer.com) and Hootsuite (<https://hootsuite.com/>)
 - Social media planning websites

CONTENT CREATION WEBSITES

- Esri Story Maps (<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/en/>)
 - Web applications that combine interactive maps with multimedia content and text to tell a story.
- Camtasia (<https://www.techsmith.com/video-editor.html>)
 - Create and edit videos by recording your computer screen, and adding video, images, audio, or PowerPoint presentations
- Google Forms (<https://www.google.com/forms>) and Survey Monkey (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>)
 - Online survey websites

BEST PRACTICES WEBSITES

- GovTech (<http://www.govtech.com>)
 - Discusses topics relevant to implementing a social media plan in the public sector
- Buffer Blog (<https://blog.bufferapp.com/>)
 - **Posts blog posts and Twitter “Buffer chats” to share social media best practices**



208 PLAN MATERIALS

- 208 Plan website (www.capecodcommission.org/208)
- CCH20 – Learn about your watershed (<http://www.cch2o.org/my-watershed.html>)
- 208 Project Locations (<http://www.capecodcommission.org/index.php?id=562>)
 - Example of a story map with geo-tagged photos and stories about 208 Plan pilot projects
- Cape Cod Commission Black Box (<http://www.capecodcommission.org/blackbox/>)
 - Links to online decision support tools for stakeholders and policymakers, including Watershed MVP

MUNICIPAL FINANCE MATERIALS

- **Citizen's Guide to State Service** (<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/ciscig/guide.html>)
- **Citizen's Guide to Town Meeting** (https://www.sec.state.ma.us/cis/cispdf/Guide_to_Town_Meetings.pdf)
- A Guide to Finance Management for Town Officials (<http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/misc/town.pdf>)
- Massachusetts State Budget Process (<https://www.massaudubon.org/content/download/6893/127306/file/MABudgetProcess.pdf>)
- **Association of Town Finance Committees' Handbook** (http://www.worthington-ma.us/Pages/WorthingtonMA_BComm/Finance/munifinance/handbook.pdf)
- Proposition 2 ½ Ballot Questions Requirements and Procedures (http://www.worthington-ma.us/Pages/WorthingtonMA_BComm/Finance/munifinance/prop2BallotQuestions.pdf)
- Levy Limits: A Primer on Proposition 2 ½ (http://www.worthington-ma.us/Pages/WorthingtonMA_BComm/Finance/munifinance/Prop2levylimits.pdf)
- DLS New Officials Finance Forum Handbook (http://www.worthington-ma.us/Pages/WorthingtonMA_BComm/Finance/munifinance/noffmanual.pdf)
- Municipal Finance Glossary (http://www.worthington-ma.us/Pages/WorthingtonMA_BComm/Finance/munifinance/FinGlossary.pdf)
- Guide to Sound Fiscal Management for Municipalities (<http://pioneerinstitute.org/download/guide-to-sound-fiscal-management-for-municipalities/>)
 - Background materials for developing municipal finance educational materials



Appendix B: Barnstable County Social Media Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

The County of Barnstable permits departments to utilize social media sites and social networking sites (collectively “social media sites”) to further enhance communications with its residents and others in support of the County’s goals and objectives. Designated County officials and County departments are allowed to publish articles, facilitate discussions and communicate information through such media to conduct official County business. Social media sites facilitate further discussion of County government business, operations and services by providing members of the public the opportunity to participate in many ways using the Internet. This policy sets forth general guidelines that must be adhered to with respect to utilization of social media sites for official County purposes. Questions regarding this policy should be directed to County Administration. These guidelines may be supplemented by more specific administrative procedures and rules as may be issued. Furthermore, this policy may be amended from time to time, and is meant to be read in conjunction with all other applicable policies and procedures of the County of Barnstable.

2. DEFINITIONS

(a) **“Social media sites” and “social networking sites” refer to websites that facilitate user participation, networking, and collaboration through the submission of user generated content.** Social media in general includes tools such as: blogs, wikis, microblogging sites such as Twitter; social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn; video sharing sites such as YouTube; and bookmarking sites such as Del.icio.us.

(b) **A “social media identity” is a specific user identity or account that has been registered on a third-party social media site.**

(c) **A “blog” (an abridgement of the term web log) is a website with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video.**

(d) **A “moderator” is an authorized County official (appointed or elected) or employee, who reviews, authorizes and allows content submitted by County officials, employees and public commentators to be posted to a County social media site or sites.**

3. POLICY



- (a) All County social media sites shall be: i. approved by County Administration; and ii. published using social media platforms and tools approved by the Information Technology Department (“IT”).
- (b) The official posting for the County will be done by the County Administrator or their designee.
- (c) Departments have the option of allowing employees to participate in existing social media sites or creating new sites as part of their job responsibilities.
- (d) All County social media sites shall adhere to applicable state, federal and local laws, regulations and policies including the Public Records Law, Public Records retention schedules, Open Meeting Law, Copyright Law and other applicable County policies.
- (e) Public Records Law and e-discovery laws and policies apply to social media content. Accordingly, such content must be able to be managed, stored and retrieved to comply with these laws. Furthermore, once such content is posted on a social media site, it should stay posted, unless it is removed for one of the reasons set forth below in paragraph (l), x and xi, of this policy, or it is changed to fix spelling or grammar errors.
- (f) All social media sites and entries shall clearly indicate that any content posted or submitted is subject to public disclosure.
- (g) Each County social media site shall include an introductory statement which clearly specifies the purpose and topical scope of the blog and social media/network site. Where possible, social media sites should link back to the official County internet site for forms, documents and other information.
- (h) Each County social media site shall indicate to users that the site is subject to a third party’s website Terms of Service. Furthermore, each County social media site shall indicate that: the social media site provider could collect personal information through user’s use of the social media site; and that this personal information may be disseminated by the third party; and that such dissemination may not be governed or limited by any state, federal or local law or policy applicable to the County.
- (i) All social media sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the County and shall have **the County’s contact information prominently displayed.**
- (j) Sites and contents shall be, and remain in perpetuity, the property of Barnstable County
- (k) The County reserves the right to restrict or remove any content that is deemed in violation of this policy or any applicable law.
- (l) County social media content and comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed for posting: i. Comments or content not topically related to the particular site



or blog article being commented upon; ii. Profane, obscene, or vulgar language or content; iii. Comments or content that promotes, fosters or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, gender identity, national origin, religion, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, disability, maternity leave, genetic information, or active military status; iv. Comments or content that is threatening or harassing; v. Sexual comments, content, or links to sexual content; vi. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity; vii. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; viii. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party; ix. Protected health information; x. Personnel information; or xi. Other information that is not public record or is otherwise privileged from public disclosure.

(m) All County employees with designated **responsibilities related to the County's official use of social media** shall be held to the terms of this policy, including their responsibilities to review content submitted for posting to ensure compliance with the policy.

(n) Where appropriate, County IT security and/or computer use policies shall apply to all social media sites and articles.

(o) Officials (elected or appointed) and employees representing the County via social media sites must conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the County and in accordance with all applicable rules, regulations, and policies (including personnel policies) of the County.

(p) No County or department social media site can endorse or otherwise cite (either with approval or disapproval) vendors, suppliers, clients, citizens, co-workers or other stakeholders.

(q) Employees found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

4. GUIDELINES FOR EMPLOYEES DESIGNATED TO MANAGE COUNTY SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

(a) Consider Your Content. As informal as social media sites are meant to be, if they are on a government domain or a government identity, they are official government communications. Social media sites will be sought out by mainstream media – so a great deal of thought needs to go into how you will use the social media in a way that benefits both the County and the public.

(b) Handling Negative Comments. Always consult County Administration before handling negative comments from the public or attempting to navigate difficult situations in public view on social media sites when acting as a County employee.

(c) Copyright Law. Employees must abide by laws governing copyright and fair use of copyrighted material owned by others. Never reprint whole articles or publications without first receiving written permission from the publication owner. Never quote an **excerpt of someone else's work** without acknowledging the source, and, if possible, provide a link to the original.



(d) Use the Social Media Site or Identity Only to Contribute to your Department’s Mission. When you contribute to your department’s social media site or identity, provide worthwhile information and perspective that contribute to your department’s mission of serving the public. What you publish will reflect on the County. Social media sites and identities should be used in a way that contributes to the County’s mission by: i. Helping you and your co-workers perform their jobs better; ii. Informing citizens about government services and how to access them; iii. Making the operations of your department transparent and accessible to the public; iv. Creating a forum for the receipt of candid comments from residents about how government can be improved; and v. Encouraging civic engagement.

(e) First Amendment Protected Speech. Although the County can moderate the social media sites that accept comments from the public (such as blogs and wikis) to restrict speech that is obscene, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, or off topic, employees cannot use the moderation function to restrict speech with which the County merely disagrees (i.e. subject matter restrictions). Users have some First Amendment rights in posting content to public social media sites hosted by municipalities. Moderators must respect those rights by posting all comments other than those excluded for specific legitimate reasons, as referenced above.

(f) Mistakes. The County policy is that once something is posted, it should stay posted. Only spelling errors or grammar fixes should be made without making the change evident to users. If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so—do not remove or delete the incorrect content; provide the correct information and apologize for the error. Ways to accomplish this include: i. Strike through the error and correct; or ii. Create a new post with the correct information, and link to it from the post you need to correct or clarify. Either method is acceptable. In order for the social media identity or site to achieve transparency, the County cannot change content that has already been published without making the changes clearly evident to users.

(g) Media Inquiries. County or department social media identities or sites may lead to increased inquiries from the media. If you are contacted directly by a reporter, you should refer media questions to the County Administrator or his designee.

(h) Records Retention. Social media sites will contain communications sent to or received by County officials and employees and are therefore Public Records. Ensure that the County or department retains a copy of the social media content in accordance with Public Records Retention Schedules. Review the third-party **social media service provider’s terms of service** for its record retention practices. Note that while third party social media providers will most likely save your content for some period of time, they generally will not save it indefinitely. To the extent their policies are inconsistent with Public Records Retention Schedules, the County or department should retain copies of social media posts such as by printing or otherwise storing **periodic “snapshots” of the social media sites.**



(i) Open Meeting Law. Be aware of the Open Meeting Law and possible violations for improper deliberations outside of a posted meeting. A series of individual postings on a social media site cumulatively may convey the position of a quorum of a governmental body regarding a subject within its jurisdiction and may constitute improper deliberation among the members of a board or committee.

5. EMPLOYEE GUIDELINES FOR USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

(a) Related Policies. All employees are responsible for understanding and following any applicable related policies, such as those governing the general usage of information technology systems and services, in addition to this Policy.

(b) Conflict of Interest. Employees are prohibited from using social media to engage in any activity that constitutes a conflict of interest for the County or any of its employees, as defined by G.L. c. 268A.

(c) Protect Confidential Information. Never post legally protected personal information that you have obtained from the County (e.g., information that is not public record under the Public Records Law, G.L. c.66, §10 and G.L. c. 4, §7(26), or whose dissemination is restricted under applicable Federal or State privacy laws or regulations). Ask permission to publish or report on conversations that occur within the County. Never post information about policies or plans that have not been finalized by the County, unless you have received explicit permission from your supervisor to post **draft policies or plans on the department's social media sites for public comment.**

(d) Respect Your Audience and Your Coworkers. Do not use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not **be acceptable in your department's workplace.** Do not be afraid to be yourself but do so respectfully. This includes not only the obvious (no ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, threats of violence, etc.) but also proper consideration of privacy and of topics that may be considered objectionable or inflammatory— such as party politics and **religion. Do not use your department's social media presence to communicate among fellow County employees. Do not air your differences with your fellow County employees on your department's social media's sites.**

(e) Personal Comments. Make it clear when you are speaking for yourself as a resident or stakeholder, and not on behalf of the County of. If you publish content on any website of the County and it has something to do with the work you do or subjects associated with the County, **use a disclaimer such as this: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the County's positions or opinions." Employees shall not comment about rumors, political disputes, or personnel issues, in an official capacity.** (f) Employee or Official Profile. If you identify yourself as a County employee or official, ensure your profile and related content is consistent with how you wish to present yourself to colleagues, residents and other stakeholders.



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(g) Defamation. Be aware that employees acting in their individual capacity (not on behalf of the County) are not immune from defamation claims. Under Massachusetts law, defamation is established by showing that the defendant published a false, non-privileged statement about the plaintiff to a third party that either caused the plaintiff economic loss or was of the type that is actionable without proof of economic loss. Some statements, like imputation of a crime, are defamatory per se. Avoid statements that may be interpreted as defamatory.

Approved by Board of Regional County Commissioners on December 13, 2017



Appendix C: 208 Resources

The Cape Cod Commission conducted an extensive stakeholder outreach process as part of the 208 Plan Update. The lessons learned from that process greatly informed this communications plan framework. The Commission also developed many online resources that towns can leverage in their own water quality planning processes.

PLANS

The [208 Plan Update](#) was approved by Governor Charlie Baker in 2015. In 2017, the Commission published the 208 Plan [Implementation Report](#) and individual Watershed Reports that outline potential nitrogen management scenarios for each of the Cape's **53 embayment watersheds**.

They are available on the Commission's website at capecodcommisison.org/208.

GIS AND GEODESIGN APPLICATIONS

The GIS team at the Cape Cod Commission has developed innovative web-based applications to improve the decision-making processes around water quality planning. Leveraging geodesign principles and science-based, Cape-specific information, the Commission was able to recommend smaller infrastructure footprints to accomplish TMDL compliance and estimate household impacts of different water quality plan options.

- WatershedMVP: <http://www.watershedmvp.org>
 - WatershedMVP is an innovative, web-based scenario planning tool developed by the Commission that allows technical experts and members of the public to compare various wastewater treatment options at scales ranging from the neighborhood, watershed, and sub regional level. The decision support tool presents parcel-based data and calculations for land use, water use, and build-out that allow the user to quickly evaluate wastewater treatment options and provide a comparative cost analysis for different approaches. WatershedMVP makes public participation easier by driving public discussions toward the lowest cost, most **sustainable solutions to Cape Cod's wastewater**. WatershedMVP also contains the Fiscal Impact Model, which translates town-wide estimates of capital, operations and maintenance, and replacement costs for wastewater scenarios into household fiscal impacts.
- 3D Map: www.capecodcommission.org/3dmap
 - The Commission developed a 3D map layer that helps communicate proposed changes to the environment as a result of land management activities or decisions and is especially helpful for discussions about development density.



- Cape Cod Water Quality Improvement Projects Story Map: <http://www.capecodcommission.org/index.php?id=562>
 - Ongoing water quality initiatives from across the region; each Project included a picture, description, a location, and links to further reading
- Open Data Hub: <http://gis-cccommission.opendata.arcgis.com/>
 - Search for GIS data layers that will help towns better understand and communicate the nature of the nitrogen problem in the community, including planimetric data, water

VIDEOS

Commission staff and consultants developed videos to share at stakeholder meetings and at **conferences to help explain the nature of the problem, solutions to Cape Cod's nitrogen issues**, and an overview of the 208 Plan Update.

- Section 208 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan Update: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D6jks_nMIKs
- The Cape Cod Water Quality Plan: The Science: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCYksX92fiA>
- The Cape Cod Water Quality Plan: The Solutions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5EEG2BV29Q>
- OneCape Summit series on water quality planning
 - Cost: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tn7muW7FsPQ>
 - Non-Nitrogen Issues: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HJFfpYShStk>
- Cape Cod Commission: Wastewater Problem: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0uGo2oL-P3k>

EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

The Commission developed educational materials around water quality problems and solutions on Cape Cod throughout the 208 Plan Update process. Many are available online and can be used in local outreach plans to reach broad groups of stakeholders.

- CCH20: Learn about Your Watershed: <http://www.cch2o.org/>
 - Explains how water quality issues impact where someone lives – residents can learn about what watershed they live in and its level of impairment - and how degraded water quality leads to economic impacts.
- Technologies Matrix: <http://www.capecodcommission.org/techmatrix>
 - The Technologies Matrix is a compendium of data on nutrient management technologies. The technologies in the Matrix have all shown some promise for being used for nitrogen management; however, many are yet untested on Cape Cod



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or have been deployed at scales smaller than might be necessary in a watershed plan.

- 208 Plan Update Outreach Meeting Materials:
<https://sp.barnstablecounty.org/ccc/public/default.aspx>
 - Materials used throughout the 208 Plan Update stakeholder outreach meetings **are available in the Plan's [Appendices](#), available through the Commission's Public Documents Viewer** linked above. This includes the documents from watershed working groups, sub regional meetings, subcommittee meetings, chronologies for **each town's watershed planning processes, and more.**