



# FAQ

## CAPE COD COMMISSION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

---

### **ABOUT THE CAPE COD COMMISSION**

#### **What is the Cape Cod Commission and what does it do?**

The Cape Cod Commission is a governmental agency that guides land use planning, economic development, and the regulation of development proposals that have regional impacts on the environment, economy, and infrastructure of Cape Cod, the renowned coastal peninsula in the southeastern portion of the state of Massachusetts. The Commission's work covers all of Barnstable County, which includes all areas of the towns of Barnstable, Bourne, Brewster, Chatham, Dennis, Eastham, Falmouth, Harwich, Mashpee, Orleans, Provincetown, Sandwich, Truro, Wellfleet, and Yarmouth, Massachusetts. You can learn more about the mission, history, structure, projects, and current activities of the Cape Cod Commission at the web site:

[www.capecodcommission.org](http://www.capecodcommission.org)

### **ABOUT CCC FINANCES**

#### **How is the Cape Cod Commission funded?**

The Commission's revenue comes from three sources: a property assessment; federal, state, and private grants; and fees. The property assessment is entirely independent from a town's tax levy. The Commission's revenue is deposited into the Cape Cod Environmental Protection Fund (CCEPF), authorized under the Cape Cod Commission Act. Funds in the CCEPF may be used only for the Commission's approved budget, which is reviewed by the Barnstable County Commissioners and the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates. More information about the Commission's funding and budget is available online: [www.capecodcommission.org/departments/administration](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/administration)

## **ABOUT CCC REGULATION:**

### **What is a Development of Regional Impact?**

The state legislation that established the Cape Cod Commission (the Cape Cod Commission Act) authorizes the agency's regulatory powers, which are generally limited to reviews of proposed large-scale developments known as "Developments of Regional Impact" (DRIs). The Commission's regulations and authority supplement local authority throughout the 15 towns of Barnstable County. Towns refer proposed projects to the Cape Cod Commission for DRI review when the proposed projects exceed specific thresholds, and occasionally when towns wish to seek Commission consideration of specific project-related impacts. Information about the Commission's regulatory authority and regulations is available online:

[www.capecodcommission.org/departments/regulatory](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/regulatory)

### **Where can I learn about the status of a certain project undergoing DRI review?**

The Commission's Regulatory Department staff posts information and notices about hearings and meetings related to active projects on the agency's Regulatory calendar: [www.capecodcommission.org/calendar](http://www.capecodcommission.org/calendar)

If you wish to review the public record for any project, you may contact the Commission and set an appointment to see the files. Contact the office by phone (508-362-3828) or email ([frontdesk@capecodcommission.org](mailto:frontdesk@capecodcommission.org)) to request a file review Monday through Friday between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

### **How do I submit a comment about a DRI?**

When public hearings are held for a proposed project undergoing DRI review, anyone wishing to attend the hearing is welcome to do so, and anyone wishing to testify orally at the hearing is also welcome. Written comments may also be submitted at the hearing, or delivered or mailed to the Cape Cod Commission, P.O. Box 226, 3225 Main Street, Barnstable, MA 02630 for receipt on or before the date of the hearing or until the record is closed.

### **Where can I find Cape Cod Commission regulatory decisions?**

As a public convenience, the Cape Cod Commission makes its decisions available for download from the web

site: [www.capecodcommission.org/departments/regulatory/decisions](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/regulatory/decisions)

### **How long will the Cape Cod Commission's review of take?**

Generally, the Cape Cod Commission's Development of Regional Impact (DRI) review timeframe is up to 210 days, but the process can be completed more quickly if a complete set of application materials is submitted in a timely way. If a proposed project is also subject to review by the state's Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office, the review may take longer.

### **How can I contact the Cape Cod Commission members?**

Citizen volunteers serve as members of the Cape Cod Commission. In their role of reviewing Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs) and other regulatory matters, Commission members must confine their review to the oral and written information received during the public hearing process. All comments--from applicants and their representatives, town officials, and the public at large--must be made to the record so that all members equally receive the message. You may attend the public hearings and make your comments orally or in writing or send your comments in writing through the US mail or through email to the Regulatory Program staff, who will share your comments with Commission members and incorporate them into the record accordingly. You may address letters to the Commission using PO Box 226, Barnstable, MA 02630, or send email in care of the staff to [frontdesk@capecodcommission.org](mailto:frontdesk@capecodcommission.org).

## **ABOUT CAPE COD DATA AND MAPS:**

### **Where can I find census, demographic and economic information about Cape Cod and Cape Cod towns?**

One of the most comprehensive resources available to everyone is the Cape Cod Commission's online data center called STATscapecod: [www.statscapecod.org](http://www.statscapecod.org)

The site offers community profiles and comparisons; data sets of regional benchmarks for a balanced economy and regional income growth; town-by-town data about commuting, employment, wages, families, households, housing units, population, rooms

tax, and work; and a set of maps that graphically depict a wide variety of data about Cape Cod.

**I want to get a map of and geographic data about the resources of Cape Cod. How do I do that?**

Most of the Commission's geographic data is located on our Open Data Hub: <http://gis-cccommission.opendata.arcgis.com/>. Custom applications developed by the Commission can be accessed through our Featured Content ribbon on the GIS home page: [www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/GIS](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/GIS). Project specific maps can be found through our resource page. Custom maps, applications, and data may be requested but there may be fees associated. To make a special request or if you can't find what you are looking for, please contact the office by phone (508-362-3828) or email ([frontdesk@capecodcommission.org](mailto:frontdesk@capecodcommission.org))

**ABOUT CAPE COD TRANSPORTATION:**

**What is an MPO?**

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a federally mandated and federally funded transportation policy-making committee made up of representatives from local government and governmental transportation authorities. Across the country, MPOs are responsible for seeing that available local federal transportation funds are spent in a way that is consistent with regional transportation plans. The Cape Cod Commission provides staff to develop the planning documents and facilitate the MPO decisions for Cape Cod. Information about the Cape Cod MPO is available online: [www.capecodcommission.org/mpo](http://www.capecodcommission.org/mpo)

**What are the transportation projects in line for funding and implementation on Cape Cod?**

Projects listed in the first year of each annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) list that is approved by the Cape Cod MPO are in line for funding. Information about the TIP is available online: [www.capecodcommission.org/TIP](http://www.capecodcommission.org/TIP)

## **How do projects get on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)?**

A slide show summarizing the process for projects to get listed on the annual TIP is available online: [www.capecodcommission.org/TIP](http://www.capecodcommission.org/TIP)

## **ABOUT CAPE COD WATER:**

### **What is the Cape Cod aquifer?**

Cape Cod is a peninsula in southeastern Massachusetts jutting out into the Atlantic Ocean. The Cape was created when glaciers receded northward thousands of years ago and left behind large deposits of sand and gravel. The mix is very permeable, meaning water and other liquid substances that are pulled downward by gravity filter easily through it. On Cape Cod, rain and other forms of precipitation are the only sources for groundwater, which is the region's fresh drinking water supply. The water-saturated soil below the surface is called the "aquifer." More information is available

online: [www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/aquifer](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/aquifer)

### **Is Cape Cod's drinking water clean?**

Yes, Cape Cod's water supply is generally very clean. Because the region's drinking water comes only from the groundwater aquifer, however, it needs to be protected from contamination and pollution. Federal, state, regional, and local laws and careful management of public water supply wells help ensure that the groundwater remains clean. More information is available online:

[www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/supplies](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/supplies)

[www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/quality](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/quality)

### **Are Cape Cod's ponds clean?**

Cape Cod has about 1,000 ponds and lakes, most of which were formed as depressions in the ground when glaciers receded northward thousands of years ago. The depressions, called "kettle holes," filled with groundwater, and are the surface of the aquifer. Cape Cod ponds and lakes are enjoyed for their beauty and for the many

recreational uses they offer. Their water quality, however, is dependent on land uses around them, just like the rest of the aquifer. Many ponds are clean and safe for swimming and boating, but their water quality is at risk of pollution from chemicals, wastewater, and excess fertilizers running off the surrounding areas and through the groundwater into the ponds and lakes. Cape Cod citizens and scientists monitor the water quality of these water bodies on a regular basis, and federal, state, regional, and local laws and management techniques help protect and maintain the water quality.

More information is available

online: [www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/ponds](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/ponds)

### **Are Cape Cod's coastal waters clean?**

Besides being pulled down into the aquifer, Cape Cod's groundwater also flows toward and into the shorelines, bays, and tidal rivers. Cape Cod's coastal waters are generally clean for swimming, fishing, and boating. Depending on the size, shape, and hydrology of a particular water body, however, many of Cape Cod's coastal waters are affected by chemicals, wastewater, fertilizers, and other substances that may enter the surface water and groundwater from land uses. These substances are harming the ecology of many Cape Cod coastal water bodies, and scientists and officials are working to address the existing problems and prevent future ones. More information is available online:

[www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/estuaries](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/estuaries)

[www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/stormwater](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/stormwater)

[www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/wastewater](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/wastewater)

[www.capecodcommission.org/initiatives/wastewater](http://www.capecodcommission.org/initiatives/wastewater)

[www.capecodcommission.org/208](http://www.capecodcommission.org/208)

### **Where can I get data about the groundwater levels on Cape Cod?**

The Cape Cod Commission staff monitors and measures the level of groundwater at certain locations around Cape Cod. The data are posted monthly on the Commission's web site: [www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/wells](http://www.capecodcommission.org/departments/technicalservices/water/wells)

## **ABOUT CAPE COD WASTEWATER:**

### **What is the problem with wastewater on Cape Cod?**

The water quality in most of Cape Cod's coastal embayments has been assessed by scientists and show evidence of harm caused by excess nutrients, including nitrogen-containing compounds, in the water that flows into those water bodies. The single greatest contributor of those nutrients is the water draining from residential on-site septic systems. This water is what we mean when we use the term "wastewater." Cape Cod's sandy soil readily absorbs wastewater, which sinks through the soil and travels underground to Cape Cod's embayments and water bodies, impairing the water quality and having a negative effect on the ecology of those resources.

### **What is the Cape Cod Commission doing about the problem?**

The Commission is working with local, regional, state, and federal agencies to raise awareness of the issue; to perform scientific assessments of conditions; to plan for and pursue options to fix the problems that have already been caused by excess nutrients; and to protect water bodies from any future damage. The Commission is working on this issue with Cape Cod town officials, the Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative, the Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection/Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and several nonprofit organizations in the area to identify wastewater-related problems and recommend solutions to keep Cape Cod's ecology and economy healthy. More information is available online: [www.capecodcommission.org/208](http://www.capecodcommission.org/208)

### **What are the proposed solutions to the wastewater problem?**

No single technique is going to solve Cape Cod's wastewater pollution problem. A mix of solutions will need to be implemented.