

MassBays Regional Coordinator's report
Barnstable County Coastal Resources Subcommittee meeting, 3/25/20

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Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Partnership (MassBays):

Background: Formerly the Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Program, MassBays is one of 28 National Estuary Programs designated by the EPA to protect and restore degraded estuaries of national significance (<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-bays-national-estuary-partnership>). MassBays was designated in 1995 to protect and restore the coastal waters and habitats of Cape Cod Bay and Massachusetts Bay. The MassBays region includes the 50 communities from Provincetown to the Commonwealth's border with New Hampshire. As MassBays is one of the largest NEPS, there are five regions (Cape Cod, South Shore, Boston, Lower North Shore, and Upper North Shore). Five regional coordinators work with their region's communities to protect and restore coastal habitats.

Mission: *"To empower 50 coastal communities to protect, restore, and enhance their coastal habitats. To fulfill this mission, MassBays engages local, state, and federal entities to advance the use of scientific information and provide technical support for better decisionmaking."*

How we support coastal communities: Regional coordinators provide technical services, grant-writing assistance, coordination, and outreach. The Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) is the regional service provider for the Cape Cod region which includes the 11 towns on Cape Cod Bay. If you are interested in obtaining assistance, contact Dr. Jo Ann Muramoto at jmuramoto@apcc.org. (APCC also has a Restoration Coordination Center which provides restoration services to all Cape Cod towns; see below).

MassBays update:

- Healthy Estuaries Grant Program: On 3/10/20, MassBays issued an RFR for pre-proposals for research, monitoring, data analysis and planning initiatives to protect, restore and enhance coastal habitats. Pre-proposals are due by April 2. For more information and to download the RFR, visit <https://www.mass.gov/massbays-healthy-estuaries-grants>.
- New Coastal Monitoring Circuit Coordinator: Jill Carr joined MassBays as the new Coastal Monitoring Circuit Rider. Jill is available to help organizations and agencies develop monitoring plans, QAPPs, analyze data, and upload data to state and federal data clearinghouses. If you are interested in getting help, please contact her at Jill.Carr@mass.gov or contact Jo Ann Muramoto at jmuramoto@apcc.org. You can also join our [Monitoring Coordinator's Network newsletter](#) to stay informed about upcoming training workshops. To register for the first Monitoring Workshop on March 31 on EPA's How's My Waterway interactive viewer and WQX data portal, visit: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NTQ67YQ>.
- Revised MassBays Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). The CCMP defines goals, issues, needs, actions and outcomes for MassBays. A revised CCMP

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was submitted to EPA for review and is posted at: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/a-blueprint-for-the-bays> . The CCMP is a key planning document for MassBays because it prioritize actions and needs for funding.

- State of the Bays assessment: MassBays is working with regional coordinators, state and federal partners, and consultants to assess the condition of coastal ecosystems in the MassBays area. Current conditions will be compared with historical conditions. This assessment is important because it will help to prioritize actions for the next five years. MassBays plans to roll out the assessment for public input this fall. The BCCRS will be an important target audience for the Cape Cod region.

MassBays Regional Service Provider (RSP) projects: The Association to Preserve Cape Cod is the MassBays RSP for the Cape Cod region and provides regional services and projects to help communities meet goals for coastal protection and restoration. Some representative projects are described below. For more information, visit www.apcc.org .

- State of the Waters: Cape Cod. In 2019 APCC initiated this project to evaluate and grade the Cape's water resources. The goal is to raise public awareness of water quality issues and to motivate action to improve and protect the Cape's water resources. Products include an interactive website with water quality grades for coastal embayments, ponds and public water supplies, Water Health Report, and Water Action Plan. In 2020 scores and grades will be updated with new data, so APCC is seeking new water quality data for coastal embayments, ponds and drinking water sources. A new "Atlas of Water Restoration Needs" will also identify opportunities for improving water quality. The project involves many partners and an advisory committee comprising local, regional, state and federal agencies and organizations. For more information, visit www.capecodwaters.org .
- River herring volunteer counts: Since 2007 APCC has promoted and supported volunteer herring counts along the Cape's herring runs. Each year an estimated 200+ volunteers participate in herring counts along nearly 20 runs. Count data are collected by APCC, reviewed for quality assurance, and sent to local, state and federal fisheries agencies for use in stock assessments and to plan protection and restoration. However, this year the coronavirus pandemic has interrupted this program. On 3/23/20, Governor Baker issued a directive to close essential businesses and stay home, so APCC issued a recommendation to all groups to urge their volunteers to stay home. Our recommendation was based on reports that social distancing was not working at some sites as well as the risk of spreading infection.
- River herring trends over time: Analysis of 2007-2019 run sizes suggests that, with the exception of a few runs, most herring runs on the Cape continue to do poorly. Most runs saw their highest run sizes in past years. While most runs remain more or less stable, four have dropped to very low numbers (e.g., two on Cape Cod Bay and one each in Buzzards Bay and Nantucket Sound). Only a few runs have increased (e.g., Stony Brook, Pilgrim Lake). Ongoing restoration and protection measures continue to be critically needed.
- Cyanobacteria monitoring: Since 2017 APCC and our partners have been monitoring cyanobacteria in ponds on Cape Cod. In 2019 more than 30 ponds were monitored. Although

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results vary from year to year, in 2019 cyanobacteria blooms occurred widely throughout the Cape. Scientists also found cyanobacteria in juvenile herring guts. This year APCC plans to continue working with partners to monitor cyanobacteria and explore possible links between cyanobacteria and the herring food web. For more information, visit <https://www.apcc.org/cyano/index.html> .

- Cape Cod Stormwater Managers Group: In 2016 the Barnstable County Coastal Resources Committee, APCC and the Cape Cod Commission convened an informal working group of municipal stormwater managers to plan for the pending 2018 NPDES MS4 stormwater permit. On Cape Cod, 12 of 15 towns are MS4 communities based on population size (i.e., all but Provincetown, Truro and Wellfleet). Activities in 2017 and 2018 included obtaining training in the requirements of the pending MS4 stormwater permit, how to prepare MS4 Notice of Intent applications, how to monitor for illicit discharges, and learn about stormwater bylaws, stormwater management, and outreach tools. Since early 2019, no meetings have been held. The MassBays Regional Coordinator would like to know if stormwater managers are interested in learning how towns are doing with their MS4 permits and about upcoming changes in stormwater permits and regulations. If you are interested, please email Dr. Jo Ann Muramoto at jmuramoto@apcc.org .
- Restoration Coordination Center (RCC): In 2015 APCC formed the Restoration Coordination Center to help Cape Cod communities and organizations to plan and implement ecological restoration projects. The RCC was formed because of the need for a central clearinghouse to obtain assistance and information on restoration. Since then the RCC has worked with a number of towns and organizations on salt marsh restoration, fish run restoration, and stormwater remediation projects. For more information, visit <https://www.apcc.org/rcc/rcc.html> or contact April Wobst, RCC director, at awobst@apcc.org or Dr. Jo Ann Muramoto, MassBays Regional Coordinator, at jmuramoto@apcc.org .

Abbreviations:

APCC	Association to Preserve Cape Cod
BCCMC	Barnstable County Coastal Management Committee
BCCRS	Barnstable County Coastal Resources Subcommittee
CRC	Barnstable County Coastal Resources Committee (precursor of the BCCRS)
MassBays	Massachusetts Bays National Estuary Partnership
MS4 permit	NPDES Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System permit
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NEPs	National Estuary Programs