



University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
The School for Marine Science and Technology



Memorandum

To: Mr. Tim Carroll, Town Administrator
From: Brian Howes, Director Coastal Systems Program
Roland Samimy, Coastal Systems Program
RE: Update of Massachusetts Estuaries Project in the Town of Chilmark
Date: December 8, 2011

Overview: The Massachusetts Estuaries Project was initiated in 2002 as a partnership effort between the MassDEP, the UMass-Dartmouth School for Marine Science and the municipalities throughout southeastern Massachusetts. The partnership was geared towards cost effectively developing accurate assessments of the nutrient related health/impairment of all the estuaries of southeastern Massachusetts and develop refined nutrient targets to minimize costs of protection/restoration of the regions estuaries. Since the projects inception, MEP analyses have been completed for over 50 estuaries in southeastern Massachusetts, with more than 60 expected by [June 30, 2012](#). To date the MEP has completed estuarine analyses for 4 systems on Martha's Vineyard (Edgartown Great Pond, Sengekontacket Pond, Farm Pond and Lagoon Pond) with 3 others nearing completion (Tisbury Great Pond, Oak Bluffs Harbor and Lake Tashmo). Towns that have received the MEP results are now moving forward with planning for implementation of nitrogen management geared towards estuarine restoration.

Currently, the Massachusetts Estuaries Project is scheduled to be complete by June 30, 2013. Initially 89 estuaries were to be evaluated under the MEP, however, since some towns in the study region were not able to secure funds for the analysis of their estuaries, those estuaries had to be dropped from the project. That effectively reduced the total number of "slots" available to receive State matching funds to 70 estuaries. While there will likely be a slight extension to include a few more estuaries, it is clear that municipalities that have not "signed up" in the next year will have missed out on the 50% State matching funds. Please note that as the USEPA and MassDEP continue to take required actions under the Clean Water Act, it is likely that the Town of Chilmark as well as other towns not currently engaged in the MEP will have to complete an MEP scale estuarine analysis even without State match, effectively doubling the financial burden to the tax payers of Chilmark and the other towns in the study region that are not currently engaged in the project.

Status of MEP in Chilmark: To date, the Town of Chilmark has fully matched the MEP analysis for the Tisbury Great Pond System. The MEP Technical Team is proceeding towards modeling and reporting for that system with the intention of completing the DRAFT Threshold Report at the latest [June 30, 2012](#). For Chilmark Pond, the Town has not yet provided match for the analysis of that system. However, the Chilmark Pond Association, eager to have a hydrodynamic model to address circulation and dredging questions, contributed \$20K that can be counted towards the MEP budget. That amount was sufficient to complete the hydrodynamic model for Chilmark Pond but additional town funds will be necessary to complete the water quality model and develop the appropriate nitrogen thresholds.

Regarding Menemsha/Squibnocket Pond, as the system is shared between two towns and the Tribe, to date the Tribe has contributed its full share of match and Aquinnah has contributed nearly half of its share of match. The required field data collection has been completed, however, the MEP can not proceed to completion of its analyses in this estuary without the remaining required match from Chilmark and Aquinnah. It is important for the town to recognize that preliminary field data collected by the MEP indicates that the Menemsha/Squibnocket Pond system is showing signs of nutrient related impairment.

Moving Forward: To ensure that state funds remain focused on the remaining systems in the Town of Chilmark (Chilmark Pond and Menemsha/Squibnocket Pond) and are not shifted to other estuaries, some financial commitment from the Town is needed for at least a portion of the required match for either of the two remaining systems. It would be prudent if Chilmark re-confirmed its interest in proceeding with the MEP analyses by deciding to appropriate funds towards completion of the analysis for Chilmark Pond. Chilmark Pond is already partially matched by non-state funds, as the Chilmark Pond Association contributed \$20K for the hydrodynamic study which counts towards the needed Town match. This support from the Association reduces the required match from \$74,500 to \$54,500 going forward. In addition, it would also be important to have the Board of Selectmen express in writing its intention of developing a warrant article for Spring Town Meeting to secure the remaining match for Chilmark Pond and the Menemsha/Squibnocket Pond system. This will help to safe guard the match from the state by showing the MassDEP that the Town of Chilmark is serious about proceeding towards completion of the MEP analysis of its remaining estuaries. In so doing, the Town of Chilmark can proceed to a unified planning process for nutrient management across the town and cost effective estuarine restoration/protection.