



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Department of Environmental Protection

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November 1, 2023

To All Interested Parties:

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), Watershed Planning Program (WPP), announces the availability for public comment the Draft Wareham River Estuary System Total Maximum Daily Load for Total Nitrogen (Control Number 549.0). The TMDL and the Technical Reports on which these are based have been prepared as part of the Massachusetts Estuaries Project (MEP) – a collaborative effort to identify and address nitrogen pollution in 70 estuaries in southeastern Massachusetts that involved MassDEP, the University of Massachusetts School of Marine Science and Technology, the Cape Cod Commission, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the US Geological Survey, and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, as well as municipalities and watershed associations in southeastern Massachusetts.

Federal Clean Water Act Section 303(d) and EPA's Water Quality Planning and Management Regulations (40 CFR Part 130) require states to develop TMDLs for water bodies not meeting water quality standards. A TMDL establishes the maximum amount of a pollutant that a water body can accept and still meet water quality standards. The TMDL serves as the regulatory and technical basis for developing integrated water resource management plans designed to restore the water quality of impaired water bodies. The Wareham River Estuary System is listed on the 2022 Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters (Category 5) for nutrient related impairments including: estuarine bioassessments, dissolved oxygen, total nitrogen, chlorophyll a, and/or nutrient/eutrophication biological indicators.

MassDEP has prepared the Draft TMDL report for controlling excess nutrients (nitrogen), the primary cause of eutrophication, that can lead to: loss of eelgrass beds (which are critical habitats for macro-invertebrates and fish), undesirable increases in macro algae (which are much less beneficial than eelgrass), periodic extreme decreases in dissolved oxygen concentrations that threaten aquatic life, reductions in the diversity of benthic animal communities and periodic algae blooms. The primary "locally controllable" source of nitrogen to the Wareham River Estuary System is sanitary wastewater from septic systems. Other significant controllable sources of nitrogen to this system include discharge from the Wareham Wastewater Pollution Control Facility, stormwater runoff, and fertilizers.

The goal is to achieve state water quality standards for Class SA and Class SB waters as defined in the Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards, 314 CMR 4.00. The water quality standards of particular interest are for dissolved oxygen, nutrients, aesthetics, excess plant biomass, and nuisance aquatic vegetation. Standards for Class SA and Class SB waters provide numerical and narrative criteria to meet designated uses, including the support of habitat for fish and other aquatic wildlife.

This information is available in alternate format. Please contact Melixza Esenyie at 617-626-1282.

TTY# MassRelay Service 1-800-439-2370
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A copy of this Draft TMDL Report is available on MassDEP's website at: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/draft-wareham-river-estuary-system-total-maximum-daily-load-for-total-nitrogen/download>

The TMDL is based on the Massachusetts Estuaries Project Final Technical Report for the Wareham River Estuary System, which is also available online: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/linked-watershed-embayment-model-for-wareham-2014/download>

MassDEP will hold a virtual **public meeting** to discuss report findings and receive public comments on the reports. The public meeting date and time are detailed below:

Date: November 28, 2023
Time: 2:00 pm

This will be a **virtual meeting** hosted via Zoom. **To participate you must register in advance of the meeting.** Click [here](#) to register or copy and paste the following address into your web browser: <https://us06web.zoom.us/join/zoom/register/tZAvduutqjloEtCXfoxiZgoT3l23X7NNzMZ1>
After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

MassDEP will consider all comments and the Draft TMDL Report will be revised as appropriate prior to submittal to EPA Region 1 for approval. All public comments, which should refer to CN 549.0, must be received in writing or in electronic format by **5:00 pm on Thursday, December 28, 2023** and addressed to:

Address: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Watershed Planning Program
8 New Bond Street
Worcester, MA, 01606

Email: dep.wpp@mass.gov
Subject: Wareham River TMDL (CN 549.0) comments

MassDEP anticipates that the effective implementation of the TMDL will depend in large part on actions taken by local officials, citizen organizations, and the general public to reduce pollution of this system. Some financial support for remedial activities is available from the state through existing competitive grant and loan programs.

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact me at 857-278-5939 or mason.saleeba@mass.gov

Sincerely,



Mason Saleeba
TMDL Analyst, Watershed Planning Program
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection