

## **Estuaries program public hearing Thursday**

The draft report on the total load of nitrogen that the three bay area of Barnstable is available for public comment.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection will hold a public meeting on Thursday, January 25 from 7 to 9 p.m. in the second floor hearing room of Barnstable Town Hall to discuss and respond to any public comments on the report.

This is the report generated over the past few years through the Massachusetts Estuaries Program and will serve as the basis for projects to reduce the overall nitrogen load.

Septic systems along waterways contributing to the estuary are primary sources of nitrogen.

Officially known as the the Draft Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for Total Nitrogen, the report covers coastal water bodies in the Three Bays estuary system, with watersheds in Barnstable, Sandwich and Mashpee.

The embayments are: Cotuit Bay, West Bay, Seapuit River, North Bay, Prince Cove, Warren Cove and Prince Cove Channel.

The draft is required by the EPA Federal Clean Water Act and establishes a maximum amount of pollution that a water body can accept and still meet water quality standards.

Five of the embayments covered in this report are listed on the 2004 Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters (Category 5) as impaired primarily for nutrients and/or pathogens.

The primary "locally controllable" source of nitrogen in these embayments is sanitary wastewater from septic systems.

Stormwater runoff, leaching lawn fertilizers, discharges from agricultural land uses, and atmospheric deposition, also contribute varying quantities of nitrogen to Three Bay's coastal rivers, ponds, and harbors.

The goal is to achieve state water quality standards for these water bodies waters as defined in Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards

A copy of the draft and a further explanation of the Program are available on DEP's Web site at [www.mass.gov/dep/water/resources/esttmdls.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/resources/esttmdls.htm).

The Massachusetts Estuaries Project Final Technical Report for the Three Bays, on which the Three Bays TMDL is based, is available at [www.oceanscience.net/estuaries/reports.htm](http://www.oceanscience.net/estuaries/reports.htm).

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 report number MA 96-TMDL-10, must be received in writing or in electronic format by 5 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 9 and addressed to: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Division of Watershed Management, 627 Main St., 2nd Floor Worcester, MA, 0 1608 Attn: Michael Ackerman [Michael.ackerman@state.ma.us](mailto:Michael.ackerman@state.ma.us)