

# Pleasant Bay study findings to be released

Wednesday, May 24, 2006

The findings of the Massachusetts Estuaries Project Technical Report for Pleasant Bay will be presented to the public Thursday, May 25, at 7 p.m. at Brewster Town Hall, 2198 Main St. The report will form the basis for standards of water quality that will drive wastewater and nitrogen management efforts in the Pleasant Bay watershed towns of Chatham, Brewster, Harwich and Orleans.

Brian Howes, director of the Coastal Systems Program at SMAST-UMass and technical director for the Massachusetts Estuaries Project, will present the findings of the report, which represents a culmination of more than two years of research, computer modeling and data analysis undertaken by the MEP, and utilizes five years of water quality monitoring data collected by the Pleasant Bay Alliance. Key findings that will be presented include:

? The configuration of the 95 watersheds contributing to Pleasant Bay, based on the latest delineations generated by the US Geological Survey;

? The measured nitrogen inputs into Pleasant Bay;

? A detailed description of tidal flows and currents, and how they affect the distribution of nitrogen entering the Bay waters.

? The levels of nitrogen in bay waters, at current and "build out" levels of development;

? Assessment of the respective health of the bay's eelgrass and shellfish communities;

? Quantification of the critical nutrient thresholds throughout the bay, indicating the maximum amounts of nitrogen that the bay can receive and remain healthy, and indicating the amount by which nitrogen is currently exceeding thresholds;

? A discussion of how changes in the location of the inlet, which determines flushing rates and tidal range, would affect nitrogen-related water quality.

Brian Dudley, state Department of Environmental Protection project manager for the MEP, will be on hand to introduce the report and to explain its role in the larger regulatory process.

The report will provide the foundation for comprehensive wastewater planning that is under way in the Pleasant Bay watershed towns. Over the past year the Alliance has convened a special work group to discuss the framework by which the towns will move forward in developing and implementing wastewater management plans for the Pleasant Bay watershed.

One half of the cost of the MEP study was funded by the state, with the towns of Orleans, Chatham and Harwich providing a local match of \$120,000. The project has been coordinated on behalf of the towns through the Pleasant Bay Alliance.

**Box-----**

## **If you go...**

**What:** Massachusetts Estuaries Project Technical Report for Pleasant Bay

**Where:** Brewster Town Hall, 2198 Main St.

**When:** Thursday, May 25, at 7 p.m.