

Town to map sites to treat wastewater

■ Falmouth plans two-year study to evaluate watersheds and possible areas for the treatment plants

By **AMANDA LEHMERT**
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FALMOUTH – Falmouth's wastewater "vision" is taking shape.

This month, town officials will embark on a two-year study to evaluate six local watersheds and map areas where wastewater treatment plants might be located or treated wastewater could be discharged.

Wastewater Supt. Amy Lowell negotiated a \$500,000 contract with Stearns and Wheler, an environmental engineering firm, to complete the work. The contract must now be approved by selectmen.

"This is the most comprehensive study we have ever done," said Town Administrator Robert Whritenour.

Last August, town leaders launched a local debate about the town's wastewater problems. Nutrients from private septic systems have leached into local estuaries, degrading water quality and causing harmful algae blooms in recent years, Lowell said.

To solve the problem, the consultants will create plans to manage the nutrient issues in the watersheds to Little Pond, Great Pond, Green Pond, Bournes Pond and Waquoit Bay.

Stearns and Wheler will use research performed by the Massachusetts Estuaries Project – which set levels for how much nutrients the ponds can handle – to plan for what areas might need sewers or nontraditional treatment options, Lowell said.

At the end of the study, officials will have a better estimate of how much the town must spend on wastewater infrastructure projects.

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