



TOWN of FALMOUTH

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, WASTEWATER DIVISION

416 GIFFORD STREET, FALMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS 02540
TELEPHONE (508) 457-2543 x 3018

AMY LOWELL
WASTEWATER SUPERINTENDENT

October 5, 2023

Dear Select Board and Finance Committee,

The Buzzards Bay Coalition (BBC) has sent letters to each of you proposing that design and permitting of increased discharge to expanded sand beds 14 and 15 be removed from Article 6 of the fall Town Meeting warrant. The BBC claims that the sewer work in Article 6 could move forward without this discharge plan because an outfall could be permitted faster than the land-based discharge.

We recommend that Town Meeting Article 6 be approved at Town Meeting as written because:

- The Town spent two years and \$350,000 evaluating discharge sites and preparing the Targeted Watershed Management Plan (TWMP) to improve water quality in severely degraded Great Pond.
- The Recommended Plan in the Great Pond TWMP involved: sewerage the lower portion of the Great Pond watershed in 2 phases, conveying that wastewater to the Town's Main Treatment Facility, and discharging the treated wastewater to expanded sand beds 14 and 15.
- The Great Pond TWMP went through a public review process and was approved by the state in January 2023.
- Article 6 would design and permit Phase 1 of the Town's Great Pond TWMP.
- Without a discharge location for the new sewer area, Article 6 would not be a viable project; the Town would not be able to move forward with bidding and construction. The Town would not be able to get a zero percent State Revolving Fund loan for project construction.
- The state issued the Town a permit to discharge an average of 260,000 gallons per day to beds 14 and 15 in 2015, and renewed that permit in 2021.
- The Town has observation wells to monitor groundwater quality downgradient of the infiltration beds, monitors them quarterly for nitrogen and phosphorous and reports that data to the state.
- The Town does not have a permitted outfall.
- Funds are also requested in the November Town Meeting warrant to collect additional data required to permit an outfall. We estimate that the data collection will take 18 to 24 months to complete, after which outfall permit applications would be prepared. The Town is optimistic that an outfall can be permitted in 4-7 years but this is not guaranteed.

- It is expected that a groundwater discharge permit for increased flow to beds 14 and 15 would be issued in less than 1 year. The reason that the Buzzards Bay Coalition claims that it would be faster to permit an outfall than to permit additional discharge to beds 14 and 15 is that they also say they plan to appeal the Town's groundwater discharge permit as far as possible in state courts.
- The Buzzards Bay Coalition previously appealed the Town's permit to discharge to Beds 14 and 15 and yet the permit was issued.
- The Town contracted with the School of Marine Science and Technology at UMass Dartmouth (SMAST) to evaluate Herring Brook and the potential impact on Herring Brook of increasing wastewater discharge to Beds 14 and 15.
- SMAST concluded that Herring Brook is a healthy salt marsh, and would be able to assimilate the nitrogen from the planned increase in flow to Beds 14 and 15 and remain healthy. This report was presented and discussed in a public Water Quality Management Committee meeting and is on the Town website at: <https://www.falmouthma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14826/Herring-Brook-Report-June-2023>.
- The SMAST team that prepared this Herring Brook report is the Massachusetts Estuaries Project team, the team that prepared all of the estuary reports upon which the state based its Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) nitrogen limits for Massachusetts estuaries.
- When the Town applies for a revised groundwater discharge permit for Phase 1 of sewerage (proposed in Article 6), the requested increase will be only be 200,000 gallons per day, only 40% of the flow evaluated in the SMAST study (the study evaluated total flow from Phases 1 and 2 of Great Pond sewerage).
- Additional flow to Beds 14 and 15 would only be needed for an interim period until either the outfall is permitted and constructed or, if the outfall is determined not to be feasible, until infiltration beds at the Augusta or Allen parcel are permitted and constructed.
- Approving Article 6 as written will allow the Town to make significant progress toward meeting the nitrogen reduction target for Great Pond while pursuing the Town's long-term plan for treated wastewater discharge, an outfall.


 Amy Lowell
 Wastewater Superintendent
 Management Committee


 Stephen Rafferty
 Chair of the Water Quality