

2024 SPRING NEWEA MEETING: ENHANCED I/A SEPTIC SYSTEMS – UPDATE & DISCUSSION

May 20, 2024 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM

[Hotel Viking, Newport, RI](#)



Dr. Alissa Cox
University of
Rhode Island



Bruce Walton
NEWEA
I/A Task Force

WELCOME!



Dr. Laura Erban
US EPA
ORD



Scott Horsley
Water Resources
Consultant



David Iorio
Izzo
RME/SUP



Brian
Baumgaertel
MASSTC

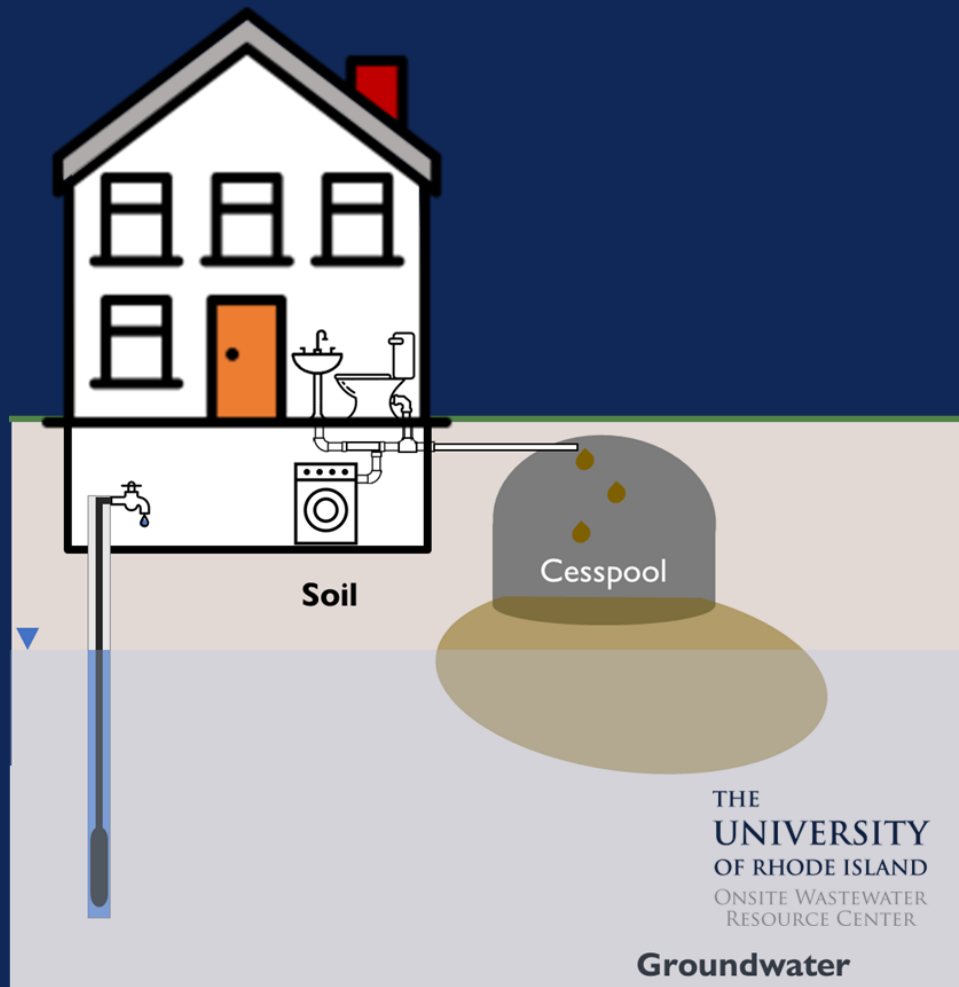
SESSION GOALS

- Describe current knowledge of advanced wastewater treatment technologies
 - Share findings from ongoing research on enhanced innovative/alternative septic systems
- Share lessons learned: holistic wastewater management at the community scale
 - Case studies
 - Managing decentralized infrastructure
 - Financial implications

ADVANCED SEPTIC SYSTEMS

Definitions & Current Knowledge

EVOLUTION OF WASTEWATER TREATMENT



HUMAN-GENERATED WASTEWATER IS RICH IN...

Nutrients (Nitrogen & Phosphorus)

Pathogens

Organic materials

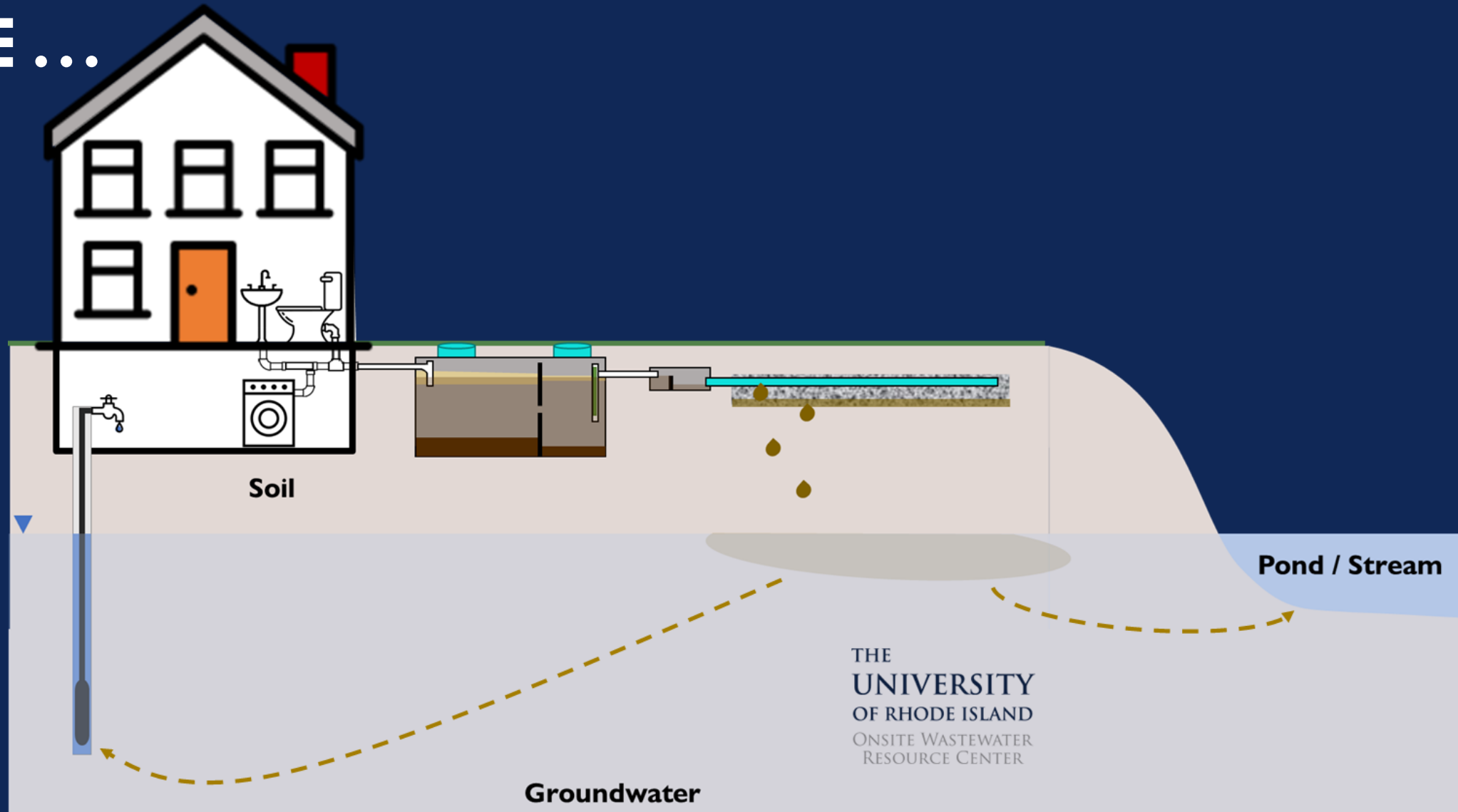
Other contaminants

CONVENTIONAL SYSTEMS ARE NOT DESIGNED TO REMOVE NITROGEN

Nitrogen may change forms via chemical conversions,
but most remains dissolved in water

The bottom of the slide features several overlapping, wavy, organic shapes in various shades of blue and purple, creating a modern, abstract background element.

NOT REMOVING NITROGEN IS AN ISSUE...



CONVENTIONAL SEPTIC SYSTEMS ARE POOR CHOICES IN ...

Nitrogen-
sensitive areas

- Marine ecosystems
- Drinking water sources

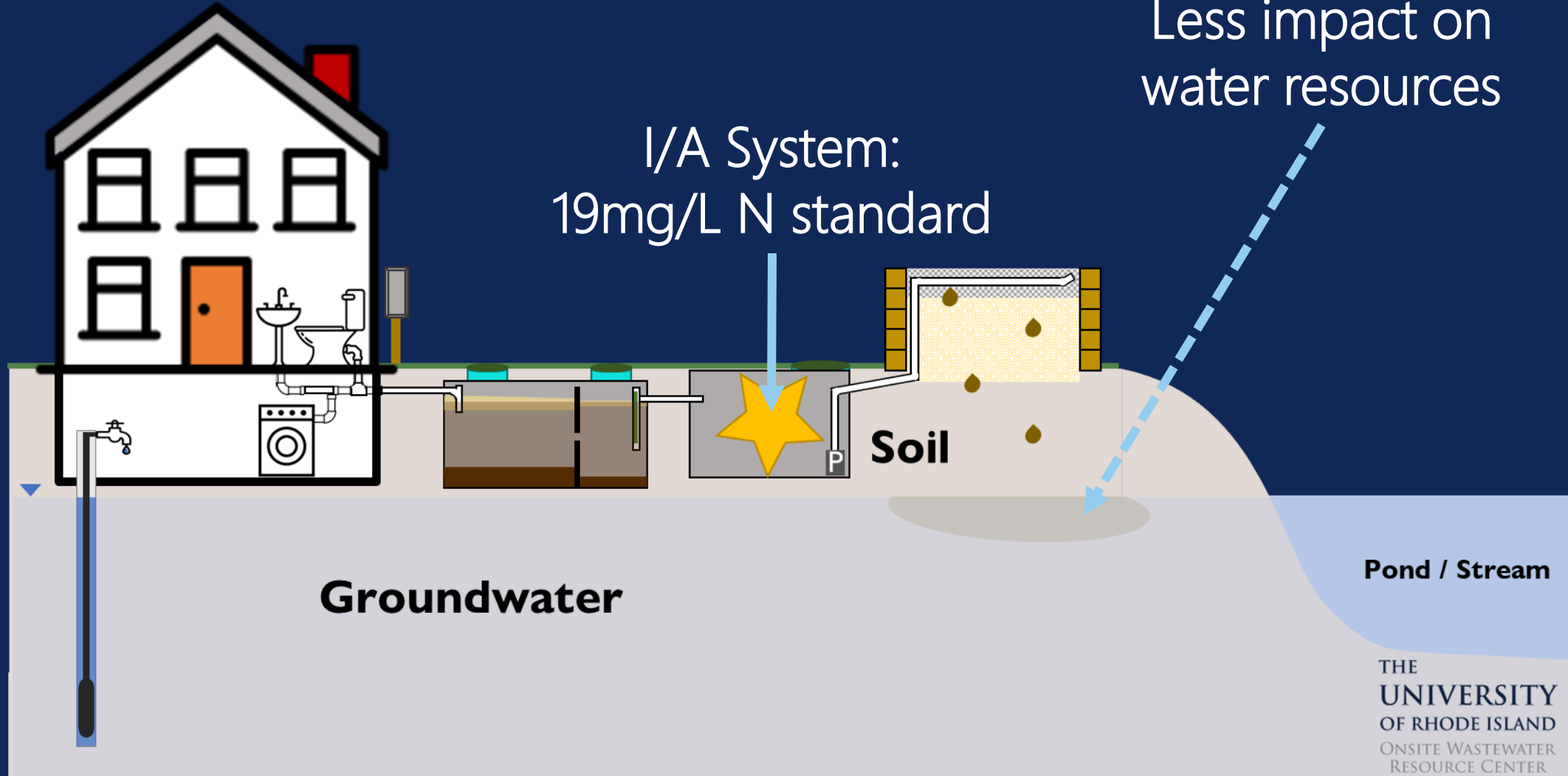
Densely
populated areas

- Too many wastewater inputs
- Not enough dilution from clean rain/groundwater recharge

Sites with many
constraints

- Shallow depth to ledge / water
- Horizontal setbacks

ADVANCED (I/A) WASTEWATER TREATMENT



PERFORMANCE OF I/A SYSTEMS

- Currently approved technologies capable of emitting ≤ 19 mg/L Total N
- Actual performance in RI & MA variable
 - Long-term performance depends on:
 - Technology selected
 - Design & Installation
 - Use / Flow
 - Level of system maintenance & monitoring
- Even with variable performance, I/A systems significantly reduce N loading to nearby waters

...WHEN 19MG/L TOTAL N IS STILL TOO MUCH...

- Coastal communities often densely developed
 - N loading can be significant
 - OWTS recharge groundwater aquifers
 - Groundwater discharged to local surface and coastal waters
- Ground and coastal surface waters affected by too much N
 - Human health impacts
 - Impaired ecosystem health
- Better treatment = less loading of pollutants to sensitive waters
 - Target: <10 mg/L total N

EIA TECHNOLOGIES ON THE HORIZON

- Neighborhood-level demonstration pilot project in MA: Dr. Laura Erban
- Holistic wastewater management at the community level – implementation case studies in MA: Scott Horsley
- Managing Septic Systems as Infrastructure: David Iorio Izzo & Brian Baumgaertel
- Financial implications of upgrading existing septic systems to EIAs in MA: Bruce Walton

Q&A
opportunities
after each
section + at
end of session

ENHANCED I&A SYSTEMS

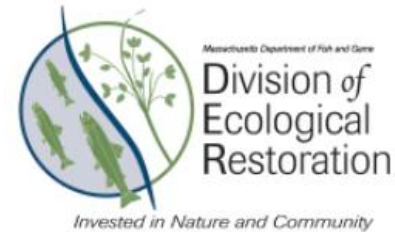
Laura Erban

USEPA

Acknowledgments



Local farmers
and other
landowners



Disclaimer: The views expressed in this presentation are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the views or policies of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Any mention of trade names, products, or services does not imply an endorsement by the U.S. Government or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA does not endorse any commercial products, services, or enterprises.

Nutrients and co-pollutants in onsite wastewater can overload water resources

The New York Times

A Toxic Stew on Cape Cod: Human Waste and Warming Water

Climate change is contributing to electric-green algae blooms. Massachusetts wants a cleanup of the antiquated septic systems feeding the mess, but it could cost billions.



Ashley Fisher, director of the Mashpee Department of Natural Resources in Massachusetts, took samples from the bed of the Mashpee River earlier this month.

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Science of the Total Environment

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/scitotenv

Pharmaceuticals, perfluorosurfactants, and other organic wastewater compounds in public drinking water wells in a shallow sand and gravel aquifer

Laurel A. Schaider*, Ruthann A. Rudel, Janet M. Ackerman, Sarah C. Dunagan, Julia Green Brody
Silent Spring Institute, 29 Crafts Street, Newton, MA 02458, USA

HIGHLIGHTS

- We tested 20 public wells in a sand and gravel aquifer for 92 OWCs.
- Pharmaceuticals and perfluorosurfactants were frequently detected.
- Septic systems are the primary sources of OWCs into the aquifer.
- Maximum concentrations of two pharmaceuticals are as high as other U.S. source waters.
- Nitrate, boron, and extent of unsewered development correlate with OWC presence.

GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT

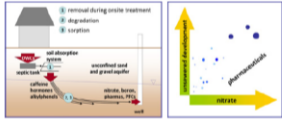
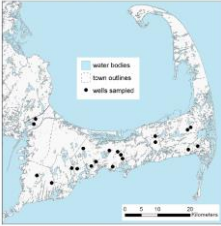
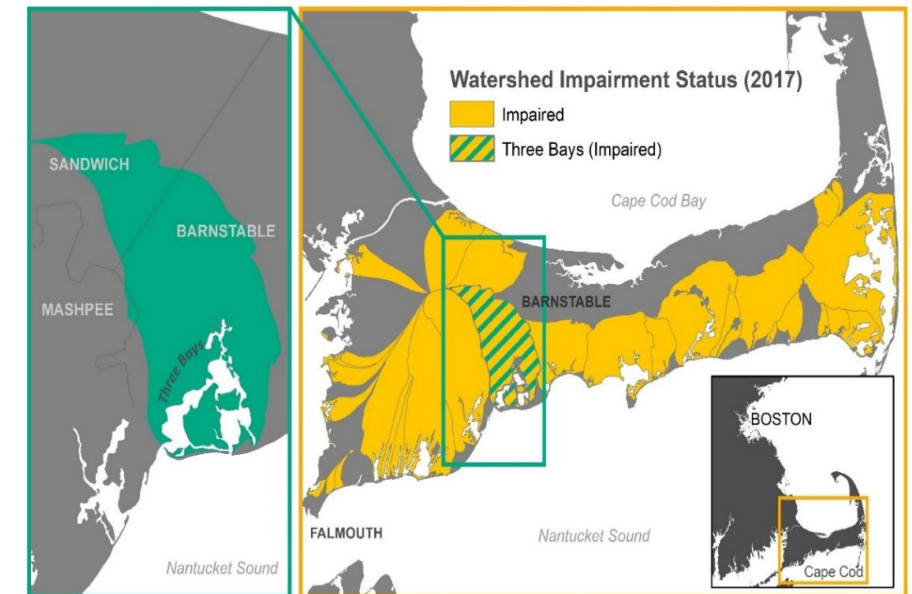



Fig. 1 Map of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA, showing the location of 20 public wells sampled in October 2016.



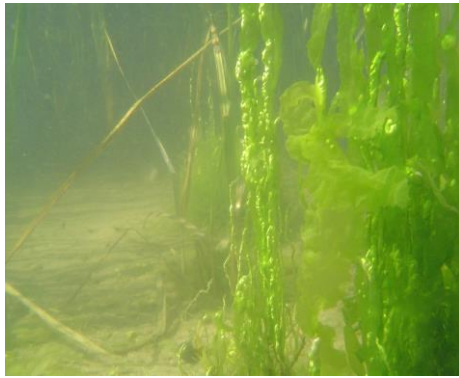
More than 30 Cape Cod watersheds have Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for nitrogen.
Source: Twichell et al., 2019. EPA/600/R-19/107

Cape Cod communities are pursuing multiple means of load reduction

- TMDLs call for >50% reduction in nitrogen (N) loading from septic systems Cape-wide.
- Sewer expansion and complementary approaches for recurring and legacy pollution.
- Clean Water Act Section 208 Plan Update Technologies Matrix identifies many interventions, including enhanced decentralized or onsite wastewater treatment.



USGS



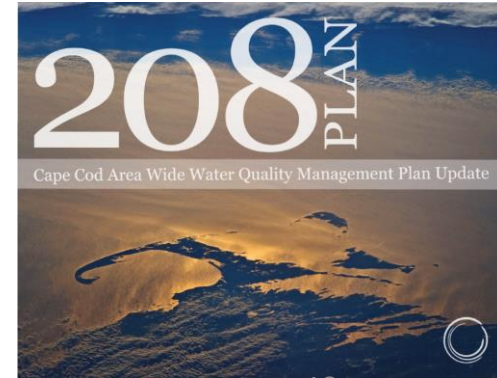
Buzzards Bay Coalition



NYTimes



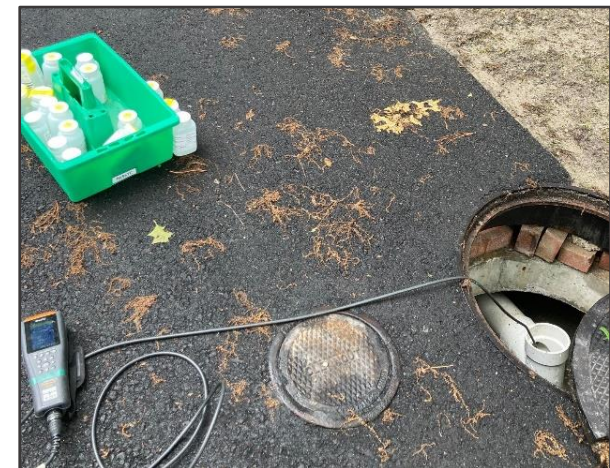
Town of Mashpee



Cape Cod Commission, 2015¹⁸

Improving wastewater treatment takes time

- Innovative/Alternative (I/A) septic systems in Massachusetts have historically sought to meet a performance goal of **19 mg/L** total nitrogen (TN) in effluent.
- New regulations (2023) set a more stringent goal for best available nitrogen reducing technologies of **10 mg/L** TN
- 50 installations and 3 years of monitoring are required for general use approval.
- Few high-performing options (**EIA**) are available to users.

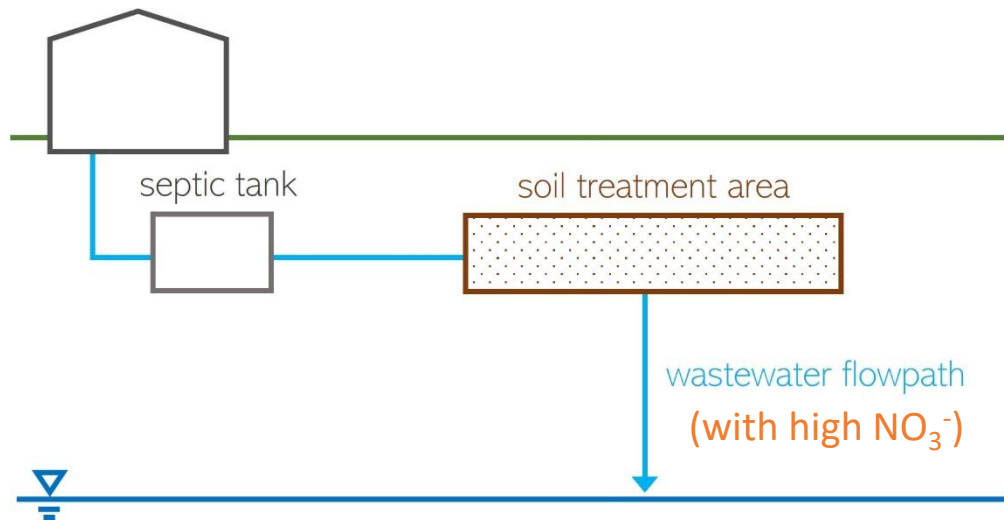


Sampling by MASSTC

photo: L. Erban

Enhancing onsite wastewater treatment

conventional septic system



* Note that the diagram is simplified and not to scale!

alternatives

- separate waste streams (urine diversion, composting toilets, tight tanks)
- add treatment stage(s) for mixed effluent

Agronomy for Sustainable Development (2021) 41: 56
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13593-021-00675-2>

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sanitized human urine (Oga) as a fertilizer auto-innovation from women farmers in Niger

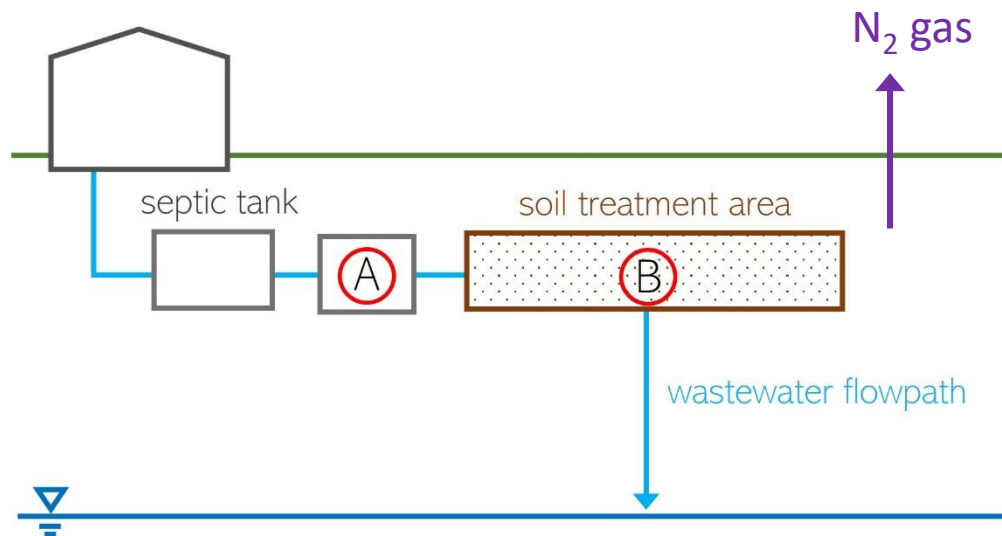
Hannatou O. Moussa¹  • Charles I. Nwankwo² • Ali M. Aminou³ • David A. Stern⁴ • Bettina I. G. Haussmann⁵ • Ludger Herrmann²

Accepted: 29 January 2021 / Published online: 29 July 2021
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Enhancing onsite wastewater treatment of nitrogen

alternative septic system



* Note that the diagram is simplified and not to scale!

Septic systems designed for nitrogen removal:

A) add a treatment unit after the septic tank and before soil treatment area (a.k.a. leach field)

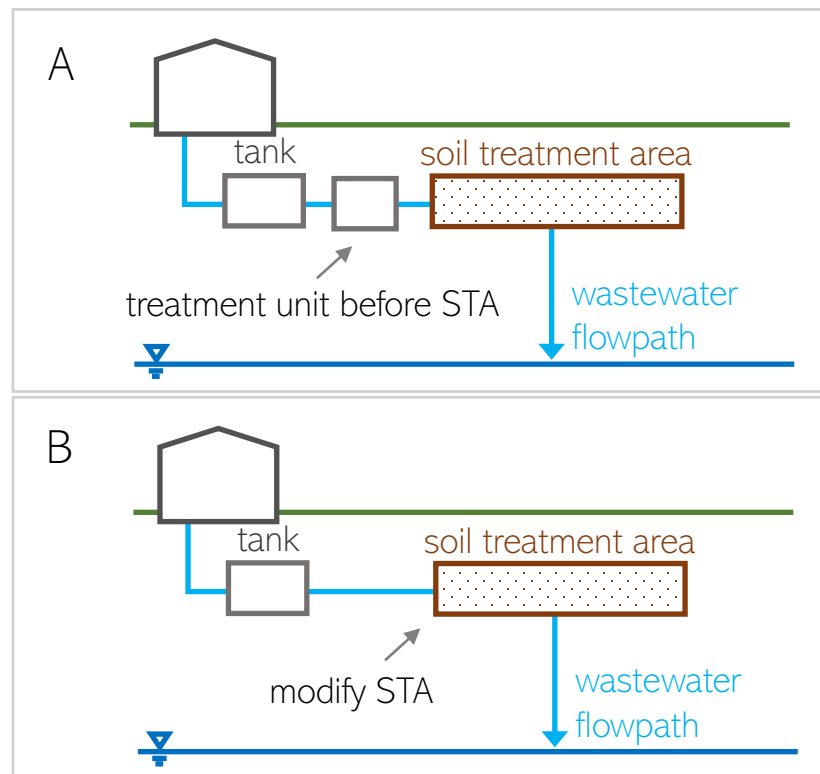
OR

B) modify the soil treatment area

(in general terms)

Enhancing onsite wastewater treatment of nitrogen

alternative septic systems



* Note that the diagram is simplified and not to scale!

- Designs with a lignocellulosic carbon source can provide a high degree of N removal.
- Two designs (proprietary and non-proprietary) use woodchips in this demonstration effort.



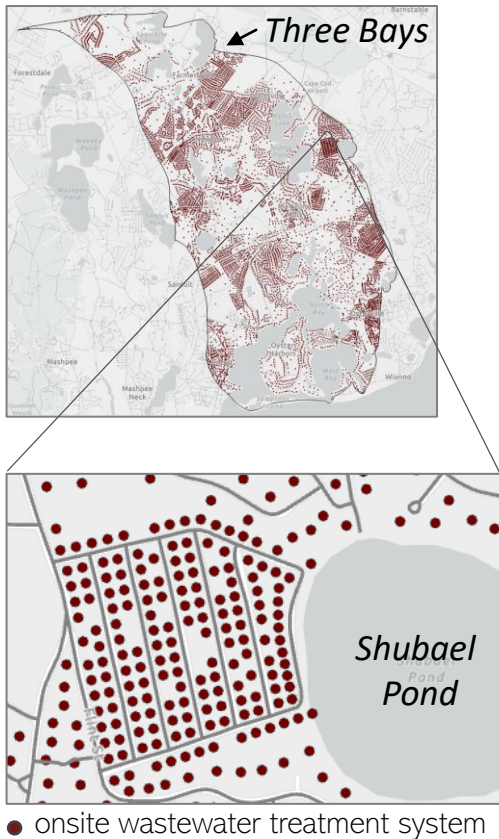
NiTROE® treatment unit
by KleanTu LLC



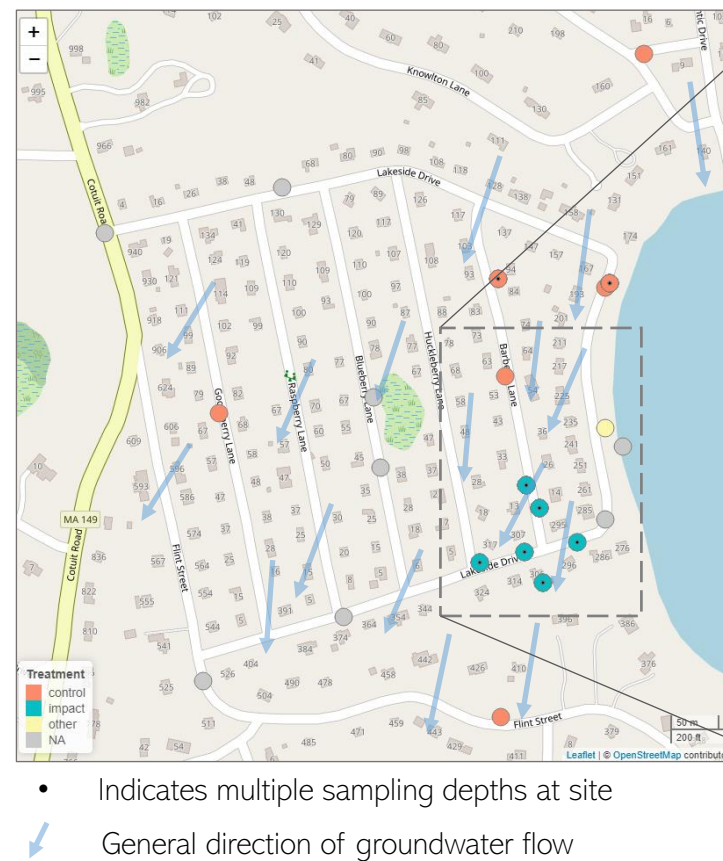
modified STA
by MASSTC

Demonstration setup

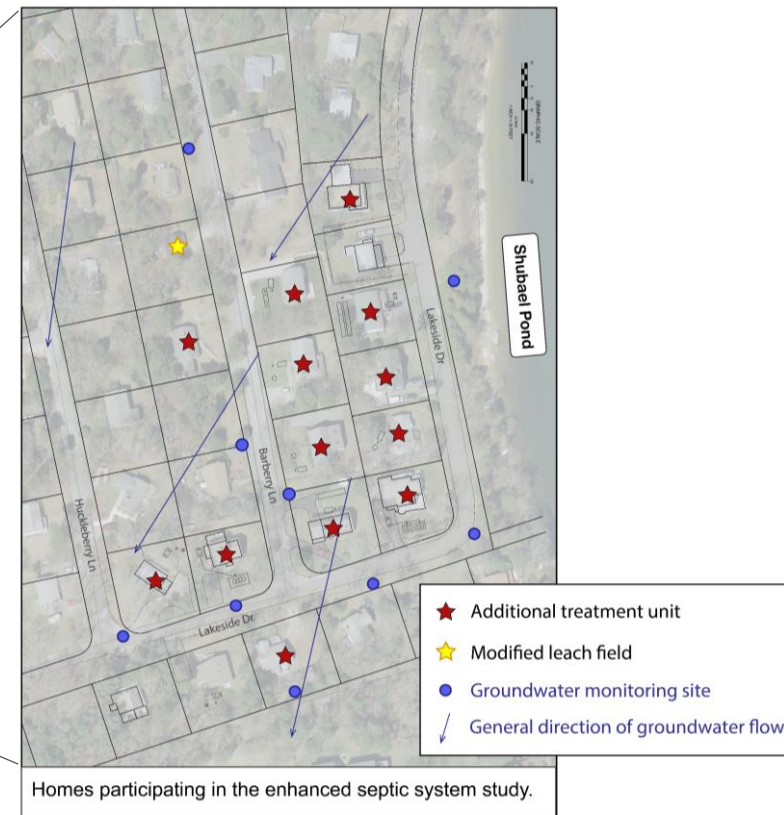
watershed screening



well network



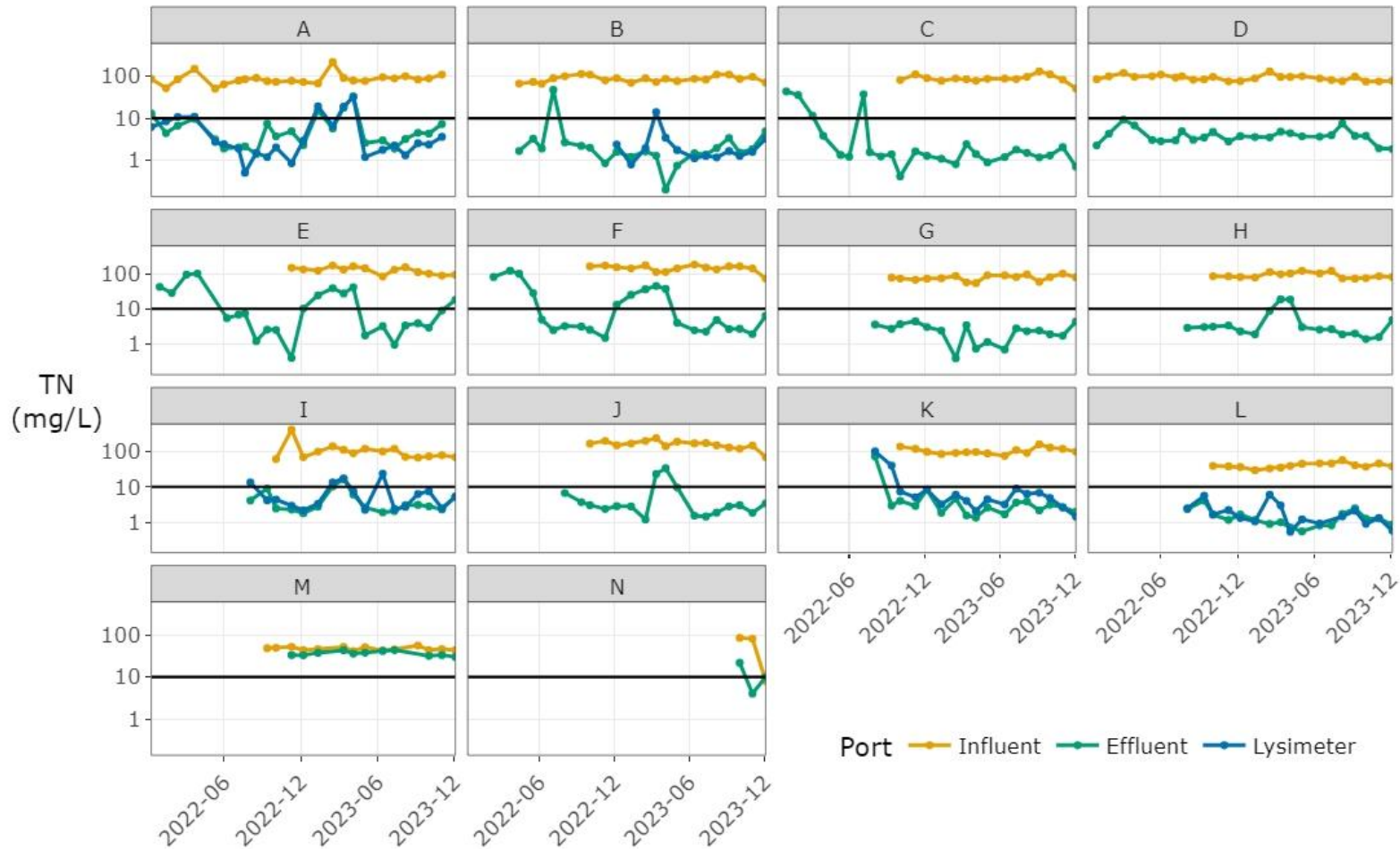
EIA septic systems (n = 14)



Partners



Performance monitoring: nitrogen concentration



Monthly samples for more than 2 years

Continuous flow metering

Order of magnitude reduction in TN

Effluent samples:

83% < 10 mg/L

50% < 3 mg/L

TN = 10 mg/L

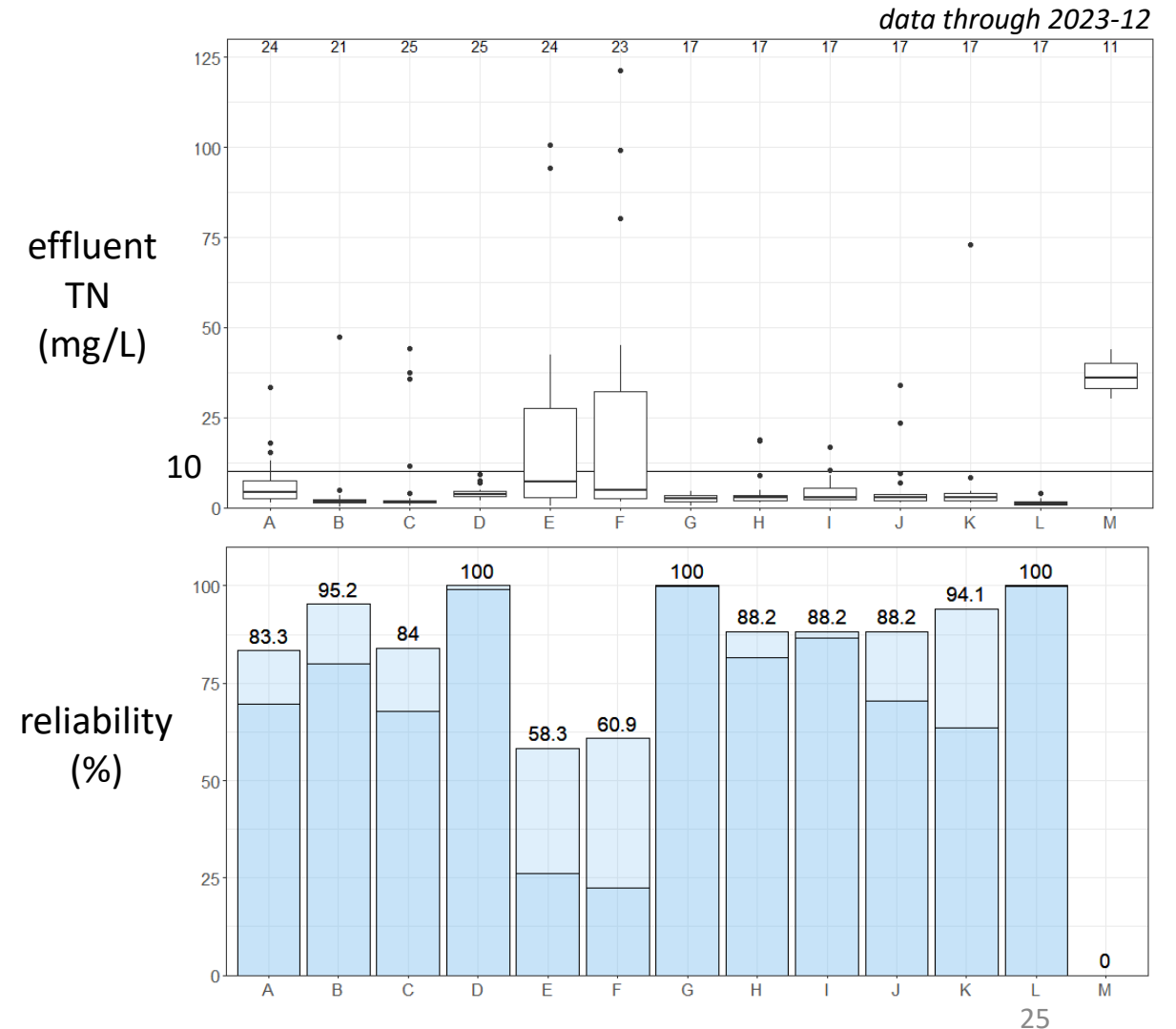
Partners



homeowners

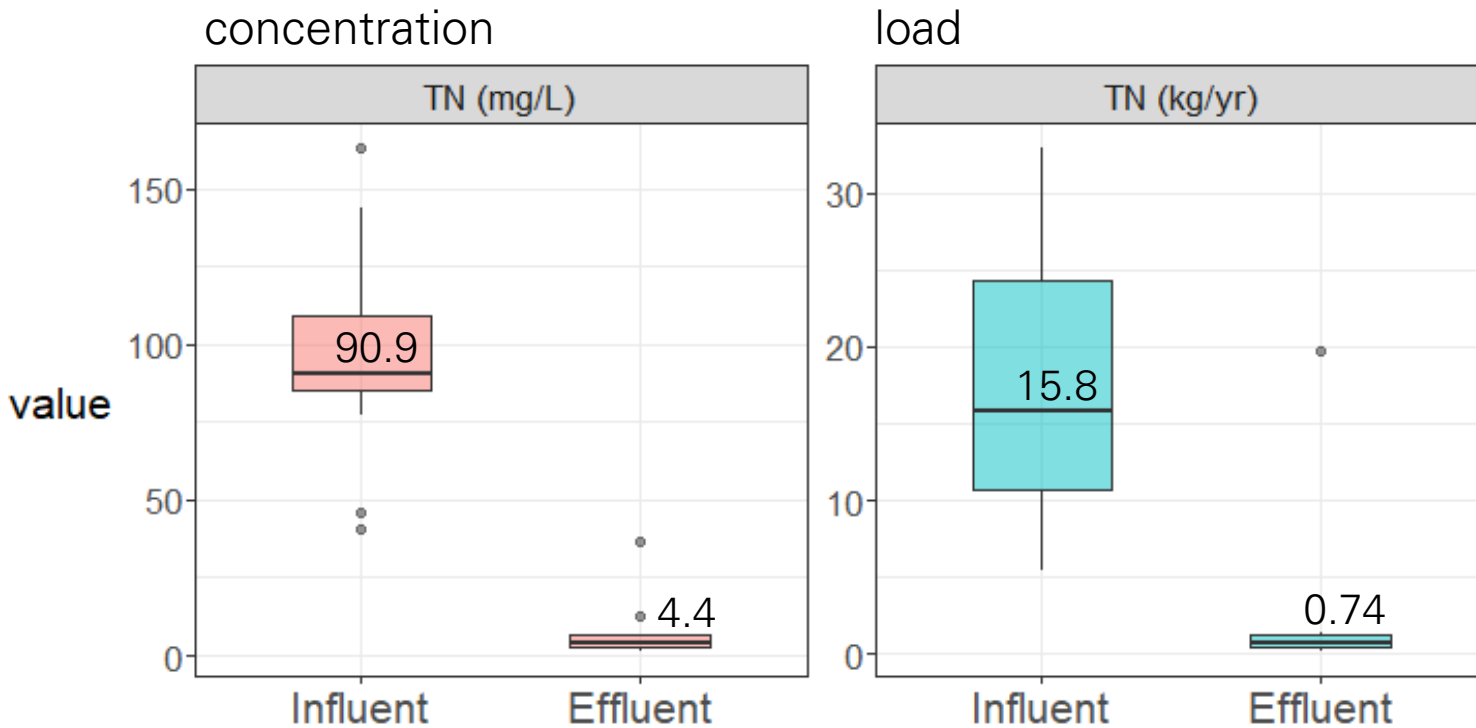
Reliability of individual systems

- Varies by household, technology, system adjustments.
- High performance requires good design, use, and maintenance.
- Monitoring and maintenance costs scale with number of systems.
- How might we implement cluster systems and/or responsible management entities (RME)?



Preliminary Information-Subject to Revision. Not for citation.

Overall: N concentration and load reductions exceed 90%



as of 2023-12 (11 to 25 months of sample data)
Labels are median values for the group of systems (n=12)

Preliminary Information-Subject to Revision. Not for citation.

Load estimates based on mean daily flow, mean monthly concentrations for systems with flow meters and a least one calendar year of data.

Boxes depict spread in estimates across systems.

Median total nitrogen (TN) reduction:*

concentration: 95%
load: 95%

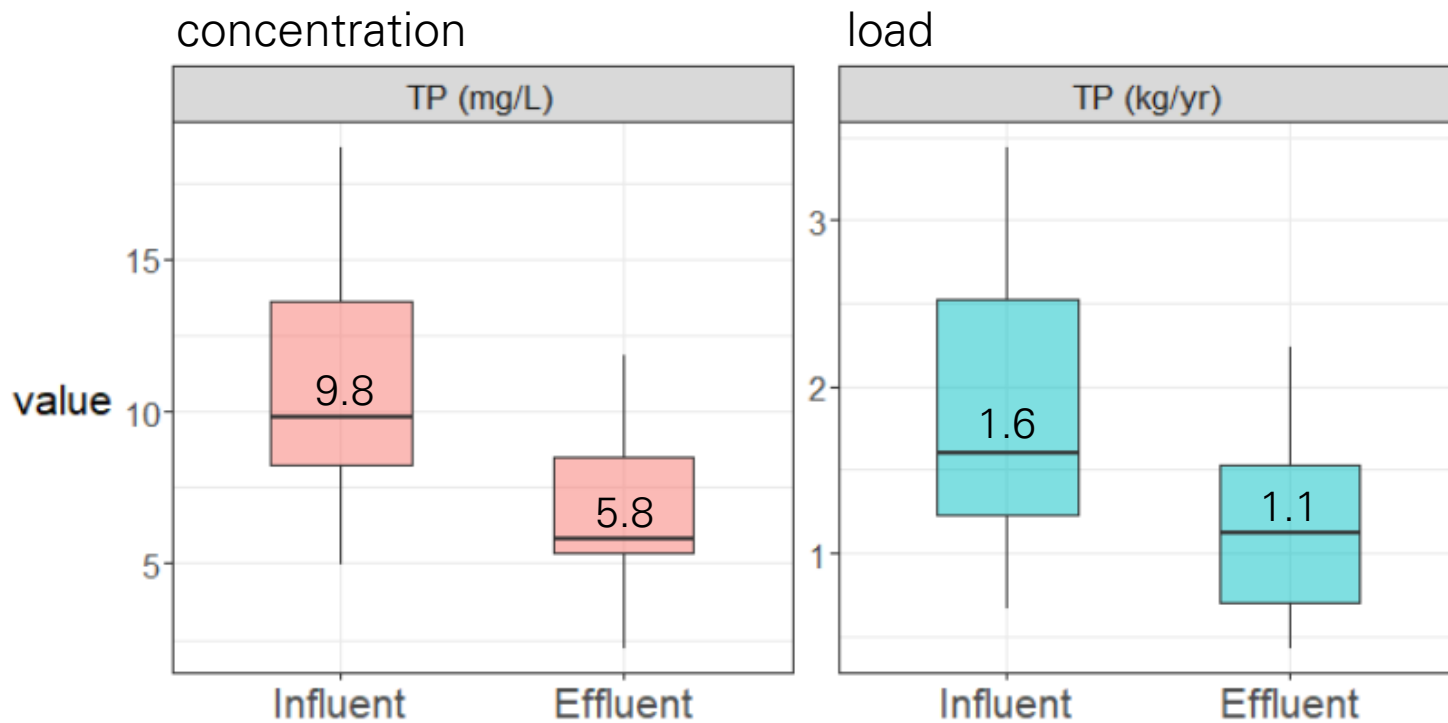
* values are sensitive to samples included and method of estimation

Partners



homeowners

P reductions are lower (note: systems were not designed for this purpose)



as of 2023-12 (11 to 25 months of sample data)
Labels are median values for the group of systems (n=12)

Preliminary Information-Subject to Revision. Not for citation.

Load estimates based on mean daily flow, mean monthly concentrations for systems with flow meters and a least one calendar year of data.

Boxes depict spread in estimates across systems.

Median total phosphorus (TP) reduction:*

concentration: 41%
load: 31%

* values are sensitive to samples included and method of estimation

Partners



homeowners

EIA septic system performance: beyond nutrients

 **frontiers** | Frontiers in **Marine Science**

TYPE Original Research
PUBLISHED 23 May 2023
DOI 10.3389/fmars.2023.1069599



OPEN ACCESS

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Factors in homeowners' willingness to adopt nitrogen-reducing innovative/alternative septic systems

Alexie N. Rudman^{1,2*}, Kate K. Mulvaney¹, Nathaniel H. Merrill¹
and Katherine N. Canfield¹

¹Office of Research and Development, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Narragansett, RI, United States, ²Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education, Oak Ridge Associated Universities, Oak Ridge, TN, United States



Ecological Engineering 161 (2021) 106157

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Ecological Engineering

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ecoleng

Removing 80%–90% of nitrogen and organic contaminants with three distinct passive, lignocellulose-based on-site septic systems receiving municipal and residential wastewater

Christopher J. Gobler^{a,b,*}, Stuart Waugh^a, Caitlin Asato^a, Patricia M. Clyde^{a,b},
Samantha C. Nyer^{a,b}, Molly Graffam^{a,b}, Bruce Brownawell^b, Arjun K. Venkatesan^{a,c},
Jennifer A. Goleski^b, Roy E. Price^{a,b}, Xinwei Mao^{a,c}, Frank M. Russo^{a,c}, George Heufelder^d,
Harold W. Walker^{a,1}

^a New York State Center for Clean Water Technology, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794, USA

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^c Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY 11794, USA

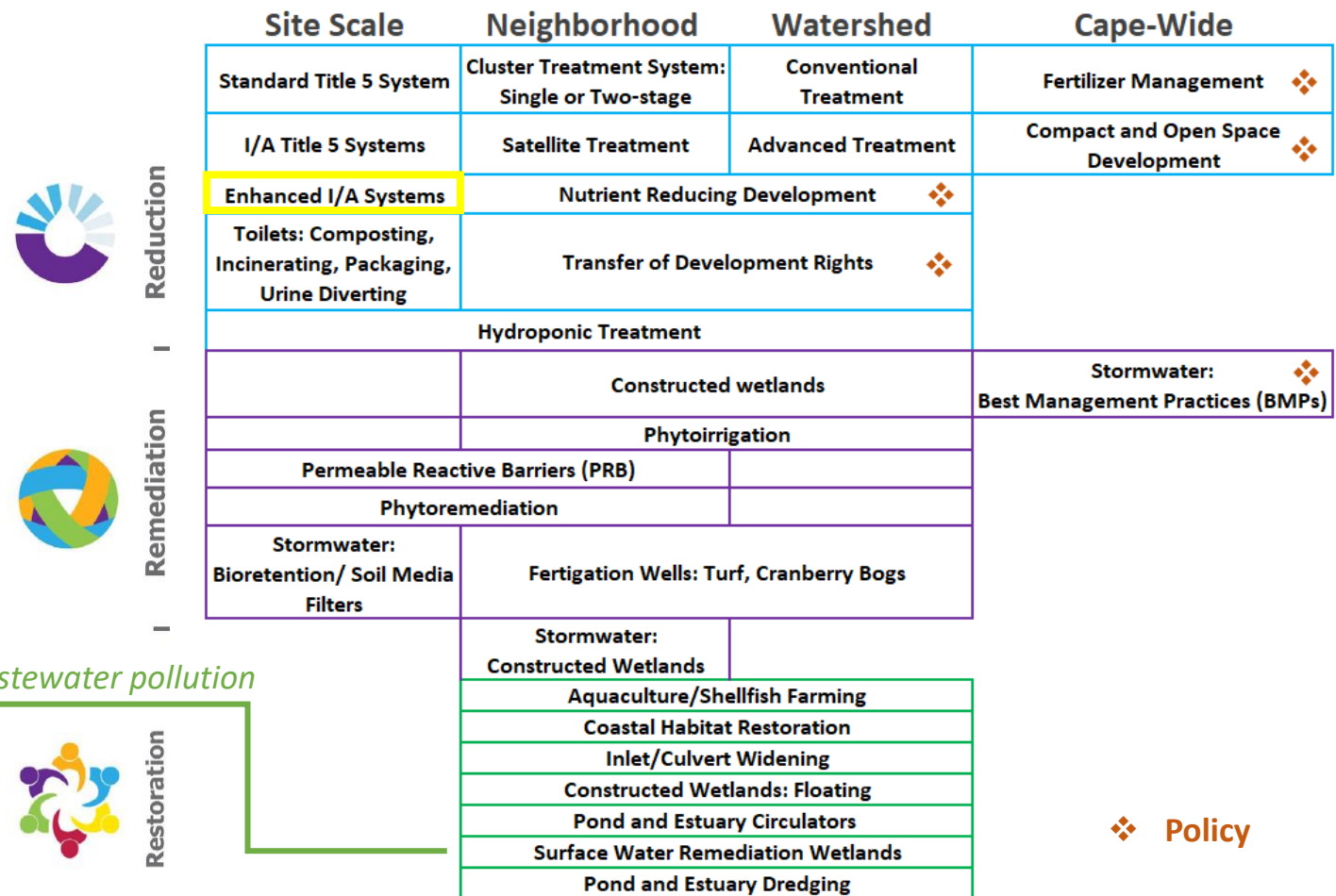
^d Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center (MASSSTC), Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment, Barnstable, MA 02630, USA

EIA septic systems in context

- One of many solutions
- Total mass of pollutants
- Values and perceptions of people
- Limitations and co-benefits



Wetland restoration site. Photo: K. Canfield

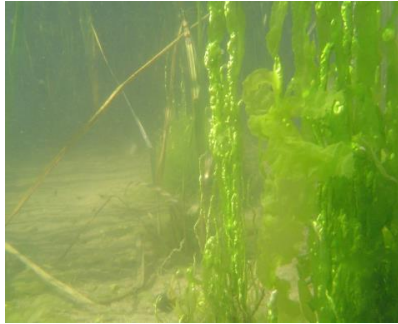


Summary and directions

- Significant reduction of onsite wastewater N loads is possible
- Incentives are limited
- Consequences of the status quo are indirect and remote
- Design and (redesign) for resilience
- Center equity: who pays, who benefits?



USGS



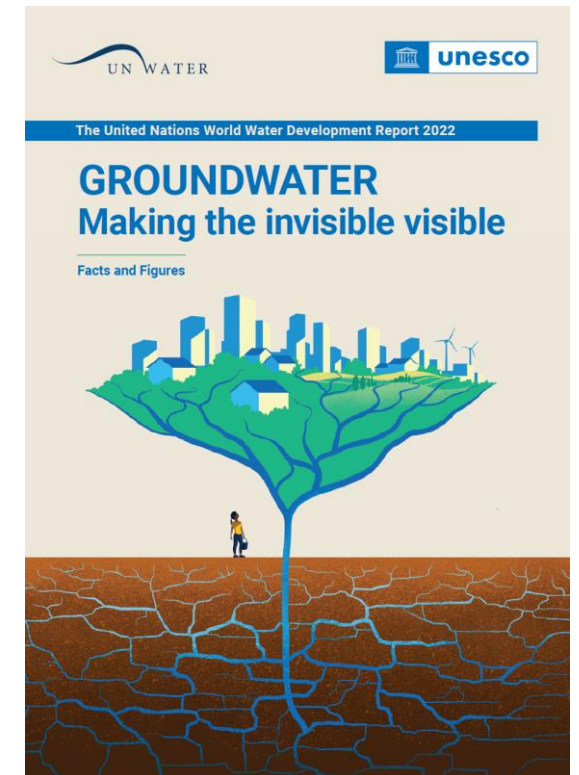
Buzzards Bay Coalition



NYTimes



Town of Mashpee



"...once groundwater becomes contaminated, it can be extremely difficult and costly to remedy."

Questions?

erban.laura@epa.gov

Laura Erban, PhD

Office of Research and Development
Center for Environmental Measurement and Modeling, Atlantic Coastal Environmental Sciences Division

CASE STUDIES: EIAS AS INFRASTRUCTURE

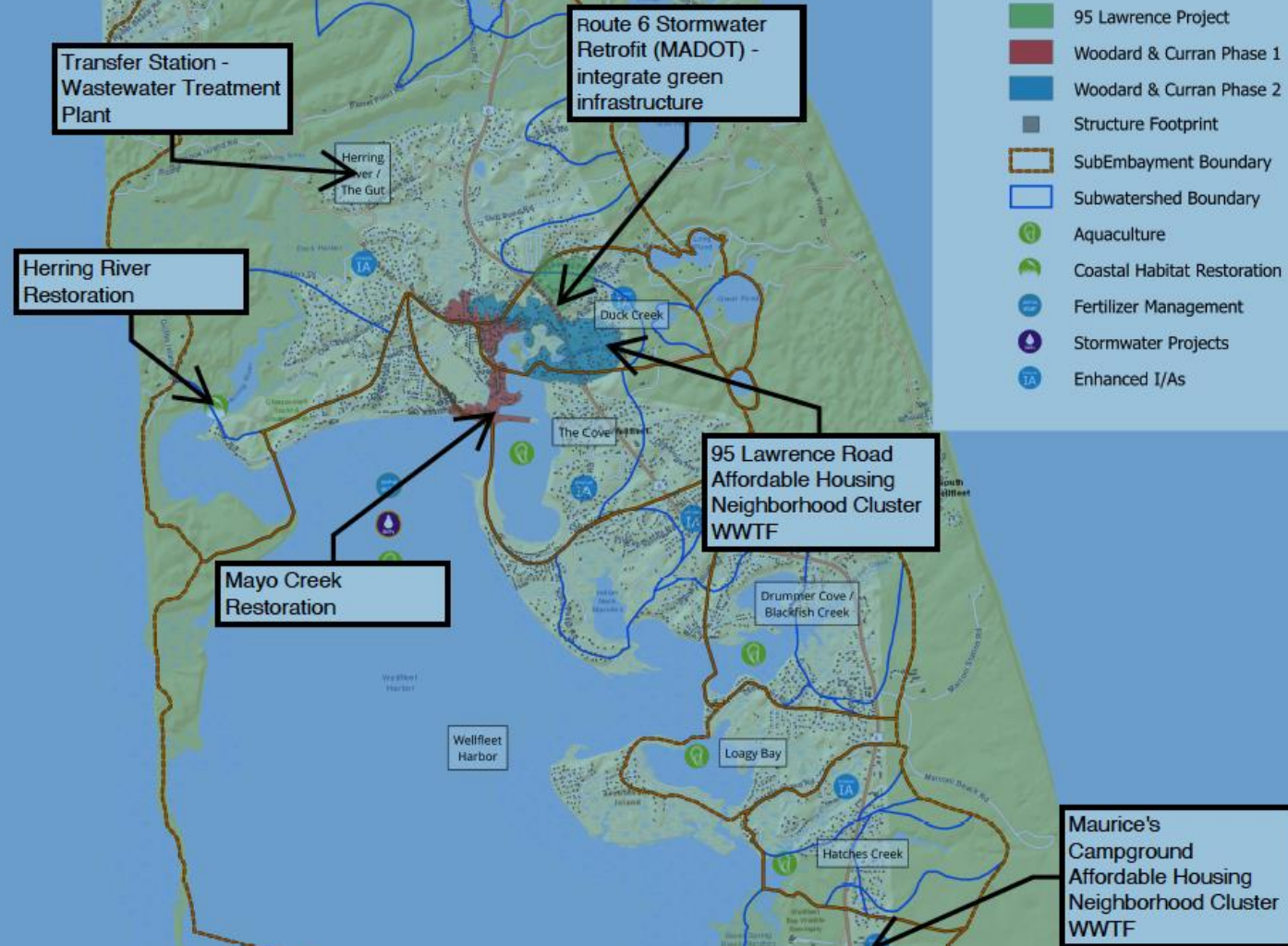
Scott Horsley

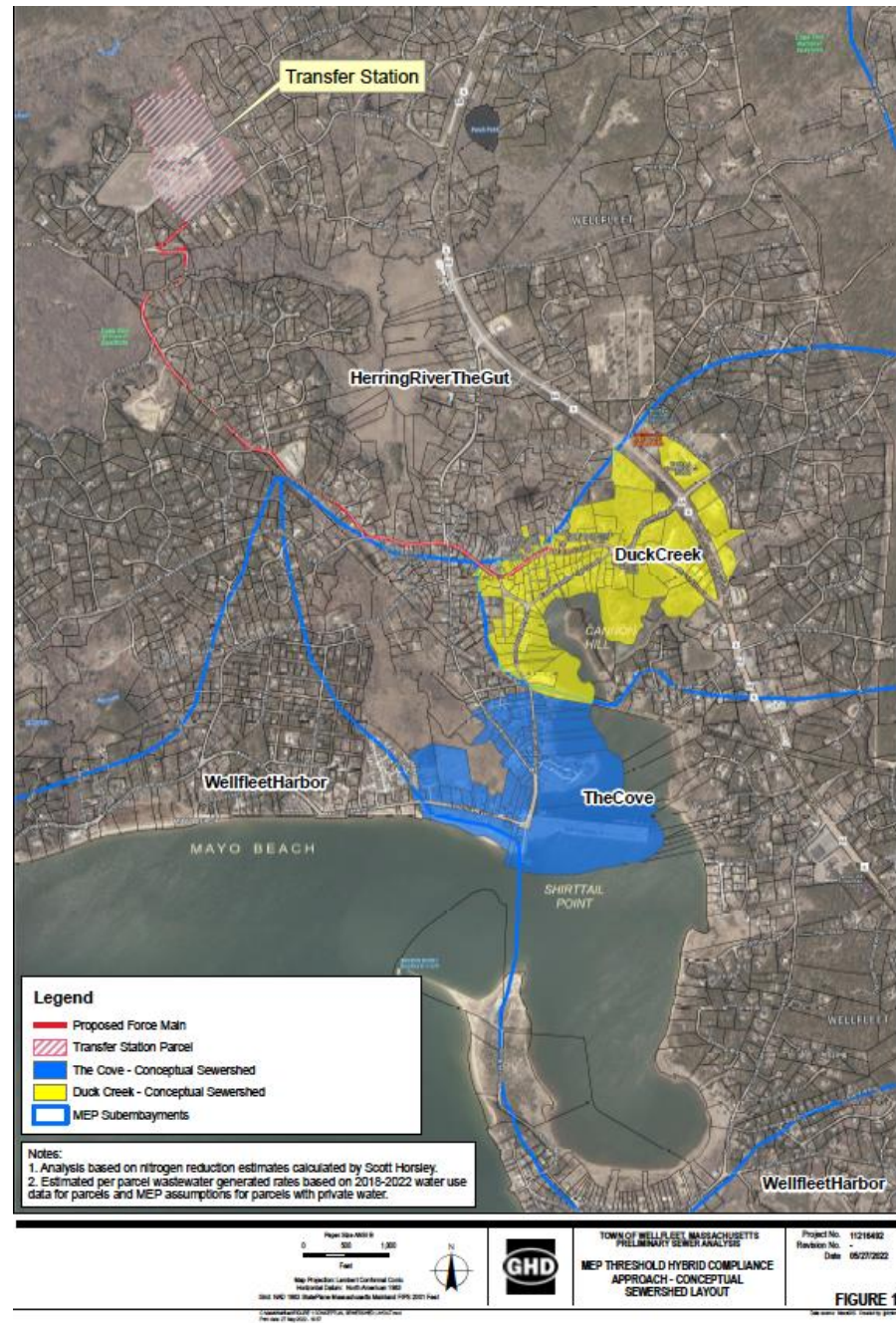
Water Resources Consultant



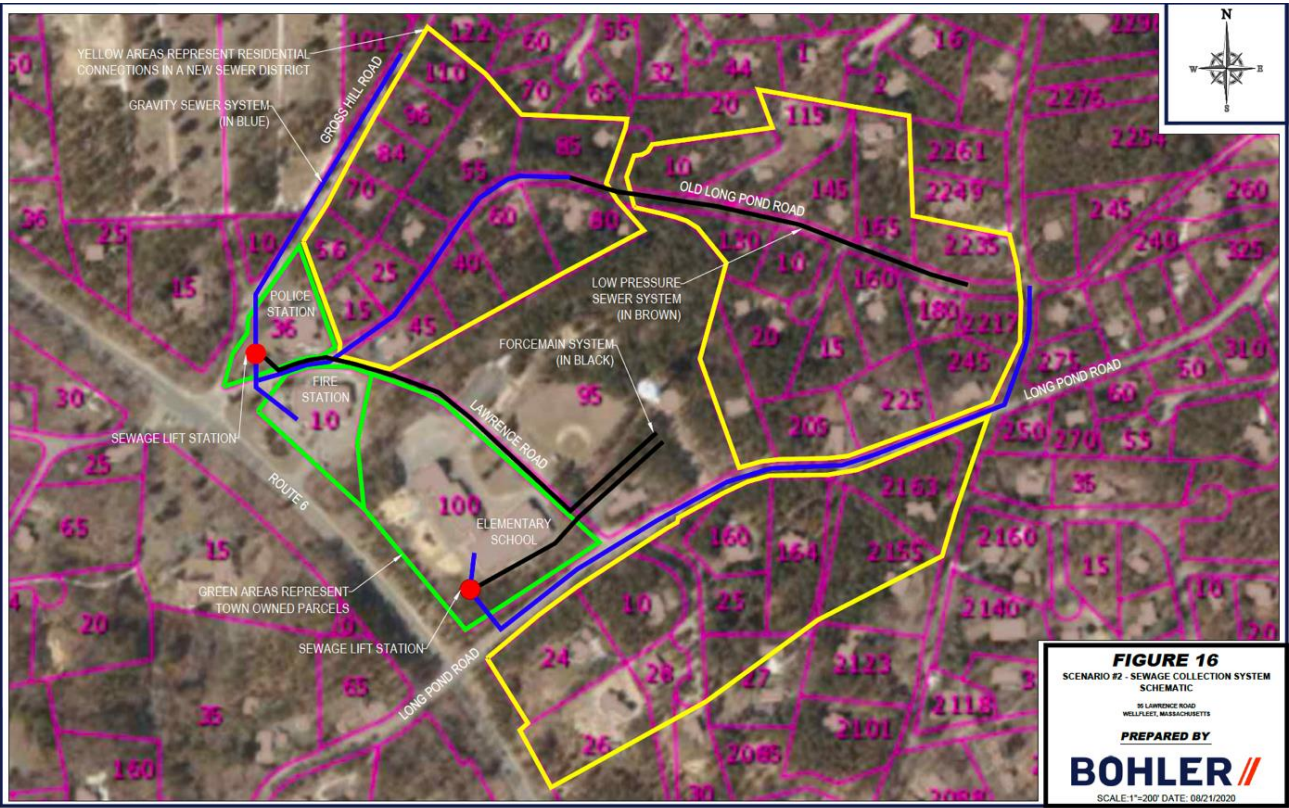
Wellfleet Targeted Watershed Management Plan (TWMP) Update Scott Horsley, Water Resources Consultant

WELLFLEET TARGETED WATERSHED PLAN

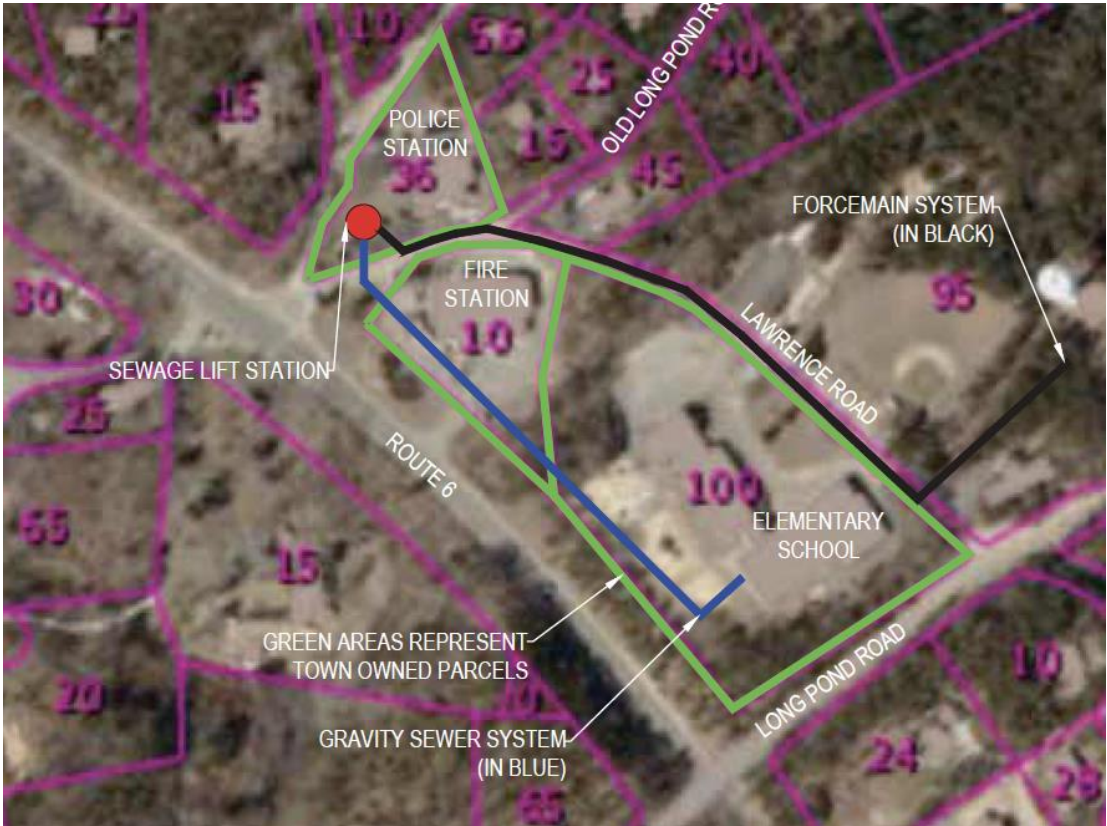




95 Lawrence Road Affordable Housing Project



Option A – Neighborhood System



Option B – Municipal Buildings



Wellfleet Targeted Watershed Management Plan - Cost/Sensitivity Analysis

Table 8 – Comparative Costs – Wastewater Alternatives

	Concentration	N load	N reduction		Cost	
	mg/liter	kg/year	kg/year	percentage	capital	\$/kg
Title 5 system	23.6	4.73				
I&A @ 5 mg/liter	5	0.90	3.83	81%	\$ 35,000	\$ 457
I&A @ 8 mg/liter	8	1.44	3.29	69%	\$ 35,000	\$ 533
I&A @ 11 mg/liter	11	1.98	2.74	58%	\$ 35,000	\$ 638
I&A @ 19 mg/liter	19	3.43	1.30	28%	\$ 35,000	\$ 1,344
Town-wide WW @ 3 mg/l	3	0.54	4.19	89%	\$ 76,400	\$ 912
Town-wide WW @ 5 mg/l	5	0.90	3.83	81%	\$ 76,400	\$ 998
Downtown WW @ 3 mg/l	3	0.54	4.19	89%	\$ 109,800	\$ 1,311
Downtown WW @ 5 mg/l	5	0.90	3.83	81%	\$ 109,800	\$ 1,435
Cluster Treatment A @ 6 mg/l	6	174	511	75%	\$ 4,703,300	\$ 460
Cluster Treatment A @ 10 mg/l	10	290	395	58%	\$ 4,703,300	\$ 595
Cluster Treatment B @ 6 mg/l	6	124	365	75%	\$ 2,546,210	\$ 349
Cluster Treatment B @ 10 mg/l	10	207	282	58%	\$ 2,546,210	\$ 451

Wellfleet Targeted Watershed Plan Costs (\$ M)

Sewer Collection & Treatment

95 Lawrence Road Affordable Housing WWTF

I&A Septics

	Scenario A Hybrid	Scenario B Traditional
Collection System	\$9.4	\$80.4
Wastewater Treatment	\$10.9	\$32.7
Sewer Laterals	\$3.2	\$27.5
Design	\$2.0	\$11.3
Construction Services	\$5.0	\$30.7
Total Municipal Centralized Infrastructure	\$30.5	\$182.6
Collection System	\$0.8	\$0.8
Wastewater Treatment	\$0.9	\$0.9
Leaching System	\$0.2	\$0.2
Design & Contingencies	\$0.6	\$0.6
Total 95 Lawrence Capital Costs	\$2.5	\$2.5
I&A Septics	\$63.0	\$44.9
Design	\$10.6	\$7.5
Total I&A Septics	\$73.6	\$52.4
TOTAL COSTS (millions)	\$106.6	\$237.5

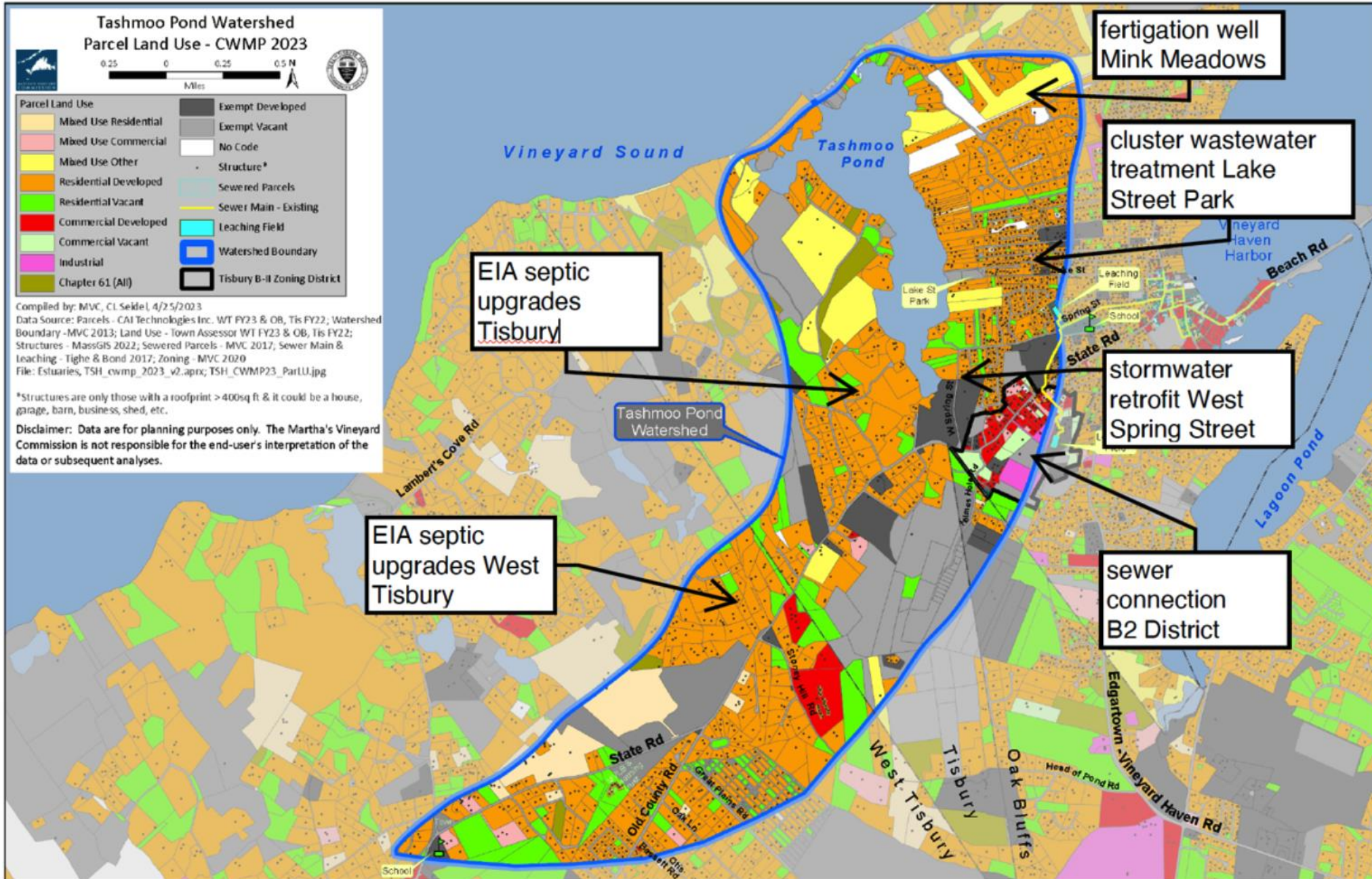


Lake Tashmoo Targeted Watershed Management Plan (TWMP)

Town of Tisbury

Scott Horsley

Water Resources Consultant



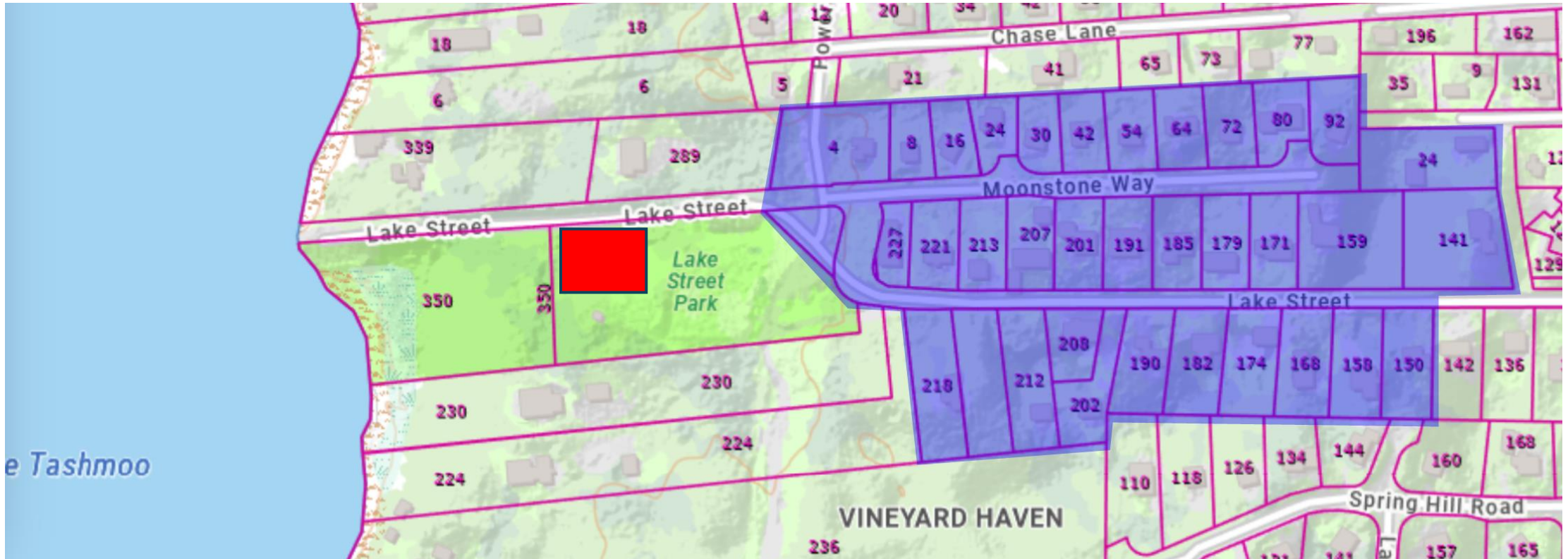
Nitrogen Reduction Strategy (2043)

Technology/Strategy	Calculation Summary	Reduction (kg/yr)
Sewering (B2 District)	16330 gals/day	560
Enhanced I&A Septics	838 upgrades x 171 gals/day x (26.25 - 10.0) mg/liter	3217
Cluster Treatment	9900 gals/day x (26.25 - 5.0) mg/liter	291
Fertilizer Management	25 percent x 457 kg/year	114
Stormwater Retrofits	25 percent x 715 kg/year	179
TOTAL		4361
Note: Calculations include conversion factors of 3.785 liters/gallon and 1,000,000 mg/kg		



Core Sewer Area
B2 Zoning District

Cluster Wastewater Treatment System – Lake Street Park



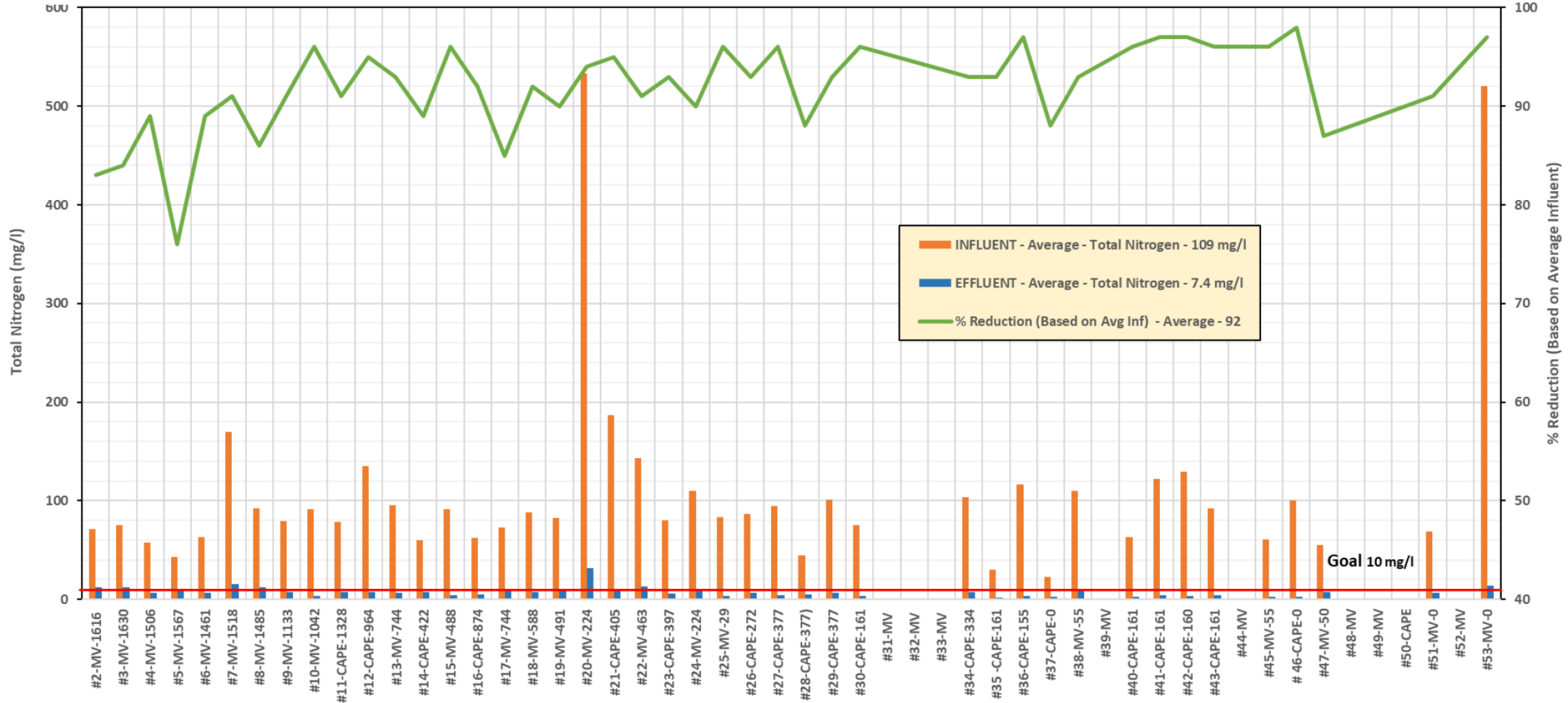
Note: Conceptual Plan

Average Total Nitrogen - Influent & Effluent

Installation #

Location - MV/ Cape Cod

Total Days of Operational Monitoring



Enhanced Innovative & Alternative (EIA) Septic Systems Actual (As-Built) Costs (including engineering design fees)

			Number	Construction Cost	Engineering Design	Total Cost Per System	Updated Cost Estimates 2023 (add \$10,000)
Retrofit of Existing Title 5 System							
		Buzzards Bay Coalition	4	\$24,891	\$3,000	\$27,891	
		Barnstable Clean Water Coalition	4	\$19,852	\$6,351	\$26,203	
		Average		\$22,372	\$4,676	\$27,047	\$37,047
Partial Upgrade (replace septic tank or leachfield)							
		Barnstable Clean Water Coalition	2	\$27,981	\$6,351	\$34,332	\$44,332
Full Upgrades (including both septic tank and leachfield)							
		Buzzards Bay Coalition	4	\$35,535	\$3,000	\$38,535	
		Barnstable Clean Water Coalition	2	\$32,808	\$6,351	\$39,159	
		Average		\$34,172	\$4,676	\$38,847	\$48,847
OVERALL AVERAGE COSTS						\$33,409	\$43,409
References: Buzzards Bay Coalition, Designing a Municipal Model for Mandating, Funding, and Managing I&A Septic Systems, June 2020							
Barnstable Clean Water Coalition, Schubael's Pond Study, 2022							

FILL IN THE BLUE BOXE FILL IN THE BLUE BOXE FILL IN THE BLUE BOXE FILL IN THE BLUE BOXE FILL IN THE BLUE BOXE!

PROJECT ID	TRHR21-13T	CONTRACTOR:	Reis Excavating	JW Dubis	Ken Rose Septic	Northeast Construction	Sweeney Excavation Corp.
PROPERTY OWNER	Anne & Alexander Marshall	CONTACT:	justin Reis	Eugene Dubis	Kevin Rose	Robert Tulloch	Shay Perry, PM/Estimator
STREET ADDRESS	6 Katharine Rd.	ADDRESS:	515 tubman rd	79 Stonehil Rd	PO Box 1443	32 Sara Ann Ln	P.O. Box 2078
TOWN, STATE, ZIP	Truro MA 02653	TOWN:	brewster	Chatham	Wellfleet	Brewster	Sagamore Beach
PHONE	508-349-6224	STATE:	ma	ma	ma	ma	MA
CELL	340-690-3236	ZIP:	2631	2633	2667	2631	2562
EMAIL	amarshall02@aol.com	PHONE:		508-945-0283	5083496804	508-989-4169	774-269-1914
YEAR BUILT	1972	CELL:	5082404837				774-283-3701
BID DUE DATE	11/9/2023	EMAIL:	reisexcavatingllc@gmail.com	pam@jwdubis.com	enroresseptic@comcast.net	rstnec@aol.com	j@sweeneyexcavatingcorp.com
TYPE OF WORK	SEPTIC INSTALL I/A NitROE system						
CONTACT:	Jean Stanley						
PHONE:	508-694-6521						
EMAIL:	jean@resource.org						
<i>Bids received by Jean Stanley, Program Director before 2pm 11/09/2023</i>							
WWU #	ESTIMATE		PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE	PRICE
1	NitROE SYSTEM						
A	Install according to design						
B	Perform all elements included in Septic WWU		\$ 16,500.00	\$ 54,875.00		\$ 28,969.00	\$ 32,582.00
C	Landscaping restoration		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 2,500.00		\$ 1,000.00	\$ 3,218.00
			\$ 17,500.00	\$ 57,375.00	\$ 21,325.00	\$ 29,969.00	\$ 35,800.00
2	KLEANTU NitROE SYSTEM						
	System	cost provided by KleanTu	\$ 23,500.00	\$ 23,500.00	\$ 23,500.00	\$ 23,500.00	\$ 23,500.00
	OM contract	cost provided by KleanTu	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 1,300.00	\$ 1,300.00
			\$ 24,800.00	\$ 24,800.00	\$ 24,800.00	\$ 24,800.00	\$ 24,800.00
JOB TOTAL			\$ 42,300.00	\$ 82,175.00	\$ 46,125.00	\$ 54,769.00	\$ 60,600.00

2 weeks after permit
5 days

3 wks from award
1 week

after obtaining permit
1 week

soon after permit
5-8 days

11/15/2023
5 days

Tisbury Health Regulations

SECTION 5. INSTALLATION OF ENHANCED DE-NITRIFICATION TECHNOLOGY

5.2 The following situations are “triggers” for the purposes of section 5.1:

- a) a new wastewater treatment system is required to serve a **Property** (i.e., new construction);
- b) at the time of replacement, upgrade or relocation of a property’s existing wastewater treatment system;
- c) additional development on the **Property** or a change in use or in intensity of use (or potential use) which would increase wastewater Nitrogen discharge beyond the Board of Health approved system capacity irrespective of whether the existing wastewater treatment system has excess sanitation capacity¹;
- d) at the time that a **Property** is transferred to another owner.



QUESTIONS?



B R E A K