



**TOWN OF EDGARTOWN  
OFFICE OF SELECTBOARD**

70 MAIN ST  
P.O. BOX 5158  
EDGARTOWN, MASSACHUSETTS 02539

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<https://edgartown-ma.us/>

January 18, 2022

Lisa Berry Engler, Director  
Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management  
251 Causeway Street, Suite 800  
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Request for Notice to Proceed – Edgartown Harbor Plan Renewal

Dear Director Engler:

Under 301 CMR 23.00, I am notifying you of the Town of Edgartown's intent to renew the 1997-2014 Edgartown Harbor Plan.

Originally known as Great Harbor, the Edgartown Harbor was a major whaling port in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Following the decline of the whaling industry the town evolved into a tourist destination and summer resort community. The harbor front is lined with historic homes dating back to the whaling era and a portion of the Edgartown business district. The harbor is well known as a yachting port and is a major economic engine of the town. The harbor planning area extends to Katama Bay, which opens to the harbor, and Cape Poge Bay on Chappaquiddick Island.

The original Edgartown Harbor Plan (EHP) was approved by EOEEA on October 2, 1997 and extended to April 30, 2014. Coastal systems are never static, and renewal of the plan will provide goals and strategies for addressing current conditions. Edgartown's 2019 MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Community Resilience project highlighted the need to address climate change-related impacts that include sea level rise, flooding, and warming water that will affect the harbor infrastructure and Katama Bay and Cape Poge Bay water quality. The Island continues to grow as a popular summer resort; that and changes in recreational use of the ponds because of the covid pandemic have increased conflicts between recreation and natural resources protection.

The goals of the Edgartown Harbor Plan renewal are:

1. To address climate-related impacts including sea level rise, flooding, storm surge, and increased frequency and intensity of coastal storms.
2. To address the growing conflict between harbor planning area recreation (boating/moorings) and impacts to sensitive coastal resources.

The current Edgartown Marine Advisory Committee (MAC) members are:



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Ed Handy, chairperson  
Martin Tommassian  
Bruce McIntosh

Relevant Town of Edgartown staff includes:

James Hagerty, Town Administrator  
Charlie Blair, Harbormaster  
Robie Morrison, Shellfish Constable  
Jane Varkonda, Conservation Agent

The consultant team consists of:

Adam Turner, Executive Director, Martha's Vineyard Commission  
Liz Durkee, Climate Change Planner, Martha's Vineyard Commission

### **1. Harbor Planning Area**

The harbor planning area remains unchanged from the previous EHP, and includes the Inner Harbor and Outer Harbor, adjacent Katama Bay and Cape Poge Bay, the Island of Chappaquiddick on the east side of the harbor and land area approximately to the nearest public way on the western shore. The harbor planning area includes the shellfish grounds of Cape Poge Bay and Katama Bay. It includes the "Village Waterfront," a compact area of bustling pedestrian-oriented activity, which abruptly gives way to quiet residential and open space lands which dominate the remainder of the shoreline. The bustling village activity extends into the water of Edgartown Inner Harbor, a narrow constriction between Edgartown proper and the Island of Chappaquiddick, where commercial, recreational, and municipal uses vie for limited waterways space. Remaining waters and residential land areas and the wild and remote places in the harbor planning area are appropriately characterized by the epithet, "quiet harbor."

### **Maps**

<https://dukescountygis.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=5a0e51868e7d44b7813ab7f4caae8579>

### **2. Historical Narrative and Rationale for the Edgartown Harbor Plan Renewal**



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### Historical Narrative and Context

Between 1818 and 1848 – the second deep sea whaling boom – the face of the Edgartown waterfront changed from beach shoreline to commercial wharfs. These filled tidelands decreased downtown public access to the water. Following the decline of the whaling industry smaller-scale bulkheads and fill were added to accommodate the needs of commercial fishermen and the new tourism industry. Today the “Village Waterfront” is a mix of water-dependent and non-water dependent businesses with improved waterfront access and a Historic District bylaw that protects the historic architecture of the downtown area. The harbor front includes dockage for the Chappaquiddick ferry, a three-car ferry that transports vehicles and passengers across the harbor channel between downtown Edgartown and Chappaquiddick Island. Historic Memorial Wharf, next to the ferry dockage, is a popular fishing spot and tourist attraction with sweeping second story views of the harbor, Katama Bay and Chappaquiddick. Memorial Wharf is currently being renovated and raised to address sea level rise and storm surge. The entire harbor front is at risk of the same. The harbor is critical to the town economy.

Cape Poge Bay and Katama Bay are historically and currently valuable shellfish resources. Recreational boating is coming in conflict with historic, commercial, and recreationally valuable shellfish habitat in the bays. Warmer and more acidic water, as well as rising seas and salt marsh erosion, are impacting the cultural and economic values of shell fishing.

The EHP was last extended to 2014 and a renewal is critical to address current conditions and the impacts of climate change.

Based on a 2017 Report on Implementation, this is the history of the EHP:

- Edgartown Harbor Plan (EHP) approved by EOEEA, October 2, 1997
- 2002: EHP extended to April 30, 2003
- 2003: EHP extended for ten years, to 2013
- 2013: EHP extended to April 30, 2014
- 2014: request for ten-year renewal
- 2022 Request for Notice to Proceed – EHP Renewal

### Rationale for initiating EHP Renewal:

Current management issues include an increasing recreational boater population and its impact on shellfish resources, climate change-related issues, including the Chappaquiddick ferry infrastructure, harbor front stormwater management, and the following:

- Need for waterfront toilet facility



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- Need for dredge permits to enhance federal navigation channel, Edgartown Harbor
- Salt marsh protection – protect values of salt marshes (flood control, fish and shellfish habitat, bird habitat, carbon absorption, pollution filtration) considering sea level rise
- Protection of aesthetic/historic/cultural sites in harbor planning area - historic homes and other structures, Edgartown Lighthouse
- Need for community piers – Gardner property on Chappaquiddick, the Edgartown Lighthouse and Collins Beaches
- Need for launching ramps to increase water access for smaller boats

The 2019 Edgartown MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program's Community Resilience Report identified the following priority actions: conduct a feasibility study to increase resilience of the Chappaquiddick Ferry infrastructure, conduct a long-term feasibility study to maintain accessibility through the harbor, create a comprehensive conservation and protection plan for wetlands and waterways, and develop a beach management plan for Town beaches.

In 2020 the Town revisited the Cape Poge Bay District of Critical Planning Concern to address the impacts of increased recreational boating in the bay.

### Planning Context

The town received a MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Action Grant project for a vulnerability assessment of municipal infrastructure and environmental factors to develop strategies for flooding, increased storm intensity, sea level rise and storm surge. This study will be a valuable tool for updating the EHP.

Based on 2014 and 2017 Reports on Implementation, the following prior goals have been met:

- Routine water testing throughout harbor planning area
- Pier prohibition, Cape Poge Bay, south of Long Point in Katama Bay
- Dredging channel from Katama Point to town boat ramp
- Street and catch basin cleaning
- Improved public access in village waterfront
- Harbor operated at "zero cost" to taxpayers
- No discharge designation
- Surface Water Zoning District (water dependent purposes, "quiet harbor" identity)
- Historic District overlay zoning bylaw (protects view from water)

In addition, harbor finger piers were repaired and Norton Point Beach renourished. Other related projects include the Fuller Street Beach and dune restoration project (CZM grant funded), Norton Point



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bathroom relocation and restoration project (CZM grant funded), Norton Point access relocation and restoration project (CZM grant funded), and Katama Bay water quality improvement dredge project (SEC grant funded).

Aquaculture is an emerging opportunity. If aquaculture remains feasible considering climate change impacts (such as warming and more acidic coastal waters) it can become a significant commercial industry that will employ local residents, help improve coastal pond water quality, and provide healthy, locally produced food for the community.

### **3. Description of Public Planning Process**

Public and municipal participation is critical to planning success. Prior to the start of the public planning process the MAC will expand its membership to include, but not be limited to, a resident of Chappaquiddick Island, a resident of Katama, the shellfish constable, and representatives of the aquaculture industry, the downtown business community, the downtown residential community, and the town climate change committee.

The MAC will meet bi-monthly during the planning process. The MAC will hold an initial community-at-large meeting/listening session to introduce the planning process and identify ways for the public to participate. There will be three stakeholder meetings, one with a focus on the harbor area, one on Katama Bay/Cape Poge Bay, and one where the following stakeholders will be invited to attend: representatives from the Select Board, Planning Board, Parks and Recreation Department, Shellfish Department, Conservation Commission, Capital Programs Committee, Board of Health, Historic District Commission, Dredge Committee, Martha's Vineyard Commission, the Edgartown Land Bank Advisory Board, Edgartown Master Plan Committee, commercial and recreational fishermen, recreational boaters, and "Village Waterfront" business owners and homeowners. When the EHP is drafted a public meeting will be held to seek public comment on the draft plan. Abutters to the Edgartown Harbor, Cape Poge Bay and Katama Bay will be notified of the pre-planning listening session and the draft plan public meeting. Consideration will be given to holding meetings via Zoom to allow input from seasonal residents.

### **4. Description of Study and Analysis Program**

The MAC will gather baseline data, analyze new data (see below) and current harbor area maps, and incorporate community and stakeholder input to develop a comprehensive list of harbor areas issues. Based on this input a set of goals and implementation strategies will be developed. The Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) will assist in the planning analysis and development of implementation strategies.



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The EHP planning effort has consistently been built upon previous planning efforts, public participation, and analysis of data, in accordance with the Office of Coastal Zone Management harbor planning regulations and principles of sound planning. This 2021 EHP renewal will be based on new data and information, including the following:

The MA MVP Community Resilience Building workshops and report identified flooding and sea level rise as priority issues to be addressed.

An Edgartown MVP Action Grant project is developing strategies to address flooding, increased storm intensity, sea level rise and storm surge.

The MVC's Edgartown booklet, *Looking Forward: Climate Change Adaptation Context*, includes town-specific climate impacts, hazards, and projections, as well as a comprehensive list of town and Island-wide planning resources.

Up-to-date shellfish license and catch records.

MVC and town water quality monitoring data.

Relevant findings from the expanded stakeholder committee for the amended Cape Poge DCPC.

The MVC Storm Tide Pathways project.

Guidance and planning assistance from the MVC climate change planner.

The 2021 Trustees of Reservations State of the Coast Report that identifies specific coastal climate change impacts on Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket.

The Woodwell Climate Research Center, Woods Hole, decadal modeling of Island-specific climate change projections (through MVC).

NOAA grant to document Island weather for the past forty years including temperature, rainfall, wind, and storms (through MVC).

The MVC is developing a comprehensive Vineyard and Gosnold Climate Action Plan (CAP) that includes planning for land use and natural resources, transportation, infrastructure, and economic resilience. Edgartown stakeholders will be represented on the CAP planning team and relevant strategies developed for these themes can be incorporated into the EHP.

In addition, the town will work with the MVC and the Barnstable County Floodplain Specialist to update the town's floodplain bylaw considering climate change-related impacts to the harbor area including increased flooding and storm surge.



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With all the above planning initiatives underway in Edgartown and throughout the Island of Martha's Vineyard, this is an opportune time to incorporate the results and findings into review of the Edgartown Harbor Plan.

Finally, the town harbor master, shellfish constable, Conservation Commission, and conservation agent, among other town officials, are well versed in CZM, DEP and other state regulations and policies and are committed to compliance with said regulations as they pertain to the Municipal Harbor Plan process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Lucy Morrison  
Chairperson, Edgartown Planning Board  
Town of Edgartown