

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## SECTION I: FRAMEWORK OF THE PLAN

### INTRODUCTION

The South Coastal Harbor Management Plan is an outgrowth of the original Stage Harbor Management Plan adopted by the Town of Chatham in 1994. Its purpose is to update the provisions of the original plan that apply to the Stage Harbor Complex, and to extend harbor planning to Chatham's adjoining waters of the Southway and Nantucket Sound.

The overarching goal of the plan is *to achieve balance among the various commercial and recreational uses of the harbor system and the quality and quantity of natural resources*. Achieving this goal requires the Town to consider broad community input in managing the harbor system, with priority in decision-making given to the long-term environmental health of the system and to maintaining a variety of harbor uses.

Underlying this planning goal are the following six management objectives:

- Maintaining the navigability of the harbor waterways,
- Protecting the viability of the commercial fishing and shellfishing industries,
- Maintaining a mix of recreational uses in the harbor areas,
- Protecting water quality, and the quality and quantity of shellfish, finfish and wildlife species and habitat,
- Maintaining and enhancing adequate public access to the harbor shoreline and waterways, and
- Preserving the character and scenic quality of the harbor areas.

The boundary for the South Coastal Harbor Management Plan encompasses all waterways, all filled tidelands and all shoreline within the following three planning areas:

- (1) *Stage Harbor Complex* (as addressed in the original plan,) encompassing Stage Harbor, Oyster Pond, Oyster Pond River, Mill Pond, Little Mill Pond, and Mitchell River;
- (2) *Southway Complex* encompassing the area between North Monomoy and South Beach, including Outermost Harbor and the Morris Island Cut; and
- (3) *Nantucket Sound Complex* encompassing the near-shore waters of Nantucket Sound and Taylor's Pond, Mill Creek, Buck's Creek/Cockle Cove Creek/Sulphur Springs, Cockle Cove Beach, Forest Beach, Pleasant Street Beach, Ridgevale Beach, and Harding's Beach.

The plan includes a review of resource conditions and human use characteristics in each of the three planning areas, integration of relevant Town plans and related information pertinent to issues, identification of management issues, evaluation of management responses, and recommendations for action. Maps depicting resources, activities or other management topics are provided. The balance of this executive summary provides a brief review of major topics and recommendations found in each part of the plan.

## SECTION II: STAGE HARBOR COMPLEX

# TOWN LANDINGS AND ACCESS POINTS

Town landings and access points in the Stage Harbor Complex are heavily used for a variety of purposes, resulting in landside and waterside congestion and impacts. The Town's management of town landings and access points will continue to be guided by the following policies:

- Landings will continue to be accessible to all legal uses to the maximum extent possible, in balance with resource protection. The use of landings by one user group should not preclude fair and equal use by another user group.
- Town landings function as gateways to the Town's waterways. Managing the capacity of landside access points is one of the Town's most effective ways of controlling the amount of activity on Chatham's waterways. The finite amount of parking available at town access points serves to limit the number of boats that can safely access the waterways from these locations at any one time.
- Town policies and practices for issuing permits for moorings that are accessed from town landings must consider landside impacts of overburdened parking, public safety, congestion at town landings, and spill-over parking onto local streets.
- Recognizing the continuing importance of town access points for commercial and recreational uses the Town will identify and evaluate new opportunities for facilitating access to the Stage Harbor Complex.

### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Continue a high level of municipal investment in the acquisition, improvement, maintenance, and management of town landings, access points and associated facilities.
2. Develop a public education program to inform resident and transient boaters about the opportunities, facilities, and regulations associated with various landings and access points. The campaign may include outreach to local media, printed materials and improved and coordinated signs at access points.
3. Develop a parking plan that addresses the vehicular access issues unique to each landing.
4. Secure permanent public use and access to Bridge Street landing, if possible.
5. Develop and implement a plan to locate permanent or seasonal public restrooms at heavily used landings and access points.
6. Identify all access points that may not be governed by the Town's existing regulations for landings and water dependent properties and address the need to clarify regulatory oversight at these locations. Evaluate the potential for seeking town landing designation for commonly used access points that are not currently so designated, including Stage Harbor Point, Morris Island Road, and Water Street.

7. Develop a dinghy storage plan appropriate to conditions at each town landing or access. Approaches to dinghy storage that should be considered include dinghy registration, racks, and use of town-owned “courtesy” dinghies.
8. Identify and evaluate opportunities to create or acquire new public access points as they may become available.

## **COMMERCIAL FISHING INFRASTRUCTURE**

Commercial fishing and shellfishing is important to the local economy and is fundamental to Chatham’s heritage. A continuing objective of the Town’s management of the Stage Harbor Complex is to ensure that landside and waterside facilities needed to support commercial fishing and shellfishing are adequate to, at a minimum, safely and efficiently handle the current level of commercial fishing and shellfishing activity.

### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Evaluate options for ensuring adequate offloading, packaging and storage facilities for the commercial fleet in perpetuity, through repair and maintenance of existing facilities and potential addition of new public or private facilities. Among the options to be explored should be the potential for town purchase and operation of commercial offloading facilities, and incentives for private or cooperative purchase and operation of facilities for these uses. Whenever private waterfront property comes onto the market, the Town should evaluate the potential benefits and feasibility of purchasing the parcel.
2. Operators of commercial offloading facilities should provide adequate waste (trash, waste oil, etc.) management procedures and equipment, commensurate with the operation and services provided by the facility, in order to prevent degradation of water quality or surrounding resources.
3. Foster cooperation among town officials, commercial fishermen and local marinas and boat yards to ensure that adequate haul out facilities are available to the commercial fleet, and that they meet the most stringent applicable environmental requirements for protection of sensitive coastal resources.
4. Provide a reasonable number of public moorings to be made available to transient commercial boats needing to offload in Stage Harbor, provided the boat operators adhere to strict management protocols and all applicable regulations.
5. Continue to acquire public moorings at a reasonable rate in balance with the demand for private moorings. Public moorings could relieve demand for private moorings by commercial fishermen and seasonal boaters who only need to use a mooring for a limited period of time.
6. Protect provisions within the zoning bylaw that allow for gear storage in residential areas. Gear storage is currently provided at an area at the Chatham Airport. However misuse of the storage site has resulted in the expenditure of town resources to remove hazardous and

inappropriate material from the site. Guidelines and access restrictions should be developed and enforced to prevent future misuse. The Town should evaluate the potential for alternate or additional gear storage areas as needed. Areas that have been under consideration include the Chatham transfer station.

#### MARINA AND RECREATIONAL BOATING FACILITIES

The four private marinas or boat yards in the Stage Harbor Complex provide important services to recreational and commercial vessels, including maintenance, hauling, fueling, boat storage, and parking. The continued safe operation of these facilities is an objective of the Town's management plan.

##### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Marinas and boatyards should be brought into compliance with all existing federal, state and local water quality protection regulations and measures. Operators should be encouraged to voluntarily adopt the most protective best management practices for their operations
2. Marinas and boatyards should be allowed to expand activities provided: they meet stringent environmental regulations; the demand for services accommodated by the expansion can be demonstrated; the land use impacts, particularly parking, are adequately addressed; and the use of upland locations can be demonstrated to be infeasible.

#### MOORING MANAGEMENT

The number of mooring permits in the Stage Harbor Complex has increased by one-third since the original management plan was prepared a more than a decade ago. While some portion of this increase is the result of improved record keeping, it is plausible that the number of moorings in the system has increased by a significant number over the past twelve years. While the original plan included a mooring proposals and recommendations, many were not implemented due to concerns about their appropriateness for Chatham's mix of recreational and commercial vessels. Recently the Town has instituted a number of changes in mooring policies and regulations that have improved mooring administration. A key objective of the current plan is to continue to build on that work in addressing issues of mooring congestion, placement, enforcement and environmental impacts.

##### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. A comprehensive mooring program for the Stage Harbor Complex—including a mooring layout proposal—that addresses a range of community access and environmental impact concerns and is consistent with state and federal law, is needed. The program should complement existing mooring regulations and be consistent with the South Coastal Harbor Management Plan. Funds to implement the program within a reasonable timeframe should be appropriated by the Town. The number of mooring permits in the Stage Harbor Complex should remain at approximately the current (2003) level until such time as the program has been developed, adopted by the appropriate local authorities, and put into effect.

2. The Harbormaster and Waterways Advisory Committee should continue to evaluate the utilization of environmentally compatible mooring technologies and techniques as a means of limiting impacts on the environment and achieving the mooring layout plan. The use of alternate technologies or methods should not be pursued as a means of increasing the number of moorings in the Stage Harbor Complex. However, as noted above, changes in technology and improvements in layout could achieve efficiencies that result in no net negative impacts on congestion or natural resource impacts from the addition or relocation of moorings throughout the system, and without compromising vessel safety.
3. The Town should move forward with a proposal to designate environmentally sensitive areas and enforce the removal of concrete block moorings from those areas within five years of the designation. Specific criteria and evaluation methods for the designation of such areas should be developed.
4. Issues of insurance liability and compliance with applicable town bylaws and regulations need to be evaluated and addressed regarding instances when the Harbormaster authorizes temporary use of a mooring by a vessel other than the permit holder's.

#### REGULATION OF PRIVATE PIERS AND OTHER SHORELINE STRUCTURES

Private docks can have a variety of impacts on public access, navigation, and natural resources values addressed in this plan. Each of these impacts needs to be considered in the consistency review of specific private dock proposals. At the same time, clear permitting guidelines are needed to inform prospective dock permit applicants of the issues inherent in the consistency review and subsequent local and state reviews, and to assist them in assessing the potential for obtaining necessary local and state approvals prior to investment in application. The following actions are recommended to clearly define the purpose and process of the consistency review.

##### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Undertake an assessment of the entire Stage Harbor Complex shoreline, focusing on the public access, navigation, and natural resource values addressed by the management plan. The assessment is necessary to determine where along the shoreline of the Complex piers may be found in compliance with the plan, and any areas where piers are not in compliance with the plan. The assessment should evaluate primary and secondary impacts on natural resources, public access, water quality, and navigation. (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)
2. The assessment should be used to designate areas where the location of private piers may or may not be consistent with the management plan. The assessment should also be used to evaluate performance and design standards for private docks in areas where they may be consistent. Any such designations or specifications should be recommended for integration in to the local zoning bylaw governing docks, as well as wetland protection regulations. (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)

3. The plan does not address the impacts of other types of structures such as erosion control structures, stairways or walkways. The potential impacts or benefits of these types of structures must also be evaluated, and guidelines for permitting should be developed. (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)
4. The Town should take action to ensure that the Davis dock is removed expeditiously. The Town should act similarly in all other instances that may arise where a private property owner fails to maintain a dock or other structure within the tidelands, resulting in harm to the public and surrounding resources. (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)
5. The Town should work with the Department of Environmental Protection which administers Chapter 91, to monitor all structures within tidelands, including docks, piers, bulkheads and stairways, and ensure they have a valid Chapter 91 license and that the provisions of the license are being enforced. (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)

#### DREDGING

On-going dredging in selected areas in the Stage Harbor Complex will be necessary to ensure the safe, navigable passage of vessels. Future dredging may be proposed for on-going maintenance, to create new access, for emergency purposes, or in response to water quality or other natural resource conditions. Dredging should not be allowed to proceed if its primary purpose is to accommodate passage of larger vessels.

#### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Continue maintenance dredging (dredging of previously licensed dredge sites) of the Federal Channel and other previously licensed dredged areas to continue safe access into the Stage Harbor Complex, and for the use of facilities there.
  - a. Allow dredging to maintain navigable depths at all town landings and access points. Accordingly, the Town should develop an inventory of proposed dredge activities and sites for disposal of dredged material, particularly if there is no prior record of licensed dredging.
  - b. Allow dredging to maintain navigable depths at private facilities such as marinas, boatyards and offloading facilities that provide part of the boating infrastructure and have a license for maintenance dredging
2. Allow improvement (new) dredging in areas where shoaling is limiting access through traditionally important publicly navigable waterways. Traditionally open waterways including Buck's Creek, Mill Creek, and Little Mill Pond should be evaluated to determine if dredging would improve access, water quality, and wildlife habitat.
3. In the design or review of dredging projects, the Town should ensure that dredging should only occur to the depth required to maintain navigation or improve water quality, and only if a project meets all local, state and federal environmental reviews and is consistent with the approved harbor management plan.

4. The Town should ensure that funds are available to undertake regular bathymetric surveys of all navigable channels throughout the Complex to be able to track changes in depth over time.

#### BOATING SAFETY AND NAVIGATION

The Town should continue a policy of supporting a broad range of recreational and commercial activities in the Stage Harbor Complex while ensuring environmental protection and public safety.

#### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Continue to use all means available to manage the number and size of boats that access the Stage Harbor Complex through town landings and access points.
2. The Harbormaster is encouraged to continue active, highly visible patrol presence during the prime boating season (Memorial Day through Labor Day), especially on weekends.
3. Appropriate town officials, as necessary, should undertake relocation of lobster pots when the location of pots poses a hazard to navigation. If such measures are not sufficient to address the problem, then regulatory steps should be considered.
4. Public education and changes in waterways regulation should be evaluated to promote safe and appropriate use of recreational equipment and activities, including but not limited to kayaks and canoes, windsurfing, kite sailing, towed tubes and water skis, and swimming.

## COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL SHELLFISHING

Commercial and recreational shellfishing is an important part of Chatham's heritage and the local economy. The plan seeks to support commercial and recreational shellfishing through regulatory enforcement, resource management and a continued high level of commitment to propagation.

#### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Continue the Town's commitment to propagation of the wild shellfishery. Currently, Chatham has one of the most innovative and far reaching propagation programs among Cape Cod towns. The many years of successful propagation are no doubt largely responsible for the sustainability of commercial shellfishing in the community. The Town should explore the benefits of expanding the propagation program to encompass other species and to increase the production of seed. The adequacy of the existing upwelling facility to meet the Town's long-term propagation needs should be evaluated.
2. The number of commercial and recreational permits has increased over the past several years. The Town should ensure that increases in the number of permit holders is matched by a commensurate increase in the amount of resources spent on enforcement.

3. The ability to offload shellfish at town landings is an important part of the local shellfishing industry and is among the charter uses of those facilities. The on-going importance of this activity at town landings is acknowledged by the plan. The on-going management of town landings should ensure that offloading activity is undertaken in compliance with all applicable town bylaws and regulations.
4. Through the development of the comprehensive mooring program proposal (see 3.4 above) the town should evaluate creative methods for addressing demand for increased access to moorings for commercial shellfishermen.
5. In evaluating proposals for waterways projects, the Town should require applicants to provide documented assessment of impacts on shellfish or shellfish habitat and access to shellfish beds, from projects including: dredging, private and public docks, moorings and mooring fields, erosions control structures, catwalks. Preservation of shellfish, shellfish habitat, and public access to shellfish habitat should be given special consideration, in balance with broader public access needs.

## WETLANDS AND EELGRASS

Coastal wetlands serve many important environmental functions. They provide habitat to a wide variety of terrestrial, avian and aquatic species, they moderate flooding cause by storm events, and they absorb pollutants from ground water and surface waters before reaching coastal waters. The protection of these critical resources is an objective of the plan.

### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Protection of salt marsh should be a priority consideration in the review of projects for private docks, marina or boatyard expansion, erosion control structures, walkways and dredging.
2. Opportunities for the restoration of damaged salt marsh, and for identifying land to provide inland migration, should be identified and explored
3. The Town, through its water quality monitoring program and wastewater planning efforts, should continue to monitor changes in eelgrass throughout the complex and develop an understanding of the causes of eelgrass variability.

### WATER QUALITY

The original management plan contained extensive analysis of nutrient loading from surrounding land uses, and the effects of excess nutrients on water quality throughout the Stage Harbor Complex. Since then the Town, in cooperation with the Chatham Water Watchers, has undertaken an extensive water quality monitoring program and has nearly completed two comprehensive planning efforts that address land use and wastewater issues cited extensively in the original plan: the Chatham Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan and the Chatham Comprehensive Plan. The swift implementation of these plans will help protect Chatham's coastal resources and drinking water supplies.



## Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town should continue a high level of commitment to water quality monitoring throughout the Stage Harbor system. Implementation of the recommendations of the nutrient management plan should be a priority.
2. The Town should carefully consider employing DNA testing, or other feasible method of determining bacteria sources, in areas where sustained high bacteria counts have been recorded on a frequent basis. If in those areas a bacteria source is identifiable, the Town should undertake or require responsible parties to undertake remediation efforts (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)
3. The Town should review the Coast Guard Area Committee Oil Spill Contingency Plan for Southern Massachusetts and Rhode Island and to evaluate whether it adequately addresses local emergency response needs. Recognizing that the Harbormaster must notify the Coast Guard of any fuel spill, the Town should develop a locally tailored emergency response plan to address spills that, while harmful to the area, may not trigger intervention by the Coast Guard. (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)
4. The Town should continue to monitor research and policy developments regarding Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs). Based on information generated from regional and national institutions, and based on local conditions, the town should develop a plan to address the prevention, mitigation, and control of HABs. (This recommendation applies for the Southway and Nantucket Sound complexes also.)

## SHELLFISH RESOURCES

Shellfish resources within the Stage Harbor Complex are often referred to as the “bread and butter” of the Town’s shellfishing industry. Commercial and recreational harvesting of bay scallops, quahogs, soft-shell clams, and mussels occurs throughout the Stage Harbor Complex. Protection and enhancement of shellfish habitat—to ensure on-going viability of the wide variety of species native to these waters—is an important objective of the plan.

## Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town’s shellfish propagation program should continue to be supported. The existing upwelling facility should be evaluated to determine if it is adequate to meet the Town’s long-term propagation needs. To the extent that there is a desire to increase the volume or variety of species addressed by the program, increases in funding for the propagation program and a larger or additional upwelling facility may be necessary.
2. Impacts to shellfish habitat resulting from excessive nitrogen in coastal waters is being documented through the Town’s wastewater planning project. Continued loss of habitat will have a dire impact on the local shellfishing industry. Implementation of wastewater management measures aimed at reducing the flow of nitrogen into coastal waters should be expedited. The potential for reclamation of degraded habitat areas also should be considered.

## LAND USE AND VISUAL CHARACTER

The historical features, scenic qualities and water views surrounding the Stage Harbor Complex contribute to the public's enjoyment of the resource. Public views and vistas from both land and water throughout the Stage Harbor Complex help to define the area's unique character. These are important elements of the local citizen's experience of the area, and also contribute to the community character that attracts seasonal residents and visitors to the town who in turn help support the local economy.

### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. Support the recommendation in the Comprehensive Plan to maintain and reopen views on town properties where unmanaged vegetation has or threatens to obscure views. Work with private property owners to promote similar efforts.
2. Explore mechanisms for preserving and restoring water views from public roads in residential areas.
3. The Town should develop management guidelines to address encroachment at town landings and access points.
4. In the process of revising Chatham's zoning bylaws, consideration should be given to the current definition of water dependent uses to ensure that it encompasses all uses that support desirable water dependent activities and public access.

## SECTION III. SOUTHWAY COMPLEX

### CONTINUED ACCESS

The Southway encompasses areas under the jurisdiction of the Town of Chatham, the Cape Cod National Seashore, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Recent changes in the geomorphology of the area that have occurred and that are expected to continue suggest that South Beach and Monomoy may ultimately join together. The potential connection between the landmasses may lead to management concerns and questions about regulatory jurisdiction and ownership.

### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town should work with the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife service to evaluate a range of management issues that could emerge should North Monomoy Island and South Beach landmasses join. These issues include the need to update data and studies concerning changes in the geomorphology of the area; the need for policies to ensure ongoing access to Monomoy for commercial shellfishing; and the need for navigation management in the event that the Southway navigational channel fills in due to shoaling. Areas currently under local ownership and management should remain under local ownership and management in the event that the landmasses are joined.

# PUBLIC SAFETY

The Southway has become an increasingly popular boating destination. The area experiences heavy boat traffic, often with vessels operated at excessive speeds. The narrow channel and strong currents pose added challenges for boaters.

## Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town, through the Harbormaster, should continue to carefully monitor vessel traffic throughout the area and evaluate the need for further speed control measures, or other management actions aimed at keeping vessel conflicts or disturbance to nearby wildlife at a minimum.

## NATURAL HABITAT AND RESOURCE PROTECTION

The Southway provides important habitat to a wide variety of marine and terrestrial animals. The intrusion of boaters may be harmful to these important habitats. Special efforts must continue to ensure the area's biodiversity

## Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town, through the Health and Environment Department and Harbormaster, should pursue the federal designation of the Southway within the three-mile limit of local jurisdiction as a No Discharge Area. The disposal of treated or untreated boat sewage is illegal within a No Discharge Area. Currently disposal of treated sewage in the area is permitted, although strongly discouraged. Disposal of untreated sewage is permissible in federal waters (beyond three miles off shore). The adequacy of pump out capacity at Old Mill Boat Yard in Stage Harbor will need to be evaluated as part of the application process. The Town should identify and secure resources necessary to ensure adequate pump out capacity and public outreach and education activities to support the designation. (This recommendation applies for the Nantucket Sound Complex also.)
2. The Town should continue to work with the appropriate governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in marine mammal protection, as well as seal tour providers to take measures to prevent harassment or injury to seals, and to report and respond to events as they occur. Measures may include monitoring and survey activities, public education efforts, enforcement of speed controls in the area, and placement of signs.

## SECTION IV: NANTUCKET SOUND COMPLEX

### SHORELINE PROTECTION

Protection of public and private shoreline from the process of erosion is a major management objective in Nantucket Sound. The Town's efforts to stabilize the shoreline should place priority on the protection of the Town's public beaches, and the safety of navigation.

## Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town should place high priority on nourishment of public beaches as needed to mitigate erosion. Sections of the Nantucket Sound shoreline should be evaluated and prioritized for periodic re-nourishment. The Town has already identified a need to nourish Cockle Cove Beach and has done so with material from the dredging of Stage Harbor channel. Erosion along Forest, Pleasant Street and Ridgevale beaches should also be evaluated for future nourishment projects. Harding's Beach, which has been fairly stable over recent years, should also be carefully evaluated. The Town should also identify a list of potential sediment sources that could include upcoming channel dredgings, and the Army Corp of Engineer dredged material disposal site located in Nantucket Sound.
2. The Town needs to develop guidelines for permitting erosion control structures on public and private property along the Nantucket Sound shoreline, including estuarine areas. The guidelines should seek to balance the needs of private land owners to protect their property with the need to protect against loss of public beach or wildlife habitat due to erosion.
3. The current configuration of groins and jetties along the Nantucket Sound shoreline, particularly between Red River and Mill Creek, should be evaluated to determine their current effectiveness in shoreline stabilization and their role in eroding down drift beaches. The Town of Harwich, which is experiencing erosion at Red River Beach, should be invited to participate in the evaluation and re-design discussion. The evaluation process must include the participation of shoreline property owners who would need to participate in, or could be affected by, any proposed redesign of structures. The objectives of the evaluation and redesign discussion should be the continued stabilization of public and private shoreline, the protection of public beaches, and the preservation of wildlife habitat.
4. The shoreline monitoring program underway under the auspices of the Town and the Friends of Chatham Waterways is an important step in developing baseline data and monitoring trends in shoreline conditions. The Town should provide the necessary support to ensure that the monitoring program continues. Results from the monitoring program should be considered in the evaluation of areas for re-nourishment, as outlined above.

## MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF PUBLIC BEACHES

Chatham's Nantucket Sound beaches are critical community assets. The maintenance and protection of the beaches should continue to be a community priority. The Park and Recreation Commission will continue to manage and maintain the public beaches. The Coastal Resources Department and Harbormaster also will have roles in ensuring the protection and safe use of the public beaches. The following actions are recommended to guide the management activities of Town officials and departments.

## Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The existing official beaches adequately meet current demand for public beaches. However, should demand for beach access reach a point where Ridgevale, Cockle Cove, and Harding's Beaches are experiencing consistent saturation of available parking, the Town may need to

consider management options and strategies for addressing demand. Any such management action, strategy or policy should strive to maintain the environmental integrity of the beaches and surrounding wetlands, respect traditional uses of the areas, and preserve the quality of beach experience provided.

2. Public safety is a concern in locations where boating activity takes place in proximity to swimmers and moored vessels. Forest Beach and Ridgevale Beach are areas where increased boating and beach activities have heightened concerns for potential conflicts. The Harbormaster and Park and Recreation Commission should address potential conflicts through public education, enforcement and, as needed, demarcation of swimming and boating areas.
1. The raking and piling of seaweed at Harding's, Cockle Cove and Ridgevale beaches has helped to stabilize dunes and reduce a public nuisance caused by excessive seaweed. The Park and Recreation Commission should adopt a plan to continue this program in a safe and effective manner.
2. The Parks and Recreation Commission should continue its policies concerning commercial activity at public beaches. The Commission currently bids out the right to provide limited mobile food and beach related sundries (except at Ridgevale Beach where such goods are sold on adjacent private property). The Commission should continue to prohibit the expansion of commercial activities at beaches.
3. Rules for pet access at public beaches should be continued and enforced. Signs indicating access rules, and "Mutt Mitt" dispensers, should be installed and maintained at all public beaches. Continued public education is needed regarding the need to pick up pet waste, especially along the shoreline where shellfishing and swimming occur.

#### PROTECTION OF HABITAT

The waters and associated upland of the Nantucket Sound Complex provide a variety of marine, terrestrial and avian habitat. Adequate steps must be taken to ensure that the habitat value of the Nantucket Sound Complex is preserved and, if necessary, restored.

#### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town should continue a high level of commitment to water quality monitoring throughout the Nantucket Sound system. Implementation of the recommendations of the nutrient management plan should be a priority. Developments and activities that fall within the jurisdiction of health and wetland protection regulations should be held to the strictest standards applicable.
2. The Town is encouraged to continue a high level of commitment to public aquaculture projects, such as the grow-out area in Mill Creek, which seek to build the vitality of public shellfisheries. Through the Shellfish Constable the Town should seek to identify potential new grow-out locations within Nantucket Sound or elsewhere in Chatham's waters.

## BOATING AND NAVIGATION

Boat traffic has intensified throughout the Nantucket Sound Complex. Recreational and commercial boating is integral to Chatham's community character and local economy, and the Town should continue to promote policies and regulations that support safe boating. In some instances in the Nantucket Sound Complex, increased boating activity conflicts with other uses or natural resource conditions. The following recommendations are provided to augment existing regulations and policies in addressing those issues.

### Recommended Actions and Policies

1. The Town has issued approximately twenty-four weir permits in its Nantucket Sound waters, with approximately one-third of those permits in use at any one time. The location of active weirs is based on a number of factors and changes from year to year. As commercial and recreational boat traffic continues to grow throughout Nantucket Sound it is important to affirm the importance of the permitted sites to the local fishing industry, as well as the potential for any of the alternate permitted sites to be used at any one time.
2. The Harbormaster has issued 89 mooring permits throughout the Nantucket Sound Complex. The Harbormaster should continue to limit the issuance of new mooring permits and maintain waiting lists at these locations. An abundance of eelgrass and shellfish habitat, shallow water, and the location of a Town aquaculture grow-out facility are factors that support a limit on mooring permits in Taylor's Pond and Mill Creek. Limited parking, the presence of swimmers in proximity to moorings, and frequent severe weather conditions are the basis for limiting moorings in the open Sound.
3. The demand for and impacts from dry sailing and dinghy storage at public beaches and landings need to be evaluated. The evaluation should consider the need for the permitting or registration of boats left on shore, use of courtesy dinghies at town landings, and other management recommendations.
4. Due to the importance of shellfish habitat in the estuarine waters of the Nantucket Sound Complex, dredging in those areas should be limited to extreme storm events or other uncontrolled events that preclude use of traditionally navigable waterways. In such cases dredging should only be pursued to approximate conditions that existed immediately prior to the event. Dredging in the outer waters of Nantucket Sound, for navigation or for mining of sediment for nourishment of beaches and other vulnerable shoreline areas may be necessary. Under any circumstances dredging should only be undertaken if all applicable federal, state, county and local environmental standards and requirements for dredging and dredged material disposal are met.

## **SECTION V. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

It is recommended that the SHMPIC continue to be the organization charged with coordinating implementation activities. However the committee should be renamed, and current membership should be expanded to include representation of interests unique to the Southway and Nantucket Sound. The committee's role and responsibilities should continue to be:

- Conducting consistency reviews for Chapter 91 applicants within the planning area;
- Providing comment to the Conservation Commission and Zoning Board of Appeal regarding harbor related projects within the planning area, as needed;
- Encouraging interdepartmental cooperation in addressing and implementing recommendations;
- Encouraging public support and involvement in the development of policies and regulations called for in the plan; and
- Keeping focus on the priorities of the plan; and
- Providing a forum for new issues as they arise in the planning areas.

Chapter 5 includes matrices of specific actions called for in this plan. The matrices identify the parties that should be involved to provide full consideration to each action, and the levels of resources needed to implement each action.