

**ADDENDUM 1**  
**AMENDMENTS TO**  
**South Coastal Harbor Management Plan**  
**Chatham, Massachusetts**

Prepared by the South Coastal Harbor Plan Committee

XXXX 2025

The South Coastal Harbor Management Plan (Plan) was originally approved by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs on October 21, 2005. The Plan was subsequently renewed on May 12, 2015, following submission and approval by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs of a Plan Update and Implementation Report (Update Plan). The Update Plan identified new initiatives/recommendations and provided a comprehensive list of action items and accomplishments relevant to addressing recommendations of the 2005 Plan.

The Plan is an outgrowth of the harbor plan originally known as the Stage Harbor Management Plan, approved by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs in 1994. The Stage Harbor Plan was the first Harbor Management Plan to be approved for a Town in the Commonwealth. Subsequent approvals of the 1994 Plan occurred in 1999 and, as described above, in 2005 and 2015. The current renewal was to expire on May 12, 2022, but was extended to May 12, 2024, in response to two one-year extension requests by the Town of Chatham (Town).

In accordance with the provisions of the Decision, the Director of the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management (CZM) was informed by the Town of Chatham by letter dated June 17, 2024, as to its intent to request renewal of the Plan. The letter further stated that an implementation report would be provided as soon as it was completed. The Town was subsequently approved by the Director of CZM to proceed with renewal by letter dated August 26, 2024. The South Coastal Harbor Plan Committee (SCHPC) is tasked with implementation and oversight of the Plan and has prepared the Implementation Report incorporating this Addendum 1 (Amendments) and follow on Addendum 2 (Report on Implementation).

**NEW INITIATIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Review of the 2005 Plan and 2015 Update Plan confirmed the continued relevance of the Plan. Therefore, Addendum 1 of this update simply provides some additional enhancements to help guide management and oversight of the South Coastal bodies of waters within its jurisdiction. These items include:

- Placing a stronger emphasis on the character and scenic quality of harbor areas to emphasize aesthetic values and importance of the natural view scape of the harbor and adjacent shorelines to avoid visual dominance of man-made structures.
- Further review and assessment of the appropriateness of new private catwalk structures and their impacts (both positive and/or negative) to resources and visual character of the harbor.

- Place increased support for wetland preservation and marsh migration considering climate change and rising sea levels.
- Encourage opportunities for maintaining and enhancing the Blue Economy.

1) Stage Harbor Complex: Land Use and Visual Character (*Enhancement*)

The original Plan identified the importance of maintaining Water Dependent Uses within the Stage Harbor Complex and highlighted the juxtaposition, and potential conflicts, of these uses within a mostly developed and residentially zoned district. The Plan also identified the importance of historic and scenic views and vistas and that efforts should be undertaken to maintain and enhance these views when possible.

This update supports these goals and recommendations; however, it places a stronger emphasis at efforts that preserve the scenic harbor scape consistent with a traditional “New England village”. Human intervention within sight of the harbors should enhance rather than detract from what remains of its scenic qualities and blend with the natural landscape when possible. This goal acknowledges that the harbor scape includes important public and private commercial water dependent infrastructure critical to maintaining a vibrant and functioning maritime community. To this end this addendum recommends the following:

*Stage Harbor Complex*

*Land Use and Visual Character (Priority 2):*

*Ensure that continued shoreside development places an emphasize on aesthetic values and importance of the natural and/or traditional maritime view scape of the harbor and adjacent shorelines to avoid visual dominancy of man-made structures.*

2) Stage Harbor Complex: Regulations of Private Piers and Other Shoreline Structures (*Enhancement*)

The previous update (2015) indicated that existing regulations governing the appropriateness of catwalks and other erosion control structures were deemed sufficient for regulating these types of structures. During the subsequent period since the 2015 update, the SCHPC has grown concerned over several issues related to private residential catwalks. These include the perception that more new catwalks are being sought and often used as an alternative to traditional docks now that docks are prohibited in the Stage Harbor Complex. Given the heightened awareness of the importance of marsh ecosystems, SCHPC has concerns of the potential individual and cumulative negative impacts the installation and seasonal removal of catwalks may have on these ecosystems as well as increased potential for collateral damage and debris if damaged following storms. Coupled with the goal of placing an emphasis on the visual character of the harbor, the SCHPC is concerned that a proliferation of these structures would also create a more human-dominated aesthetic and negatively impact the shoreside view scape. Therefore, this addendum recommends the following:

*All areas within Jurisdiction*

*Private Residential Catwalks (Priority 1)*

*Undertake an assessment that reviews the individual and cumulative impacts (positive and/or negative) that new private residential catwalks may have on ecological resources and the visual character of the shorefront. The assessment should consider whether additional regulatory restrictions governing new catwalks are warranted and deemed sufficient or if these structures should be prohibited in a similar manner as private residential docks.*

3) Wetlands (Enhancement)

Wetlands are facing increased pressures from both human and natural forces that threaten to degrade the ecological function of these important resources. Preservation of wetlands has consistently been identified as an important goal of the Plan. However, with increasing awareness of future sea level rise, the ability of these resources to naturally migrate, both vertically and horizontally, to preserve their viability and function has become a more pressing issue. Maintaining existing wetlands as well as identifying and possibly preserving areas that may serve as future land where wetlands may naturally migrate with rising sea levels is strongly supported. This may include purchasing of open space and/or converting, if appropriate, land for marsh migration when not in conflict with shellfish or other important habitat conversion. Therefore, a new emphasis on marsh preservation and migration is recommended.

*All areas within Jurisdiction*

*Marsh Migration (Priority 2)*

*Support efforts to identify methodologies and land areas that enable marsh resources to migrate in the face of rising sea levels.*

4) Preserving the Blue Economy (New Topic)

Chatham has a rich maritime heritage which historically provided employment options in many areas of what has become referred to as the Blue Economy. Many of these opportunities centered around commercial fishing and shellfishing as well as other traditional marine related professions. However, several factors are impacting historically dependable and viable income prospects which are vital to retain Chatham's existing, and future, working families. Offshore fishing stocks have declined, and many commercial fishermen and shellfishermen rely on multiple jobs to sustain sufficient income to continue living in the Town. This issue is compounded by extremely high property values in Chatham, and the region, making it difficult to find attainable and affordable housing. New opportunities for working in the Blue Economy should be encouraged and promoted assuming they do not overly impact existing resources, navigation or other traditional marine uses.

*All areas within Jurisdiction*

*Support for the Blue Economy (2)*

*Encourage opportunities for maintaining and enhancing the Blue Economy.*