

February 5, 2003
For More Information Contact
Carole Ridley, Coordinator
508 430 2563
cr@ridleyandassociates.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Pleasant Bay Resource Management Alliance Releases
Resource Management Plan Update**

Public Comment Meetings are Scheduled

Harwich, MA. The Pleasant Bay Resource Management Alliance today released the *Pleasant Bay Resource Management Plan Update* for public comment. The update was prepared in accordance with the requirement that the *Pleasant Bay Resource Management Plan* be updated within five years of adoption by the Towns. In 1998 Town Meetings in Chatham, Harwich and Orleans adopted the plan and formed the Alliance to coordinate implementation activity. The Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs approved the plan in 1999.

The Update provides a summary of implementation actions undertaken by the Alliance and the Towns over the past five years, recommendations to be carried forward, and new recommendations and actions to be undertaken. It is intended to describe progress and to chart a course for the coming five years of coordinated management activity.

Accomplishments highlighted in the Update include:

- Implementation of the *Pleasant Bay Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Program* in which more than 150 volunteers have been recruited and trained. Three consecutive years of water quality monitoring have been completed, and interim reports have been issued for 2000 and 2001.
- Development of *Guidelines for Permitting Docks and Piers in Pleasant Bay*. The guidelines received state approval, and were used by the Alliance towns to bring permitting requirements for the Bay in line with the resource management plan. As a result, the categorical restriction on Chapter 91 licenses for new structures was removed in parts of the Bay.
- Development of *Guidelines for Private Walkways and Stairways in Fresh and Marine Resource Areas in Pleasant Bay*. The guidelines are intended to assist

towns in permitting these types structures, and are now being integrated into local regulations.

- Completion of a build out assessment of land within the Bay’s watershed. The analysis, which shows the potential for a 28% increase in new homes in the watershed, will be used to evaluate land use and wastewater management options for the towns.
- Initiation of two studies that deepen our understanding of the conditions and dynamics of the unique habitats in and around the Bay. The nearly completed *Intertidal Habitat and Sediment Assessment* will generate unprecedented information concerning intertidal sedimentology, and the condition and dynamics of habitats supported by intertidal areas. The *Resource Assessment of Freshwater Lakes and Ponds* has generated a profile of rare and endangered species surrounding the freshwater bodies leading in to Pleasant Bay, and will be used to provide a basis for future management recommendations.
- Continuation of a coordinated bay-wide patrol among the Harbormasters of Orleans, Chatham and Harwich. In response to a decision by the National Park Service, the Alliance helped to coordinate the development of bylaws to prohibit the operation of personal watercraft in the Bay.
- The Alliance secured \$106,500 in non-town funds, or 36% of total funds received over the five-year period, for special projects.

Over the coming weeks the Alliance will be presenting the Update to Boards of Selectmen in Orleans, Chatham and Harwich. The Alliance has requested that Selectmen present the Update to Town Meetings this spring for adoption, along with a request to authorize each Board of Selectmen to extend the memorandum of agreement forming the Alliance.

The Alliance is seeking public comment on the update. A limited number of copies of the update will be available at Town Halls and libraries in the Alliance towns. The update may also be downloaded from the Alliance website at www.pleasantbay.org. Public hearings are scheduled for:

Thursday, February 27th, 7 p.m., at Chatham Town Hall Annex;
Monday, March 3rd, 7 p.m., at Orleans Town Hall; and
Wednesday, March 5th, 7.p.m., at Harwich Town Hall.

“We believe that the Update demonstrates a solid record of accomplishment in the areas of research, analysis, policy development and public education for the Bay,” said George Olmsted, Chairman of the Alliance Steering Committee. “There is no question that the widespread public appreciation of the Bay has been key to the Alliance’s success and we greatly appreciate the ongoing public support we have received in each town,” Mr. Olmsted said.

“The Alliance’s work thus far has helped build a baseline of technical information about a variety of conditions in the Bay, and has forged a strong communications link among the towns,” said Robert Duncanson, Chairman of the Alliance Technical Resource

Committee. “By continuing our work over the next five years we will build on this foundation and strengthen our to collective efforts to manage the long-term health of the Bay,” Dr. Duncanson said.

Among the issues identified by the Update to be addressed over the next five years include:

- Seeking federal designation of Pleasant Bay as a “No Discharge Zone”;
- Continuing to monitor development in the watershed and resulting nitrogen impacts;
- Conducting a shoreline changes study to establish a baseline shoreline measurement and assess changes in shoreline topography due to natural and man-made features;
- Prioritizing sites for the disposal of dredge material in the Bay, and studying the impacts and feasibility of dredging in selected previously un-dredged areas;
- Continuing the water quality monitoring program, and integrating the data into the modeling of the entire Bay system through the Massachusetts Estuaries Project;
- Evaluating additional changes to strengthen wetlands regulations, encompassing definitions, performance standards, and enlarging the area of jurisdiction within the ACEC; and
- Studying conditions among shellfish and finfish populations in the Bay.