

BARNSTABLE COUNTY

CAPE COD REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Newsletter of Barnstable County

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Above: Susan Evans earned first place in the Adult Category of the Barnstable County Photo Contest during National County Government Month with her captivating photograph, 'Nobska Light at Dawn'.

Join Barnstable County as we look at highlights from April, 2024.

April activities at Barnstable County illustrate the County's involvement in every aspect of community life, providing services to residents and towns across Cape Cod. Explore a summary of major events below.

Supporting Affordable Housing

Continuing to address the pressing need for affordable housing, the County granted \$1,100,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to support the construction of 61 units of affordable rental housing at 3 Jerome Smith Road in Provincetown. \$300,000 of Barnstable



Educational Events and Public Safety Training

County HOME funds were also awarded for the redevelopment of the Henry T. Wing School in Sandwich.

Human Services Outreach

Responding to the community's needs, the Department of Human Services launched an online Behavioral Health Needs Assessment in April. This initiative seeks to gain insights into the behavioral health landscape for children, youth, and young adults, to support development of a more targeted and effective support system.

In addition, Children's Cove promoted April as both National Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness Month, collaborating with partner organizations to raise awareness about these critical issues and emphasizing community support.

The Barnstable County Human Rights Advisory Commission held its annual Spring Human Rights Academy, fostering discussions on social justice and inclusion among 60 students from across Cape Cod.

The County's Cape Cod Center for Public Safety Training provided training sessions to firefighters in Eastham and Mashpee.

In April, the Master Gardeners Association of Cape Cod announced, "Evenings in the Garden," a free event series starting in May 2024, aimed at educating and inspiring gardening enthusiasts.

In April, the 2024 Cape Cod Household Hazardous Waste Collections Season Schedule was introduced. This Cape Cod Cooperative Extension initiative provides a safe and convenient disposal option for items that could otherwise endanger people, pets, first responders, and local drinking water supplies.



(Image: above Yarmouth Town Libraries' Adult Services Librarian, Phoebe Acheson looking over sewerage for Yarmouth)

Environmental Stewardship in Action

Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center, a division of the Department of Health and Environment, continued to celebrate its 25th anniversary with an ongoing library tour, where visitors can explore curated books on wastewater topics and watch screenings of the documentary "Waste No Water".

In April the Cape Cod Cooperative Extension unveiled plans to transform underutilized land into the Barnstable County Research & Demonstration Farm. This project aims not only to cultivate crops but also to cultivate knowledge, serving as an educational hub for sustainable horticulture practices across the region.

AmeriCorps Cape Cod, in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers,

The Barnstable County Dredge Crew completed dredging projects in Barnstable in the Cotuit Approach Channel, in Bourne Pond in Falmouth and at Great Pond in Falmouth. They also began dredging in Allen Harbor, Harwich. These projects are crucial for improving navigation, beach nourishment, and for increasing tidal flow.

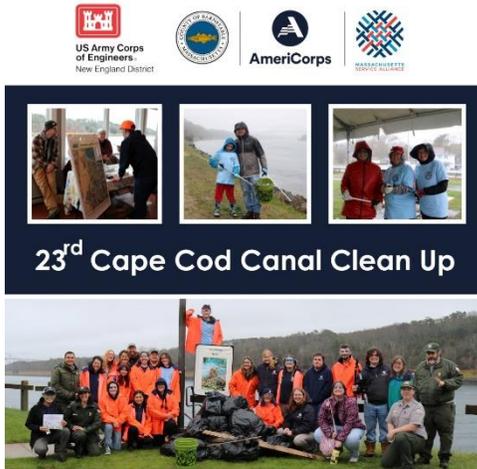
National County Government Month

In April, Barnstable County embraced National County Government Month with the theme "Forward Together", engaging residents through educational videos, quizzes, and a children's coloring book. These resources are still available at www.capecod.gov/CountyMonth2024

The County's celebration included a photo contest, with winners announced mid-April. Susan Evans clinched first place with "Nobska Light at Dawn" a. Sarah Cabe's "Sagamore Bridge in Winter" earned her 1st Runner Up, Susan Evans also secured 3rd Runner Up for "Low Tide at Skaket Beach." In the Student Category, Keala McCarthy's "Lifeguard Winter Scene" took first place, while Hanna Thornton's "Greys Beach at Sunset" and Garrett Keenan's "Fire Trucks" were 1st and 2nd Runner Up respectively. All winners will receive certificates at the next Commissioners Meeting on Wednesday, May 8, 2024.



organized the 23rd annual Canal Clean Up initiative on April 20, rallying volunteers to preserve and protect the vital waterway.



Shown above: In the Student Category, Keala McCarthy's 'Lifeguard Winter Scene' took first place for Barnstable County's photo contest.

Updates on the Cape Cod Canal Bridge Program

Progress continues to be made within the Cape Cod Canal Bridges Program, marking significant milestones in funding, outreach, and public engagement. There is an upcoming Open House on May 13, 2024, at the Bourne Veteran's Memorial Community Center, (12-3 p.m.) and evening (5-8 p.m.) where residents can participate and share their insights.

These updates represent just a few of the initiatives and activities at Barnstable County. Read **Featured News** to find out more.

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County

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Considering the “What Ifs”: Changes To Title 5

Posted on: [November 13, 2023](#) By: [Amy DuFault](#) Posted In: [Uncategorized](#)



In Massachusetts, the changes to Title 5 are intended to directly address nitrogen pollution at the source to help reverse environmental degradation from septic systems that has taken place over decades. This is not a small challenge.

After learning more about the [changes to Title 5](#), you may be wondering how you can be part of the solution. There are many ways; some big, some small. Some of the solutions may require you to change your habits, while others may require a bit of research. Almost all of the steps we've outlined below will require getting to know your town government, or better yet participating in it. The cost of doing nothing is unacceptable to most of us who know and love Cape Cod. Further, damaged water resources will eventually lead to significant loss of economic value for the region. The time to change is now. By focusing on a common goal of protecting our vulnerable water resources, we can work together to affect change for ourselves and generations to come."

-[Brian Baumgaertel](#), Director of the Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Test Center (MASSTC) and Senior Environmental Specialist with the Barnstable County Department of Health and Environment

Check out some our “What-if” scenarios below!

What if...you're a homeowner with a Title 5 septic system?

The region has embarked on a multi-decade, multi-billion-dollar effort to protect Cape Cod's fragile water resources from the effects of “standard” septic systems. Thus, most Cape Cod homes will be required to either connect to a sewer system or upgrade their standard systems to newer advanced technologies. It is difficult to say exactly when homeowners will be required to upgrade, but generally speaking, most can expect to be faced with the prospect of connecting to a sewer or upgrading their system to an I/A technology within the next 20-25 years. To find out where your home falls in the town's planning process, [get in contact with your local health department](#).

What if...you just purchased a new home and it has a cesspool?

While the state septic system regulation (Title 5) allows functioning cesspools to remain in use (they're banned for new construction since 1995), many town Boards of Health, which are tasked with drafting and enforcing local regulations at the municipal level, have passed regulations disallowing the use of even functioning cesspools. Typically, cesspools are identified during the septic system inspection that is required prior to a property transfer. In towns where cesspools are banned, either the seller would need to replace the cesspool with a compliant system prior to the sale, or there would need to be a written agreement between the seller and buyer that transfers this responsibility to the buyer (with permission from the Board of Health). In towns where cesspools are not banned, the buyer can continue to use it for as long as it continues to function properly. “If you are required to upgrade a cesspool, depending on the specifics of your lot, you may or may not be required to use Innovative/Alternative (I/A) septic system technologies. As an example, if your lot is small (¼ acre or less), you may need to reduce the size of the leachfield so that it physically fits on your property. In many instances, a Board of Health may require that you use an I/A system as a “concession” for allowing you to use a smaller leachfield. This is called “maximum feasible compliance” in Title 5 lingo.

What if...I just bought a new home on Cape Cod?

If you just bought a home on Cape Cod, congratulations! While you may have been informed of the *current* status of your septic system during the purchase process, you likely didn't receive any information on what may happen with regards to your septic system in the future. It is difficult to say exactly when homeowners will be required to upgrade, but generally speaking, most can expect to be faced with the prospect of connecting to a sewer or upgrading their system within the next 20-25 years. To find out where your home falls in the town's planning process, [get in touch with your local health department](#).

What if...I'm in the process of building a new home?

It depends on where you are in the process. If you have all of your permits in hand or if you filed prior to July 7th, 2023, you should be able to continue with your project as planned. Having applied for your permits before July 7th will not necessarily protect you from having to connect to

a sewer or upgrade your system in the future, however. To find out where your home falls in the town's planning process, [get in contact with your local health department](#).

What if...there's wastewater infrastructure currently being built in my town. Now what?

If your town is in the process of constructing wastewater treatment infrastructure, whether that is a sewer system or I/A systems, it is important for you as a property owner to stay informed of the town's plans. Being aware of when your property will be required to connect to a sewer or to upgrade the septic system will help you make your own personal financial plan to pay for the betterments to come. To find out where your home falls in the town's planning process, [get in contact with your local health department](#).

What if...I'm considering a composting or urine-diverting toilet? How do I move forward?

First and foremost, educate yourself about the types of technology, how they work, and what kind of maintenance goes into them. Get in contact with someone who uses an alternative toilet technology to ask them about their experience. Better yet, give one a test drive! Once you have made the decision to "dive in", your first stop should be your town's Health Department to gather information about getting the proper permits for your project. You will likely need sign-offs from both the [local health department](#) and the town's plumbing inspector.

What if...I'm required to install an I/A system? What does the process look like?

Currently, it is the homeowner's responsibility to begin the I/A system adoption process by finding an engineer and vendor for site design and construction. Your local health department can provide you with a list of recommended engineers and contractors (installers, service providers, pumpers). You can also contact the Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Technology Center (MASSTC) to walk you through this process.

Barnstable County is currently working with the towns of Bourne, Falmouth, Brewster, and Wellfleet to pilot a new program called a [Responsible Management Entity \(RME\)](#). The role of the RME will be to work with homeowners, in a similar manner to a small utility, to navigate the I/A septic system installation process. This program will be the first of its kind.