



Town of Middleborough

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

March 16, 2012

Kathleen Baskin, P.E.
Director of Water Policy
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

RE: SWMI Framework Comments

Dear Ms. Baskin:

The Middleborough Conservation Commission wanted to send its comments and concerns to you regarding the Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI) that your office is proposing for the new determination of Safe Yield.

The Commission is concerned that this new determination will further impact the ecological integrity of the watersheds that Middleborough falls into, which is mostly the Taunton but also a small portion of the Buzzards Bay Watershed in our southeast corner along the Weweantic River. The Nemasket River, which flows from the Assawompset Pond Complex (APC) to the Federally Recognized Taunton River is a river of concern here in Middleborough as it is already a low flowing river and has been compromised by silt and thick aquatic vegetation throughout. The APC is currently a water supply for the cities of New Bedford and Taunton and it is the largest natural body of freshwater in the state.

There was recently a river survey done on the Nemasket River by volunteers trained by Carrie Banks, Stream Specialist in the Riverways Program, part of the Division of Ecological Restoration, within the Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game. Through this survey done in 2011 it was confirmed that there are several segments that have a lot of aquatic vegetation, trees, and sandbars impeding the rivers flow.

The other things to consider in our neck of the woods is the fact that we have many cranberry farm operations that currently have water withdrawal permits that influence the flow of the Nemasket River, Fall Brook (which feeds the Nemasket), the Weweantic River and water levels of the vast and surrounding wetlands.

Excessive withdrawals during the summer and fall months when the waters are in "low-flow" anyway should not be permitted. The location of water withdrawals also needs to

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be documented and mapped on GIS or similar system to monitor where there are withdrawal permits and where there are requests for new permits so that each permit is not viewed in a vacuum but is looked at as influencing a complete system, which we all know the environment is.

It is critical to establish clear goals and measurable benchmarks toward the restoration for the 301 sub basins in Classes 4 and 5 under the current stream classification system, based on science developed by the US Geological Survey and MassWildlife. We are therefore asking for sustainable water management for all the waters in Middleborough.

If you have any questions regarding this don't hesitate to contact the Conservation Department at 508-946-2406.

Sincerely,



Patricia J. Cassidy, Agent

For the Middleborough Conservation Commission

Cc: Middleborough Herring Commission
Charles Cristello, Middleborough Town Manager
Middleborough Board of Selectmen
Pamela Truesdale, Mass DEP SERO
Linda Orel, MACC (via e-mail)