

Massachusetts Nonpoint Source Management Plan



2025 - 2029

Executive Summary



The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), through the Nonpoint Source (NPS) Management Section in the Watershed Planning Program, presents the Massachusetts NPS Management Program Plan (2025 – 2029), as required in section 319 of the Clean Water Act and the US Environmental Protection Agency’s [Nonpoint Source Program and Grants Guidelines for States and Territories](#) (USEPA, 2024), to meet the overarching goal of NPS pollution mitigation in the Commonwealth by restoring impaired waters and protecting healthy waters. The Plan includes a new NPS vision to equitably support watershed-based planning and the implementation of climate-resilient best management practices (BMPs) statewide.

The theme of the Plan is *meeting communities where they are*, as it describes an NPS roadmap to assist communities regardless of where they are in the NPS management process. The objective is to help communities secure financial support and access beneficial tools at every step of their journey in restoring impaired waters and protecting healthy waters.

The two central priorities of this five-year Plan are enhancing equity and supporting climate resiliency. To equitably support watershed-based planning, the Plan focuses on two approaches to Environmental Justice (EJ): (1) supporting statewide EJ initiatives through active and inclusive community engagement and (2) enhancing the accessibility of NPS funding and capacity building resources to Massachusetts Tribes and Communities with EJ Populations. To support climate adaptation, the Plan focuses on climate resiliency planning and implementing BMPs with climate-adaptive management strategies.

In this Plan, nonpoint sources in Massachusetts are classified into eleven primary categories, which are further divided into subcategories based on the Assessment, Total Maximum Daily Load Tracking and Implementation System (ATTAINS) tool from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). MassDEP’s Data Management and Water Quality Assessment Section in WPP evaluates the health status of surface waters throughout the Commonwealth, prepares and submits an Integrated List of Waters (Integrated Report) to USEPA with final assessment and listing decisions (i.e., identification of impaired waters), and submits this information to ATTAINS to fulfill reporting requirements under Clean Water Act (CWA) sections 305(b), 303(d), and 314. Therefore, using the ATTAINS categorization system within the NPS Management Plan reflects a coordinated approach within Massachusetts that will help communities to more easily identify NPS impairments for their waterbodies of interest.

Funding through NPS grant programs will be available for all eleven NPS categories, but the three most frequent primary NPS categories associated with impairments in MassDEP's *Final Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters for the Clean Water Act 2022 Reporting Cycle* (i.e., the 2022 Integrated Report) are focus categories in the NPS Management Plan for the next five years: (1) developed land, (2) septic systems; and (3) agriculture (Figure ES.1). The Plan identifies six NPS Management goals for 2025 to 2029, organized into specific five-year objectives, achievable actions, and measurable milestones. MassDEP's NPS Management Section developed this plan as a capacity building tool itself, sharing knowledge and strategies to simplify complex information and provide guidelines for achieving NPS mitigation.

Successful implementation of this Plan over the next five years will advance Massachusetts's overarching NPS mitigation goals of restoring impaired waters and protecting healthy waters. The new NPS vision, prioritization to enhance equity and climate resiliency, six NPS management goals, and proposed actions to meet the five-year objectives align with the theme of this Plan: *meeting communities where they are*. The coordinated source categorization approach will help communities identify surface waters with NPS impairments, as reported in the Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters, enabling these communities to apply for available NPS funding to restore impaired waters. The focus categories in the Plan will also enhance intra- and inter-agency partnerships to achieve the shared objectives of statewide NPS pollution mitigation from major source categories. Capacity building initiatives to strengthen regional and local partnerships that address equity and climate adaptation needs will further advance NPS management in the Commonwealth through active and inclusive community engagement.

Massachusetts NPS Management Plan 2025 – 2029



Figure ES.1. An overall summary of the Massachusetts NPS Management Plan (2025 – 2029).

NEW TO THE 2025–2029 NPS MANAGEMENT PLAN

- Massachusetts NPS Vision
- Theme, priorities, and goals
- NPS categorization (source of NPS impairments): eleven NPS primary categories and their subcategories, based on the 2022 Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters
- Three focus categories for 2025-2029: Developed Land, Septic Systems, and Agriculture
- Nitrogen Impacted Coastal Waters: A newly added geographical focus area eligible for NPS funding
- In addition to traditional NPS pollutants (nutrients, pathogens, and sediment), emphasis on chloride, contaminants of emerging concern, and other NPS pollutants.
- Capacity building initiatives: (technical, nontechnical, community-focused)
- Active and Inclusive Community Engagement with an emphasis on youth engagement
- Enhanced accessibility of NPS funding to Massachusetts Tribes and Communities with Environmental Justice (EJ) Populations
- Climate Resiliency Planning and Adaptive Management of Best Management Practices
- More focused partnership with achievable outcomes
- NPS Education Materials