

# Cape Cod Sole Source Aquifer Information Sheet

U.S. EPA | DRAFT DETERMINATION FOR THE SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

## U.S. EPA REGION 1 SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT

on a Sole Source Aquifer (SSA) project review draft determination for a proposed Multi-Purpose Machine Gun Range to be built by the Massachusetts Army National Guard at Joint Base Cape Cod.

### KEY CONTACTS:

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### GENERAL INFORMATION

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Toll free  
1-888-EPA-7341

**EPA will be accepting public comment between April 27 and June 26, 2023.**

**You may email written comments to: [R1SSAcomments@epa.gov](mailto:R1SSAcomments@epa.gov)**

**You may provide oral comments by leaving a voicemail at 617-918-1800**

### Public Hearing, Wednesday • May 24, 2023

**6:30pm Overview by EPA      7:00pm Public Comment Accepted**

**Center for Active Living  
70 Quaker Meetinghouse Road  
Sandwich, Massachusetts**

**To listen remotely via Zoom, copy and paste the following link into your web browser: <https://usepa.zoomgov.com/j/1605125622?pwd=TXkyY29CNG9vR2tvUEkraWNONm82dz09>**

### EPA REGION 1'S DRAFT DETERMINATION

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) mandates a strong protective approach where a drinking water supply is highly dependent on a single aquifer. EPA has conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the design and operations of the proposed machine gun range at JBCC, and has provisionally determined that the proposed project has the potential to contaminate the aquifer so as to create a significant public health hazard.

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If this draft determination becomes final, it means that no federal funds (for example, from the Department of Defense) can be used for the project.

EPA honors and respects the critical role of the Massachusetts Army National Guard in its mission to protect the Commonwealth against threats to citizens and their livelihood. The Massachusetts Army National Guard is among several U.S. Department of Defense military units at Joint Base Cape Cod that have diligently worked, over decades, to train soldiers, while, at the same time, partnered with state and federal agencies to investigate environmental conditions, assess data, and conduct clean ups to address contamination from past military activities.

EPA has a unique obligation under the Safe Drinking Water Act to protect sole source aquifers, like the Cape Cod Sole Source Aquifer. The Region arrived at the draft determination in this case after evaluating factors outlined in EPA guidance, including the following:

- Possible public health hazard;
- Design, and operations, maintenance, and monitoring plans;
- Effectiveness of state or local control;
- Cumulative or secondary impacts; and
- Any environmental benefits.

## **BACKGROUND**

EPA defines a sole source aquifer as one where:

- The aquifer supplies at least 50% of the drinking water in its service area; and
- There are no reasonably available alternative drinking water sources should the aquifer become contaminated.

In 1982, the Cape Cod Aquifer was designated as the sole or principal source of drinking water for Cape Cod. As a result, projects proposed to be constructed on Cape Cod funded by federal financial assistance may be subject to a sole source aquifer review, at EPA's discretion, as outlined in the Safe Drinking Water Act.

In response to significant public concerns and inquires to EPA, Region 1 evaluated the project scope and, in August 2021, notified the Massachusetts Army National Guard and the U.S. Department of Defense that EPA would be conducting an SSA review of the proposed multi-purpose machine gun range. The review focused primarily on the project's potential impacts to the aquifer and was not a comprehensive review of all other potential environmental or public health impacts, such as those evaluated by other agencies through their environmental reviews and their public involvement mechanisms.

Protecting Cape Cod's source of drinking water continues to be a high priority for EPA and the many parties involved in the cleanup and management of Joint Base Cape Cod. Throughout the SSA project review, EPA has coordinated closely with and received input from the Massachusetts Army National Guard and the state Environmental Management Commission (EMC). The EMC is comprised of the commissioners of the Department of Fish and Game, the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and the Department of Conservation and Recreation. EPA acknowledges the dual role of the EMC protecting the Upper Cape Cod Water Supply Reserve (part of the Cape Cod Aquifer) through oversight, monitoring, and evaluation of all military and other activities, while ensuring that military activities are compatible with resource protection.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

During the 60-day comment period, the public may submit written comments for EPA's consideration. In addition, EPA will hold a public hearing which will be held to receive oral comments. Information on registration procedures and mechanisms to submit formal comments are included below. All comments timely received will be reviewed and considered by the Region, along with other available information. If, after evaluating this material, the Regional Administrator continues to believe that the proposed project may contaminate the aquifer so as to create a significant public health

hazard, then he will forward the information and recommended conclusion to the EPA Administrator. The Administrator will then make a final determination. Should this determination become final, no commitment of federal financial assistance (through a grant, contract, loan guarantee, or otherwise) may be allowed.

This draft determination, which was made under the Safe Drinking Water Act's authority governing the protection of sole source aquifers, is based on information gathered and documented through an administrative record.

EPA's Draft Determination is available at: <https://www3.epa.gov/region1/eco/drinkwater/capecod.html>

EPA will hold a short public informational meeting followed by a public hearing to accept oral comments

**Wednesday • May 24, 2023**

Public Meeting -6:30 pm

Public Hearing – 7:00pm

Center for Active Living

70 Quaker Meetinghouse Road

Sandwich, Massachusetts

\*for accessibility or translation requests, please email [melanson.kate@epa.gov](mailto:melanson.kate@epa.gov)

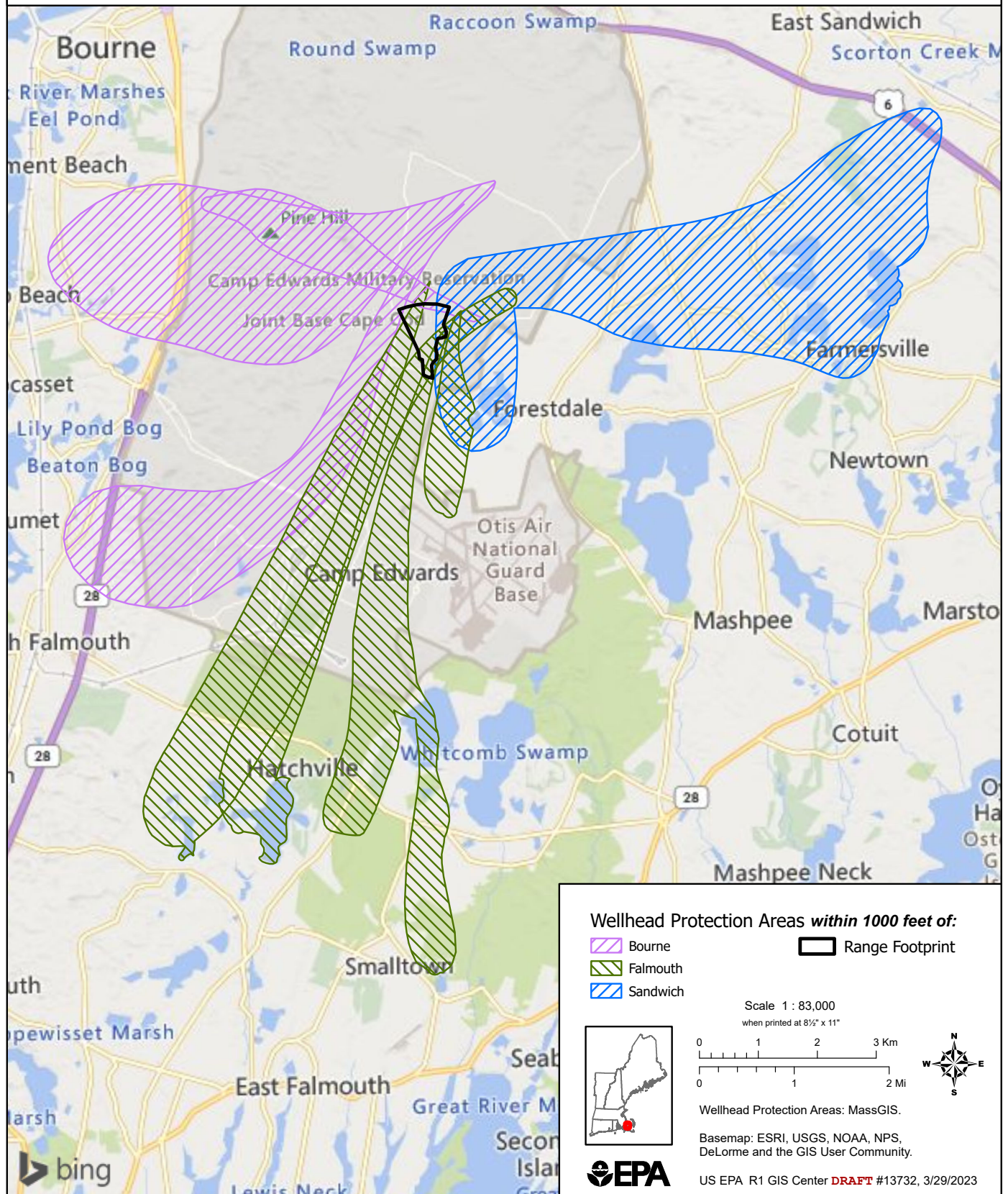
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The map on page 4 shows the proposed MPMGR Phase I in relation to Zone II Wellhead Protection Areas (purple, green and blue shapes) for 21 public wells supplying drinking water to Bourne, Falmouth, and Sandwich. A Zone II is defined as the area of an aquifer that contributes water to a well under severe pumping and recharge conditions that can be realistically anticipated (180 days of pumping ), as approved by MassDEP's Drinking Water Supply Program.

## Joint Base Cape Cod: Proposed Multi-Purpose Machine Gun (MPMG) Range and Zone II Wellhead Protection Areas



map source: EPA produced using MassDEP Zone II information