

From: [Chris Powicki](#)
To: [Barden, Michele \(she/her/hers\)](#)
Cc: [Clint Richmond](#); [Diane LeDuc](#); [Mary Mary](#); [morgan Peck](#); [David](#); [Keith Lewison](#); [Vickash Mohanka](#)
Subject: Comments to USEPA on Draft Permit, Deer Islands Treatment Plant, from Sierra Club Cape Cod & Islands Group
Date: Wednesday, November 22, 2023 10:14:10 AM

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Dear Ms. Barden,

The Cape Cod & Islands Group of the Sierra Club is opposed to eliminating the Outfall Monitoring Science Advisory Panel (OMSAP) as part of the proposed renewal of the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) discharge permit for the Deer Island Treatment Plant's ocean outfall to Massachusetts Bay. These comments complement and extend those being submitted by the Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club as a signatory to a coalition letter prepared by Just Zero.

Continued long-term scientific monitoring of the outfall—guided by a direct advisory function and based on sampling campaigns and research studies identified, designed, and implemented by a multidisciplinary team of independent experts—is essential as a permit condition for understanding and managing interactions among outfall constituents, other sources of nutrients and pollutants, and additional stressors, notably climate change's effects on storm frequency and severity and on ocean water temperature, chemistry, circulation, primary productivity, and ecosystem function.

Over the past 23 years, Boston Harbor's water quality has greatly improved as a result of the operation of the Deer Island Treatment Plant and its ocean outfall in Massachusetts Bay. To meet an equally important challenge facing Cape Cod & the Islands, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has issued regulations to reduce nitrogen loading effects on coastal embayments attributable to uncontrolled development and widespread use of Title V septic systems. In response, the town of Falmouth is launching a study of an outfall pipe in Nantucket Sound as the possible point of discharge for growing volumes of treated effluent collected from newly sewerred neighborhoods, and other communities adjoining Joint Base Cape Cod (JBCC) are studying whether to enlarge the JBCC wastewater treatment plant, with an outfall pipe in Nantucket Sound.

US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is still developing regulations regarding discharge limits for contaminants of emerging concern (CEC), including microplastics and PFAS chemicals known to be concentrated in the Deer Island effluent. All research to date related to microplastics in this effluent has been conducted by the OMSAP. Some CECs are known to bioaccumulate in fish and shellfish, creating potential for human exposure, including for those who fish to put food on the table and thus raising environmental justice concerns. Dilution is not the answer to CEC pollution, according to Sierra Club policy.

Now is not the time for the elimination of OMSAP as a necessary independent scientific body. Instead, EPA should expand OMSAP's scope to better understand and address CEC contamination of marine environments and food chains attributable to long-term operation of the Deer Island outfall within the context of other stressors including cumulative impacts, nutrient loading, and rapidly changing climate, oceanography, and ecology.

Studies of proposed outfalls in Nantucket Sound, the implementation of DEP's nitrogen management regulations, and development and implementation of EPA's CEC regulations will benefit from historical and continued OMSAP-directed scientific monitoring of effluent from the Deer Island plant. Continued function of OSMAP as a permit condition is essential for informing future permit actions within an adaptive, ecosystem-based management framework.

Thanks for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Chris Powicki,
Chair, Executive Committee
Cape Cod & islands Group, Sierra Club

cc:

David Dow, Diane LeDuc, Keith Lewison, Morgan Peck, Mary Waygan, Executive Committee
Members/Officers, Sierra Cape Cod & Islands Group
Clint Richmond, Conservation Chair, and Vic Mohanka, Acting Director, Sierra Massachusetts Chapter