# VEGETATION STUDY COHASSET, MA

# Prepared for THE COHASSET BOARD OF SEWER COMMISSIONERS

BY
TUTELA ENGINEERING ASSOCIATES
AND
APPLIED SCIENCE ASSOCIATES, INC.
FEBRUARY, 1995

# **INDEX**

DESCRIPTION	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
STUDY	2
STUDY RESULTS	3
CONCLUSIONS	7

APPENDIX A - LOCAL CLIMATOLOGICAL DATA

POCKETED PLAN - COHASSET HARBOR VEGETATION STUDY

### INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1994 Tutela Engineering Associates (TEA) and its subconsultant Applied Science Associates, Inc. (ASA) undertook the first of several tasks to evaluate one of the potential receiving water systems for the Cohasset Wastewater Treatment Plant, namely Cohasset Harbor. The October 25, 1994 Special Town Meeting authorized the evaluation of this and other alternatives to better provide an environmentally sound and cost effective option for the Town. Since the assessment of existing eutrophic conditions or tendencies in a receiving water sytem is a primary element to defining the impacts of future nutrient loadings, an early indication of the conditions, can facilitate future evaluation efforts. Since climatic conditions during the Fall of 1994 were relatively mild (i.e., Average Air Temperatures: 64.2°F in September, 55.5°F in October and 55.1°F for the first 15 days of November with minimal extremes, it was deduced that conducting a vegetation study at that time would still be highly productive since aquatic vegetation seasonal "die-off" would still be minimal.

The water-based study could also provide a reference base to TEA and ASA for comparison purposes during subsequent dye study or water quality evaluation work. Significant masses of aquatic vegetation could also provide added insight to the detection and location of nutrient sources entering the enbayment.

## STUDY

The Vegetation Study was conducted on November 15, 1994 during low tide conditions. Doctor Henry M. Rines of ASA conducted the study with the aid of an environmental engineer from TEA. Due to the relatively small size of Cohasset Cove and Harbor and the numerous land-based references available along the shores, visual locating of delineated areas was deemed more than sufficient. Vegetation landward boundaries were supplemented by shoreline field verification. Deep water delineations of aquatic vegetation were shown in an approximate fashion as observed. Water turbidity restricted full delineation of eelgrass boundaries and have thus been labeled with "unknown limits".

#### STUDY RESULTS

The Cohasset Harbor area vegetation study took place from 13:30 to 16:10 on November 15, 1994. Low tide was predicted or occur at 15:16 with a height predicted for Boston at 0.13 m (MLLW) or close to mean low water. The survey took place from a small Zodiac capable of navigating most of the area of the cove and harbor at low tide. Where shoreline details were indistinct from the boat, landings were made to more closely examine shoreline flora. Notes were also made on subtidal flora that could be seen and identified from the boat. In addition to writing down descriptions of the observed vegetation, notes were also made on copies of maps of the area to more closely define where each observation was made.

The study started in Bailey Creek at the public boat landing. The shoreline here is pebble and cobble with a thin coat of encrusting green and brown algae on some of the pebbles and spare stands of *Fucus*, a brown macroalga ("rockweed"), on some of the larger rocks. The area to the east of the landing is surrounded by saltmarsh with stands of *Spartina* (salt marsh cordgrass). The peat edge of the marsh is eroding into the creek and the exposed peat is covered to varying degrees with algae. Directly to the east of the landing is an area with a thin but nearly complete covering of filamentous green and brown algae (tentatively identified as *Dityosiphon and Rhizoclonium*), with the green alga *Enteromorpha* mixed in. Further on, this algal

cover varies 10% to 50% in patchy areas, and is mostly lacking on the north side of the creek. The *Spartina is* backed by *Phragmites* (reed) on the north side of the creek. *Fucus* occurs intermittently where rocks are exposed.

The areas of intermittent *Fucus* extend westward along the south shore all the way to the mouth of the Gulf. The only other major vegetation here is a small isolated *Spartina* patch in front of the Cohasset Sailing Club. The rocks in and around the mouth of the Gulf all have heavy cover of *Fucus* along with considerable cover of a red encrusting alga *Hildenbrandia*. This is coverage characteristic of an open shore and reflects the considerable water movement associated with the ebb and flow of the tide in this area.

Fucus cover is rare further to the west even on the rip-rap wall abutting the Chart House on Tower Wharf, though coverage increases to about 30% at the north end of the wall. In front of the Chart House, there is a light Fucus cover and solid Hildenbrandia cover on the rocks.

On the adjoining Bates Wharf, to the west, only *Hildenbrandia* was noted. On the stones of the docks and wall further to the west, there is a 20% to 60% cover of *Hildenbrandia* and/or a similarly-encrusting brown alga *Ralfsia*. The rocks at the west end of the Cove on the south shore have a coating of *Hildenbrandia* near the water's

edge and occasional patches of *Fucus* and *Ascophyllum* ("wrack", similar to *Fucus* in appearance). A patch of *Spartina* occupies the south west corner of the shore.

The rocks around the outlet of James Brook into the Cove have about a 20% cover of *Fucus* and *Hildenbrandia*. The wall to the north is almost bare. On the north shore of the Cove there are patches of *Spartina* and eroding peat at the west end. The walls here have a light staining suggestive of *Hildenbrandia*. There is little else along this north shore.

Further to the east, there are patches of *Spartina* around the point with sparse *Fucus* cover on exposed rocks. The east shore of the point is bare, but patches of *Spartina* and eroding peat are also evident on its north side. In the cove above this point, there is an extensive marshy area - *Spartina* on a thick peat layer - to the west of the Cohasset Yacht Club. A thin layer of filamentous green algae and some brown algae intermixed with sparse *Enteromorpha* and *Fucus* cover the eroding peat in patches. There is more *Spartina* along the shore to the east of the yacht club, but no algal covering on the peat.

Heading northward along the channel out of Cohasset Harbor, there is more *Spartina* cover with bare eroding peat banks along the western shore. Hominy Point and other exposed rocky areas have about a 20% cover of *Fucus*. The jetty walls to the east

are essentially bare. *Zostera* (eel grass) grows along the bottom here on the jetty side of the Channel. The extent of this grass bed could not be defined from the boat.

Further to the north, along the shore, low-lying areas of *Spartina* back the sand flats. At the north end of this area, just south of White Head, there is another *Zostera* bed of unknown extent. All around White Head and Little White Head there is a 10 to 20% cover of *Fucus*, with 50 to 100% cover of *Hildenbrandia*, on the lower areas. Northwest of this lies Windmill Point which has a heavy cover of *Hildenbrandia*, with about 50% coverage of *Fucus*, and, for about a foot above the water line, a dense cover of a red alga *Chondrus* (Irish moss). The *Fucus* cover is much lighter to the west of this, but these areas of *Fucus/Hildenbrandia/Chondrus* are repeated on some of the most seaward north-facing points. The sandy bottom in this area has about a 10% cover of *Laminaria*, a brown alga (kelp).

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, there are few, if any indications of eutrophication in the Cohasset Harbor/Cove area. Most of the vegetation present is characteristic of a healthy system. Occasional coverage of filamentous algae along eroding peat margins, though not abnormal, may reflect the presence of some local nutrient inputs, but certainly cannot be attributed to the wastewater treatment plant inputs as they are all remote. The presence of classical rocky shore algae at the mouth of the Gulf and eelgrass in the channel by the Harbor entrance are indications of a clean and healthy system. For those who might seek a bench mark for the health of the system over time, mapping the extent and density of this eelgrass bed (in the proper season) would probably be a useful effort. Such a study is anticipated to be conducted by the Town in the late Spring of 1995 as part of it's current USACOE coordinated dredging program.

# APPENDIX A LOCAL CLIMATOLOGICAL DATA

# LOCAL

INQUIRIES/COMMENTS CALL CLIMATOLOGICAL DATA (704) 271-4800 VOICE

271-4010 TDD/271-4876 FAX GEN LOGAN INTERNATIONAL AP

## MONTHLY SUMMARY



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HEAVY FOG: VISIBILITY 1/4 MILE OR LESS.
BLANK ENTRIES DENOTE MISSING OR UNREPORTED DATA.

\* EXTREME FOR THE MONTH - LAST OCCURRENCE IF MORE THAN ONE. DATA IN COLS 6 AND 12-15 ARE BASED ON 21 OR MORE OBSERVATIONS AT TRACE AMOUNT.

\* ALSO ON EARLIER DATE(S).

\*\*HEAVY FOG: VISIBILITY 1/4 MILE OR LESS.

\*\*BLANK ENTRIES DENOTE MISSING OR UNREPORTED DATA.

\*\*DATA IN COLS 6 AND 12-15 ARE BASED ON 21 OR MORE OBSERVATIONS AT HOURLY INTERVALS. RESULTANT WIND IS THE VECTOR SUM OF WIND SPEEDS

\*\*AND DIRECTIONS DIVIDED BY THE NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS.\*\*

\*\*COLS 16 & 17 : PEAK GUST - HIGHEST INSTANTANEOUS WIND SPEED.\*\*

\*\*ONE OF TWO WINDS IS GIVEN UNDER COLS 18 & 19 : FASTEST MILE - HIGHEST.\*\* ONE OF ING WINDS IS GIVEN UNDER CODE TO A 19 : FASTEST MILE HIGHEST RECORDED SPEED FOR WHICH A MILE OF WIND PASSES STATION (DIRECTION IN COMPASS POINTS). FASTEST OBSERVED ONE MINUTE WIND - HIGHEST ONE MINUTE SPEED (DIRECTION IN TENS OF DEGREES).

ERRORS WILL BE CORRECTED IN SUBSEQUENT PUBLICATIONS.

1 CERTIFY THAT THIS IS AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ALMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION, AND IS COMPILED FROM RECORDS ON FILE AT THE NATIONAL CLIMATIC DATA CENTER. Tunneth & Hadean

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I TRACE AMOUNT.

# LOCAL

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### MONTHLY SUMMARY

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	20	66	55	61	8	56	4	0	1	0	0.02	0.0	29.910		6.2	6.7	16	SE	14	15	0	0	10	10
	21	66	56	61	8	55	4	0	2	0	0.01	0.0	29.780		11.4		25	N	17	34	37	6	10	10
	23	71	51	61	8	49	4	0	1	0	0.00	0.0	29.810	32 25	11.8	8.3	26	N SW	17	33	36	6	10	9
- 1	24	69	51	60	8	46	5	0	i	0	T		29.910	26	4.9		20	SE	17 15	23 31	350 638	54 99	ó	7
,	25	68	48	58	6	45	7	0	1 8	o	0.00	0.0	29.930		7.7		26	S	18	25	404	63	7	4
	_							- [	- "	Ĭ					/	, ,	- 3	-	1		104	"	1	7
	26	57	47	52	0	36	13	0		0	0.00	0.0	30.020	32	4.7	8.5	17	NW	10	30	120	19	10	9
	27	57	46	52	1	33	13	0		0	0.00	0.0	30.070	33	8.4	11.0	20	NW	16	32	363	57	6	6
	28	62	4.3	53	2	35	12	0		0	0.00	0.0		27	9.8		22	SW	14	26	631	100	0	0
	29	66	47	57	6	41	8	0		0	0.00			- 1	14.8	- 1	28	s₩	21	23	228	36	10	8
	30	74	51	63	12	42	2	0		0	0.00	0.0	30.080			12.2	25	W	17	27	1 1	100	0	2
L	3 1	72	51	62	12	48	3	<del>`</del>	1	0	0.03	-	30.020		4.6	7.8	25	S	17	20	380	61	9	8
	ł	5UM 1978	SUM	$\geq$	><		TOTAL	TOTAL	NUMBER OF	DAYS	TOTAL	TOTAL	20 (() 1	F0!	P THE	MONTH	_		2.1	3.6	TOTAL	FOR	-	SUM
		AVG.	1461 AVG.	AVG.	DEP.	AVG.	288 DEP.	DEP.	PRECIPITATIO	N I	0.41 DEP.	V.U	30,060	29 1	الإوف	_	_351_ DATE	₩ : 9	DAT:	34	13361 POSS		_	158 AVG
	- 1	63.8	47.1	55.5	0.7	41.0	-33	_	≥ .01 INCH	л в В	-2.89			$\leq$					- PAT		20544	-	5.2	5.1
	ı								SNOW, ICE PE								GREA	TEST	DEPT	H ON	GROUN		Time	J . A
		ทับ	MBER O	r DAY	5				≥ 1.0 INCH	0	GREATE	ST IN	24 HOUR	S A	ND DAT	ES I					OR IC			
		MAXIM	UM TEM	P. MI	NIMUM :		353	932	THUNDERSTORM	<b>15</b> 0	PRECIP	ITATIO	N SNOW,	IC	E PELL	ETS	AND	DATE						
		≥ 90°	≤ 32°	15	32°   s	ξ,	DEP.	DEP.	HEAVY FOG	1	0.18	23-24	0.	0				0						
	L	0	0		<u>c   </u>	0	-46	254	CLEAR 12	PARTL	Y CLOUD	Y 8	CLOUDY	11										

<sup>·</sup> EXTREME FOR THE MONTH - LAST OCCURRENCE IF MORE THAN ONE. DATA IN COLS 6 AND 12-15 ARE BASED ON 21 OR MORE OBSERVATIONS AT

HEAVY FOG: VISIBILITY 1/4 MILE OR LESS.

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HOURLY INTERVALS. RESULTANT WIND IS THE VECTOR SUM OF WIND SPEEDS AND DIRECTIONS DIVIDED BY THE NUMBER OF OBSERVATIONS.

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NATIONAL NATIONAL NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SATELLITE, DATA, AND INFORMATION SERVICE

NATIONAL. CLIMATIC DATA CENTER
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DIRECTOR

T TRACE AMOUNT.

<sup>+</sup> ALSO ON EARLIER DATE(S).

NOV 1994 BOSTON, MA NAT'L WEA SERVICE. SUITE 102N MASS.TECH.CTR. ISSN # 0198-2427

# LOCAL

INQUIRIES/COMMENTS CALL CLIMATOLOGICAL DATA (704) 271-4800 VOICE CLIMATOLOGICAL DATA 271-4010 TDD/271-4876 FAX



GEN LOGAN INTERNATIONAL AP

MONTHLY SUMMARY

	LA	TITU	DE 4	2" 22	'N L	ONGI	rude	71	02'W EI	EVAT	ION (G	ROUNI	) 1	5 F	EET		TIME	zoi	NE	EAST	ERN		14	739
			TEMP	ERATU	TRE .	F	DEGRE BASE	E DAYS 65 F	WEATHER TYPES	SNOW/	PRECIPI		AVERAGE STATION			WI (M.	Р.Н.				SUNS	HINE	COV TEN	ER
	· DATE	N MAXIMUM	~ HINIMUM	AVERAGE	DEPARTURE OF FROM NORMAL	o, AVERAGE DEW POINT	Y HEATING	5N17000 7B	2 HEAVY FOG 3 THUNDERSTORMS 4 ICF PELIFTS 5 HAIL 6 GLAXF 7 DUSTSTORM 8 SMOKE, HAIE 9 BLOWING SNOW	ON GRD AT 0700 (IN.)	WATER EQUIVALENT	SNOW ICE PELLETS	PRESSURE (INCHES OF Hg) ELEV. 29 (FT.HSL)	** RESULTANT DIR	RESULTANT	AVERAGE	E SPEED G 4		FAS:	TEST IIN	N HINUTES	PERCENT POSSIBLE	N TO SUNSET	A TO MIDNICHT
	0.1		56	<u> </u>	13	<del></del>		0	2	0	0.21	0.0	29.520	_	-	9.8	24	5	20	19	20	0	10	17
	01 02 03 04 05	69 63 65 77 79*	48 45 54 57	63 56 55 66 68*	6 5 17 19	60.8 39.7 26.6 46.5 50.0	2 9 10 0	0 0 1 3	1	0 0	0.00 0.00 0.00	0.0	29.460 30.030 30.060	27 28 21	18.8	21.2 12.7 10.8	46 28 21 31	W NW SW SW	29 18 17 18	27 32 21 22	96 585 589 545	16 95 96 89	9 4 4 8	7 7 7 7
MA	06 07 08 09	66 58 64 63 55	53 47 46 51 39	60 53 55 57 47	11 5 7 9 -1	53.9 25.7 26.4 40.0 25.9	5 12 10 8 18	0 0 0 0	1 8	0 0 0 0	0.04 0.00 0.00 0.01 0.04	0.0 0.0 0.0 0.0	29.810 29.965 29.970 29.790 29.970	30 25 29	21.9 12.6 8.9	13.4 22.6 13.3 12.2 15.1	63 51 31 31 35	W NW W N	41 35 23 20 23	25 29 25 34 33	3 606 31 14 240	0 100 5 2 40	10 0 9 10 6	7 7 17 17
LON ,	11 12 13 14 15	49 53 57 60 68	36 35 43 39 50	43 44 50 50 59	-4 -3 3 4 13	21.7 27.3 31.9 38.6 43.5	22 21 15 15 6	0 0 0 0		0	0.00 0.00 0.00 0.00	0.0 0.0 0.0	30.180 30.265 30.180 30.255 30.090	25 30 22	1	9.8 10.2 10.1	36 23 23 25 30	NW SW N SW	24 14 16 17 18	32 24 35 23 29	596 579 564 441 64	100 97 95 75 11	0 9 4 9	7 7 7 7
BOS	16 17 18 19 20	51 53 56 63 51	44 37 40 46 38	48 45 48 55 45	3 0 3 11	36.7 38.2 46.2 38.3 24.5	17 20 17 10 20	0 0 0 0	1	0 0 0 0	0.00 0.00 1.33 0.59 0.00	0.0 0.0 0.0	30.350 30.440 30.200 29.980 30.360	06 36 29	7.6 12.4		16 20 17 26 29	N E NW NW NW	13 15 13 18 16	34 09 04 31 34	553 119 548 558	0 95 20 95 97	10 0 9 0 6	17 7 7 7 7
	21 22 23 24 25	59 59 43 34 50	34 37 24 24 30	47 48 34 29* 40	4 5 -9 -13 -2	39.3 33.2 14.5 3.3 22.8	18 17 31 36 25	0 0 0 0	1	0 0 0	0.26 0.66 T 0.00 0.00	0.0 0.0 0.1 0.0	30.210 29.735 29.820 30.015 29.940	29 27 28	18.1 15.5 15.0	18.7 16.2	30 41 41 32 30	S W NW NW SW	24 30 28 23 20	18 28 28 29 24	7 574 264 565 310	1 100 46 99 55	10 0 5 1 7	7 7 7 7
	26 27 28 29 30	46 37 66 54 51	26 22* 35 44 37	36 30 51 49 44	-5 -11 11 9 5	18.8 16.7 46.5 25.0 26.6	29 35 14 16 21	0 0 0	1	0 0 0 0	0.00 0.00 1.17 0.00 0.00	0.0 0.0 T 0.0	30.160 30.550 29.815 29.910 30.070	03 18 26		10.2 18.4 14.2	31 20 44 35 29	NW NW W W	22 14 29 22 18	33 13 12 26 31	539 526 0 482 431	95 93 0 86 77	3 4 10 8 5	7 7 7 7
Ĺ		SUM	SUM	_		_	TOTAL	TOTAL	MILLIANDED OF	DAVE	TOTAL	TOTAL		FO		MONT	H :				TOTAL	١.	sun	
		1719	1217			<u></u>	479	4	NUMBER OF		4,31	0.1	30,035	28	7.5	:3.5		W	41		10430	FOR MONTH		178
		AVG.	AVG. 40.6	AVG.	DEP.	AVG.	DEP.	DEP.	PRECIPITATI	ON 9	DEP. 0.09		>	<	$\leq$		DATE	: 6	DAT	E: 6	POSS 17625	59	AVG	AVG
			UMBER			32.8			SNOW, ICE PI	ELLETS		EST IN	24 HOU	RS A	ND DA'	TES	GREA	TEST	DEP	TH ON	GROUN	$\overline{}$	Ť	
							TOTAL	TOTAL	≥ 1.0 INCH	0	<del></del>								E PEI	LETS	OR IC	E		
			MUM TEN	_	NIMUM		832	936			PRECIE				E PEL		AND	DATE					+	
		≥ 90			32' s		DEP.	DEP.	HEAVY FOG		1.92	18-1		لنيل	, ,	23	Щ_	C					_	
	-	0	0		5 1	0	-158	258	CLEAR 7	PARTI	Y CLOU	OY 9	CTORD.	7	<u>•</u>									

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