Regional Open Space Plan

CAPE COD COMMISSION

SUBREGIONAL MEETINGS | SEPTEMBER 2026

CAPE COD COMMISSION

AGENDA

- Introductions
- Regional Open Space Plan Introduction
- Overview of Feedback to-date
- Next Steps
- Feedback
  - Goals, Priorities, and Challenges
  - Tools, Resources, and Support
  - Opportunities and Recommendations

CAPE COD
COMMISSION

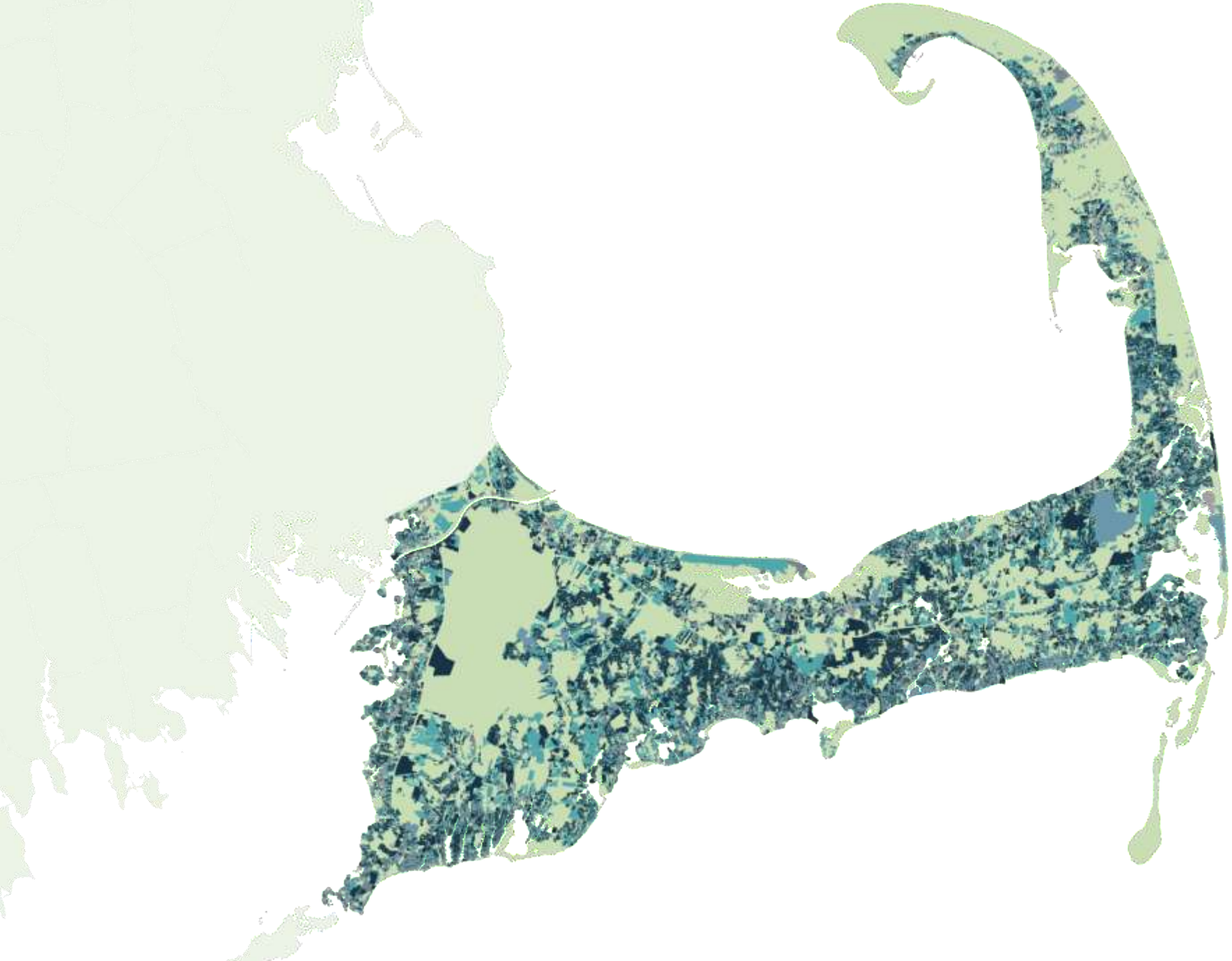
The Cape Cod Commission

...is the regional land use planning, economic development, and regulatory agency created in 1990 to serve the citizens and 15 towns of Barnstable County, Massachusetts

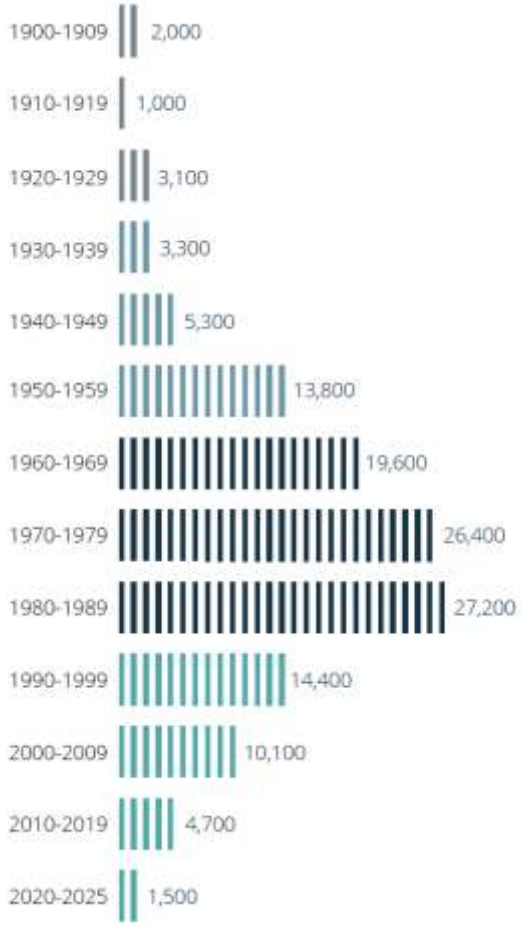


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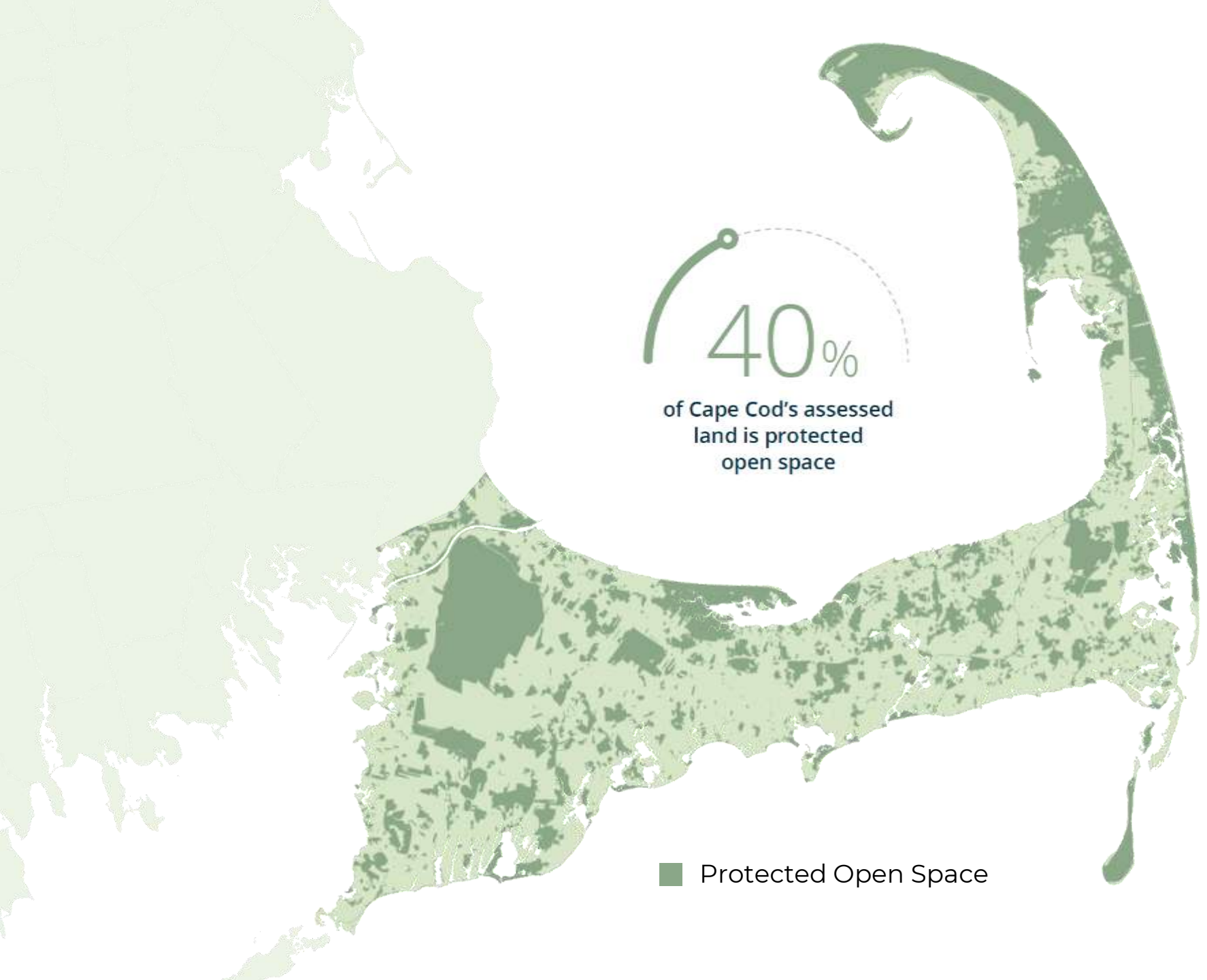
...To protect the unique values and quality of life on Cape Cod by coordinating a balanced relationship between environmental protection and economic progress.



PARCEL DEVELOPMENT BY DECADE



Source: Cape Cod Commission analysis and town assessing data for impervious surface and homes size statistics, Cape Cod Commission Parcel Data Set (2025) which uses individual town assessing data for development by decade



92,500+ ACRES PROTECTED IN PERPETUITY

PROTECTED OPEN SPACE BY OWNER

Federal
25,200 acres

State/County
22,600 acres

Municipal
33,400 acres

Land Trust, Conservation, Public Nonprofit
7,600 acres

Private
3,700 acres

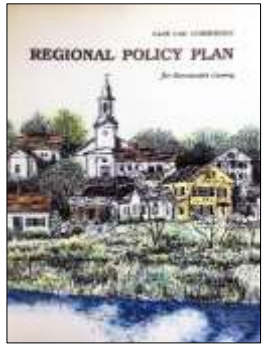
Source: MassGIS (2025)



87%

of the region's land is already developed or protected

Data source: MassGIS (2025) and Cape Cod Commission Parcel Data Set (2025) which uses individual town assessing data for development by decade



1991

Vision of "protecting the best of Cape Cod and repairing the mistakes of the past"



1996

Updated Regional Policy Plan with a focus on growth management



2002

Updated Regional Policy Plan with a focus on Districts of Critical Planning Concern



2009
UPDATED 2012

Updated Regional Policy Plan that divided the planning and regulatory sections



2018
UPDATED 2021

Updated Regional Policy Plan with a focus on context-sensitive planning and design and goals and objectives



2025

Updated Regional Policy Plan with a focus on key regional priorities and continued context-sensitive planning and regulatory review

A REGIONAL VISION FOR CAPE COD

REGIONAL POLICY PLAN

The vision for the future of Cape Cod is a region of vibrant, sustainable, and healthy communities, and protected natural and cultural resources.

Growth Policy for Barnstable County

Growth should be focused in centers of activity and areas supported by adequate infrastructure and guided away from areas that must be protected for ecological, historical or other reasons. Development should be responsive to context allowing for the restoration, preservation and protection of the Cape's unique and finite resources while promoting economic, environmental, and community resilience.

Regional Policy Plan Open Space Goal

Conserve, preserve, or enhance a network of open space that contributes to the region's natural and community resources and systems.

Regional Policy Plan Recommendation



DEVELOP A REGIONAL OPEN SPACE PLAN

With limited land left that isn't developed or protected, developing a regional open space plan is needed to prioritize resource protection, improve connectivity of open space, and identify lands of community significance.

Cape Cod Regional Open Space Plan

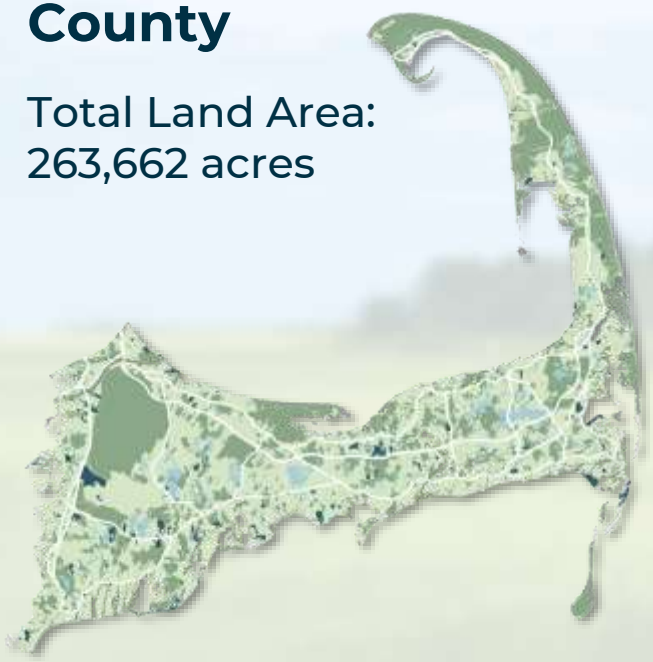
What do we mean by open space?

For the purposes of this plan, the term open space refers to lands with natural, cultural, agricultural, and passive recreational resource values. These lands may be unprotected or may be protected and managed by a division of government, a land trust, or another private entity. Open space can be used to protect community character, provide buffers to development, protect sensitive habitats or water supply, or provide for passive recreation, such as outdoor activities that occur in a natural setting with minimal alteration of the land and that are consistent with quiet enjoyment of the environment (e.g., hiking).

OPEN SPACE CONTEXT BARNSTABLE COUNTY

Barnstable County

Total Land Area:
263,662 acres



- Open space protected in perpetuity
- All other open space (not permanently protected)
- Freshwater ponds

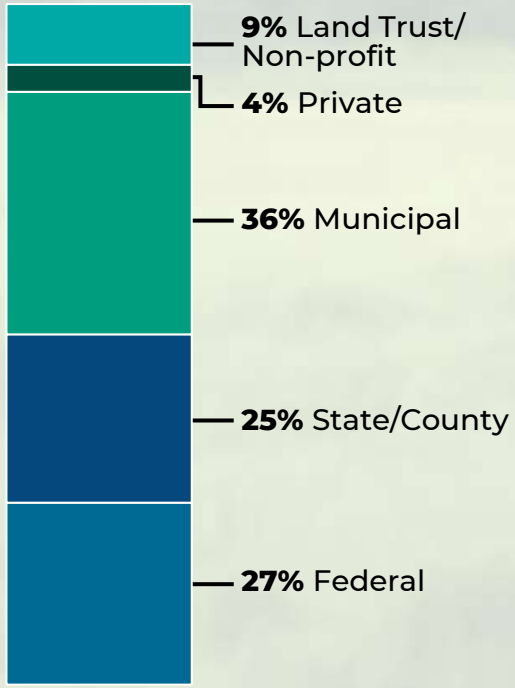
Open Space Protected in Perpetuity

92,628 ACRES

39% OF ALL LAND AREA

Includes acreage of freshwater ponds and lakes

OWNERSHIP



ARTICLE 97 LANDS

57,804 acres
3,500 parcels

CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS

8,267 acres

OTHER RESTRICTIONS

1,933 acres

CHAPTER 61

333 acres
16 parcels

CHAPTER 61A

1,335 acres
183 parcels

CHAPTER 61B

1,322 acres
88 parcels

OPEN SPACE CONTEXT BARNSTABLE COUNTY

Partially Protected and Undeveloped Lands within Sensitive Natural Resource Areas

8,944 acres
in Wellhead Protection Areas

2,507 acres
in Potential Public Water Supply Areas

3,645 acres
in the 100 Foot Wetland Buffer Area

7,630 acres
in the 2050 MCFRM

Acres within resource areas may overlap.

7,040 acres
in NHESP Priority Habitat

8,495 acres
in BioMap Core Habitat

7,657 acres
in BioMap Critical Natural Landscapes

2,764 acres
within 300 Feet of a Pond



Opportunities for Preserving Land as Open Space

13%
of the land area on Cape Cod is not yet developed or protected **(33,544 acres)**

OPEN SPACE NOT PROTECTED IN PERPETUITY

7,220 acres
of open space that is not protected in perpetuity and is either protected with less stringent restrictions, through legal mechanisms other than a restriction, or is not protected with any restrictions at all.

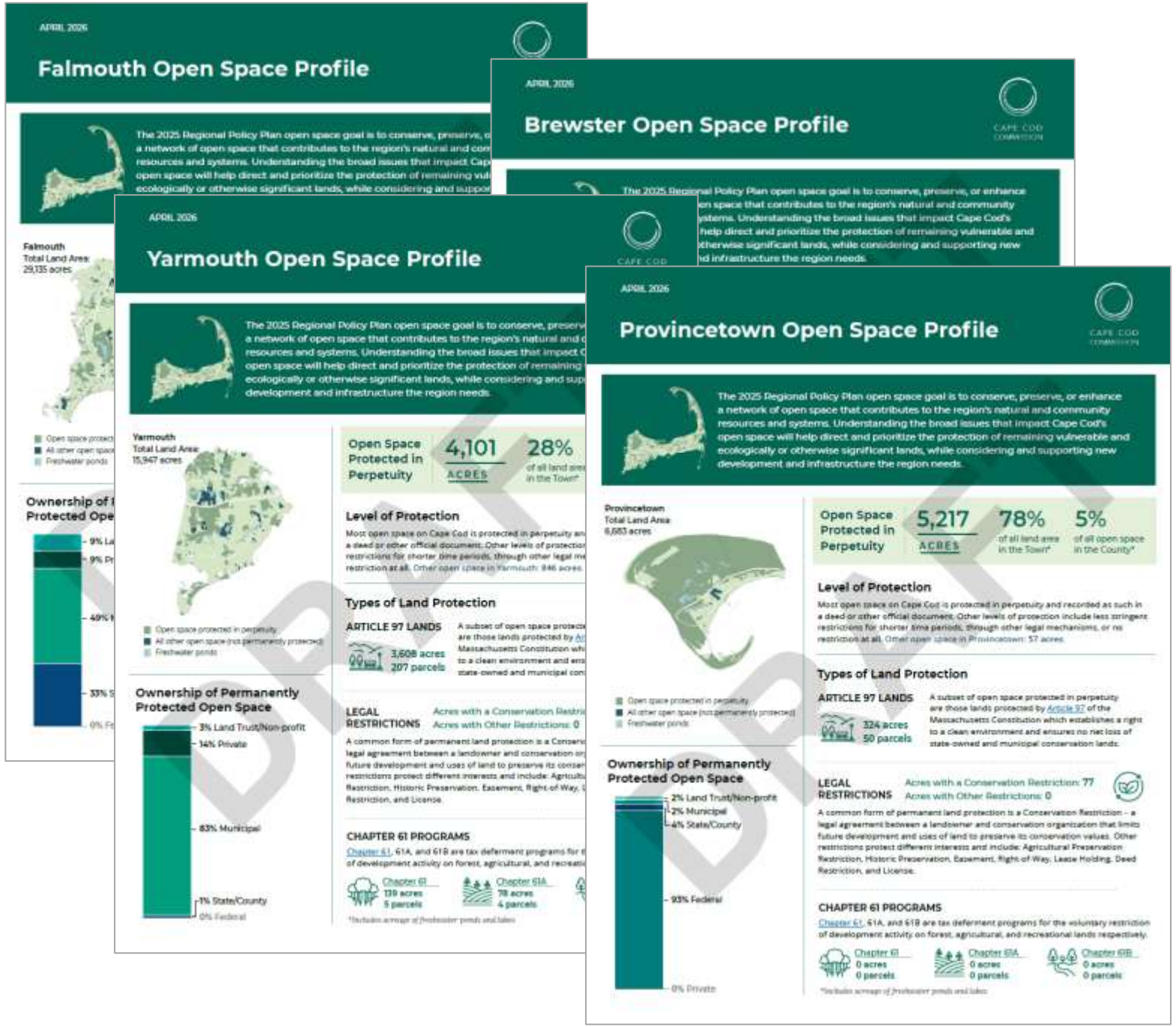
Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) status for all towns:

8 Current

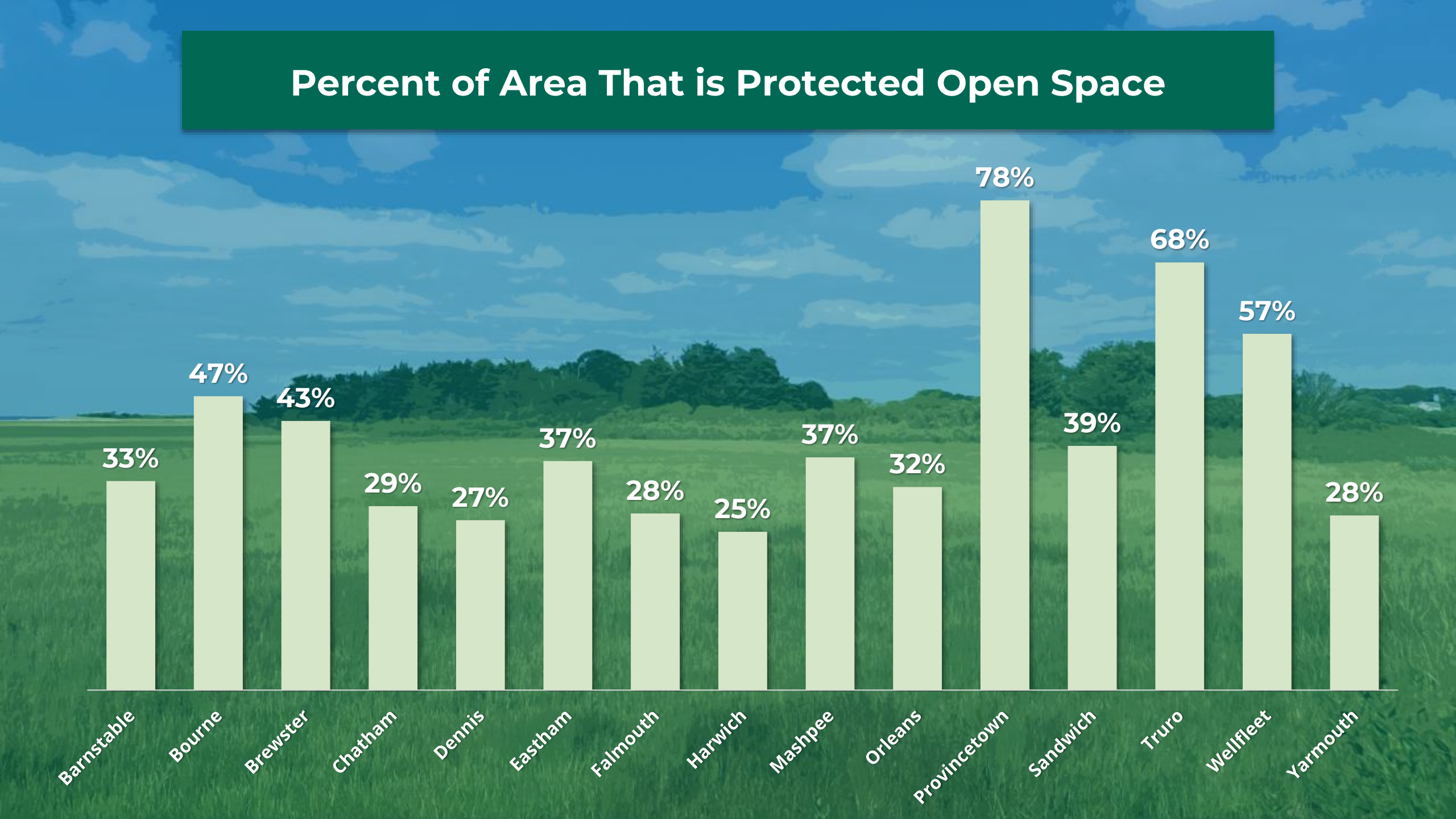
6 In progress

1 Expired

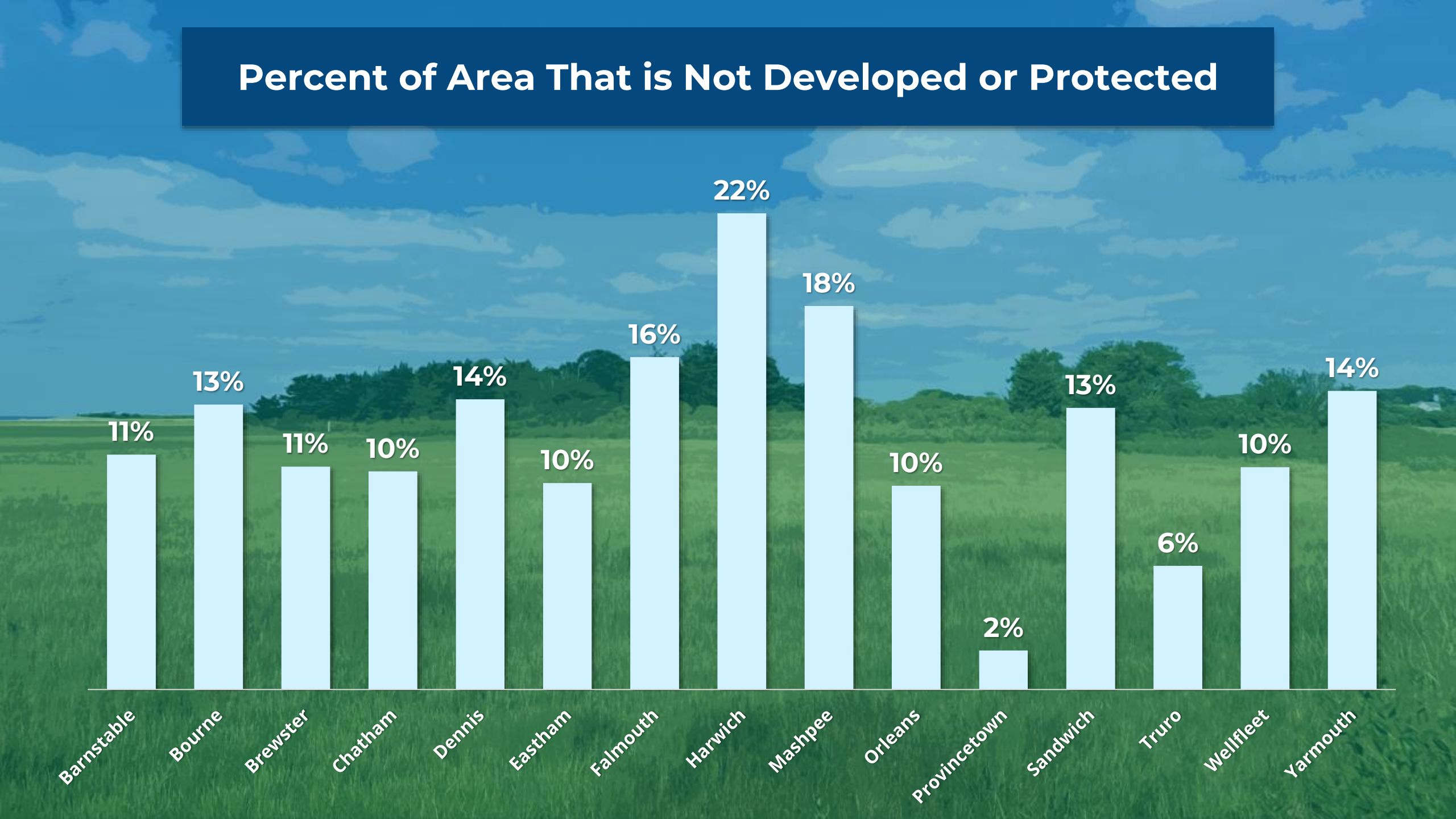
Open Space Profiles



Percent of Area That is Protected Open Space



Percent of Area That is Not Developed or Protected



Regional Priorities



Sensitive Habitats



Potential Public Water Supply Areas



Coastal Floodplains

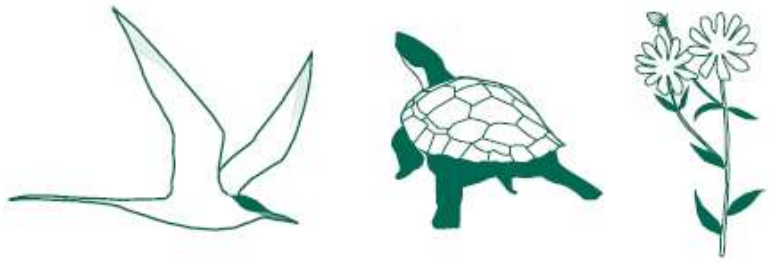
Sensitive Habitat

148

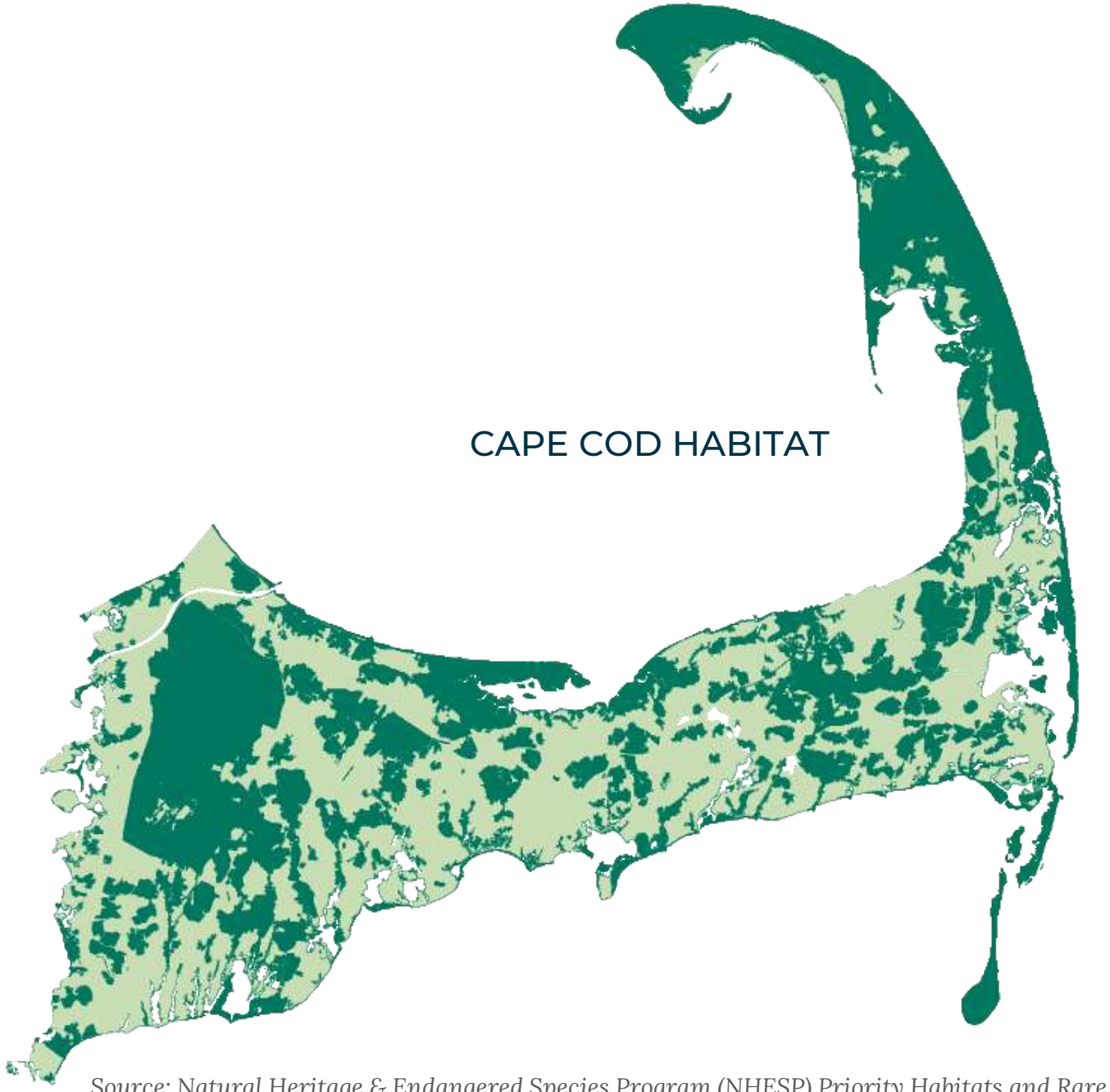
Native Plant and Animal Species on Cape Cod

453

Native Plant and Animal Species in Massachusetts



33% of all state-listed species are found in habitats on Cape Cod

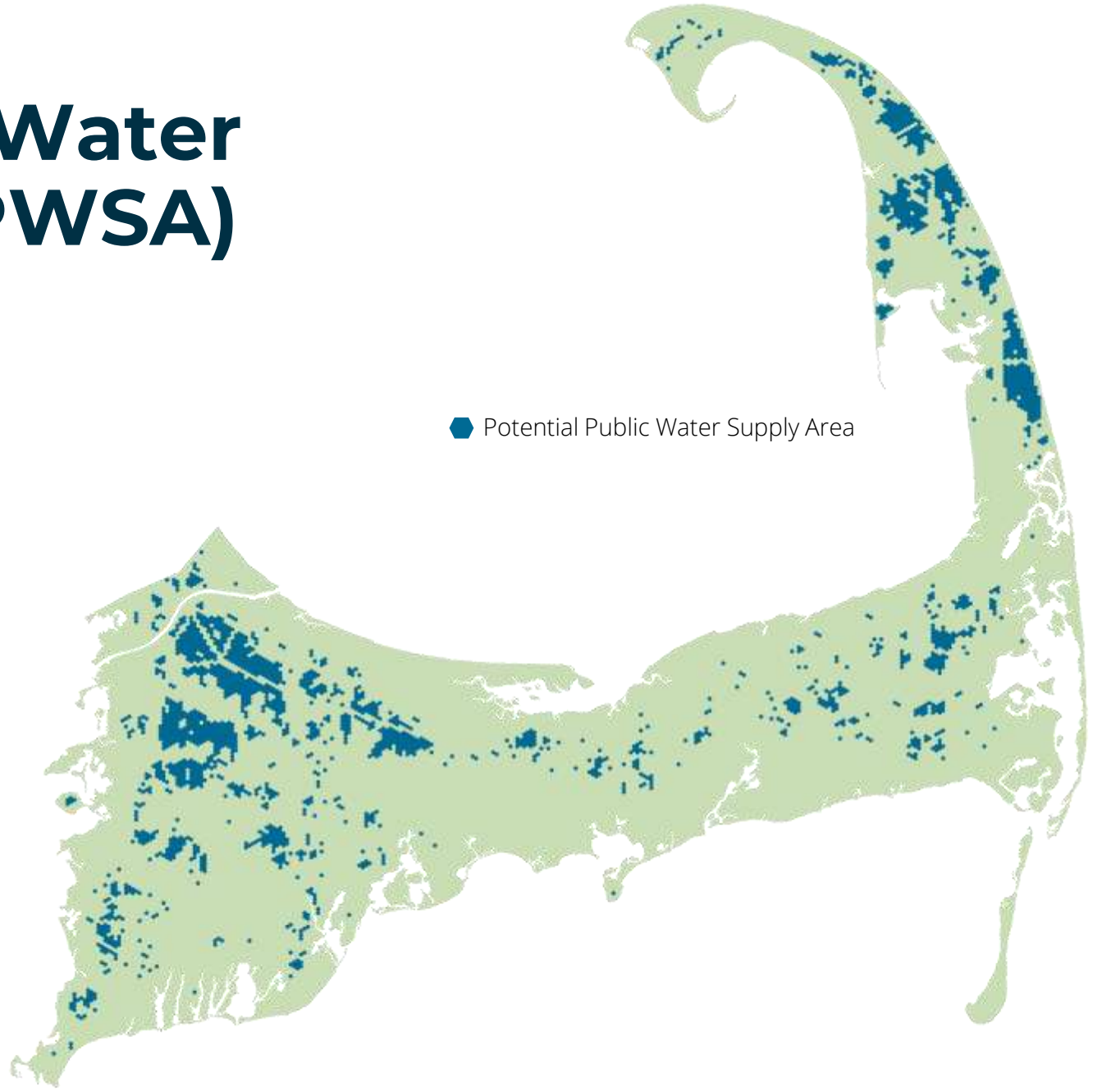


Source: Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) Priority Habitats and Rare Species, BioMap

Potential Public Water Supply Areas (PPWSA)

11%

of the Region's Land Area is Within a PPWSA



Coastal Floodplains

19%

Percent of the Region in the FEMA Special Flood Hazard Area

$9.8 billion

Assessed Building Value of Structures in the SFHA



Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)

Cape Cod Regional Open Space Plan – Draft Framework



Data Collection and Analysis

Open Space Profiles

Economic Analysis of Open Space Values



Map and Analyze Undeveloped Unprotected Lands



Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Municipal and Land Trust Meetings, Surveys, Stakeholder and Public Meetings



Develop the Cape Cod Regional Open Space Plan

Implementation Resources

The Regional Open Space Plan will align with state initiatives such as the *Biodiversity Conservation Goals for the Commonwealth*, *Farmland Action Plan,* and *ResilientCoasts Initiative*.

Cape Cod Regional Open Space Plan

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF OPEN SPACE VALUE



Property Price Analysis



Ecosystem Services Valuation



Economic Contribution of Open Space



Non-monetary Benefits of Open Space

Meetings with Towns, Land Trusts, and State & Federal Partners

Meetings to Date

8/31/26

☐ Towns:

Barnstable, Bourne, Brewster, Chatham, Eastham, Falmouth, Harwich, Mashpee, Orleans, Provincetown, Sandwich Wellfleet, Yarmouth



Subregional Land Trusts Meetings: Eastham, Mashpee, Dennis

Priorities & Challenges

- What are your goals and priorities around open space?
- Have you identified specific locations or parcels for open space?
- What are the greatest challenges you face in funding, prioritizing and protecting open space?

Tools, Resources, & Support

- Are there resources and programs we should be aware of?
- What support or resources do you need to advance open space goals and priorities?
- How could a regional open space planning process help advance local priorities?

Stakeholders / Collaborations

- Who should be involved in the regional stakeholder process?
- Are there examples of successful or challenging collaborations?
- Are there specific collaborations or opportunities you are interested in pursuing?

Towns, Land Trusts, and State and Federal Partners Meetings: Themes from Feedback



Priorities

- Pine barrens habitats protection / restoration
- Water supply protection
- Buffers to water bodies
- Connectivity
- Access to open space
- Protecting town character



Challenges

- Stewardship and management
- Limited staff resources
- Public education
- Competing interests
- Climate change
- Invasive species



Tools/Resources

- Interactive map of open space; better data
- Recommended open space acquisition criteria
- Regional land bank, other funding sources
- Valuation of natural resources and open space

Clarifying Questions

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PROVIDING FEEDBACK

>> PROVIDE COMMENTS TODAY VERBALLY

>> LEAVE COMMENTS ON THE BOARDS

>> FILL OUT A COMMENT CARD

>> MATERIALS AND MORE INFORMATION:
www.capecodcommission.org/open-space

>> TAKE THE SURVEY (AND SHARE IT!):
www.capecodcommission.org/rosp-survey

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FEEDBACK

IDENTIFIED REGIONAL PRIORITIES



Sensitive Habitats



Potential Public Water Supply Areas



Coastal Floodplains

What do <u>you</u> think should be priorities of the regional open space plan?

FEEDBACK

IDENTIFIED REGIONAL CHALLENGES



Funding



Stewardship and Maintenance



Competing Interests

What do <u>you</u> think are the open space challenges in the region?

FEEDBACK

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL RESOURCES



Interactive/Online Mapping Tool



Regional Land Bank



Model Regulations

What do <u>you</u> think could help advance regional open space priorities?

FEEDBACK

IDENTIFIED POTENTIAL RECOMMENDATIONS



Collaborations



Community Partnerships



Actions

What do <u>you</u> think should be recommendations to advance regional open space priorities?

PROVIDING FEEDBACK

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