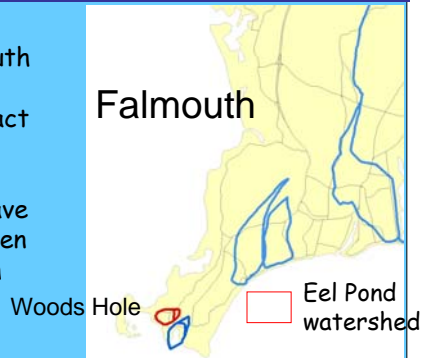


Water Quality of Falmouth's Coastal Ponds

The clean water of Vineyard Sound, beautiful beaches, and coastal ponds have long made Falmouth a destination for vacationers, retirees, and year-round residents. Yet the very qualities that attract people to Falmouth are now threatened by increasing nitrogen pollution. All of the estuaries and coastal ponds along Falmouth's south shore have been degraded - some severely - by excess nitrogen entering the water. The entire watershed of each estuary contributes to this problem.



THE PROBLEM OF NITROGEN POLLUTION

While nitrogen is a natural and essential part of marine ecosystems, too much nitrogen can lead to poor water quality and degraded habitat.

Excess nitrogen causes heavy algae growth in the water, which blocks sunlight and reduces oxygen needed by fish and shellfish. This results in loss of eelgrass and marine animal species. Other negative impacts such as murky waters, bad odors, and decline in property values can follow.

The main source of nitrogen pollution in Falmouth's coastal waters is septic systems (even Title 5 systems do not remove nitrogen), followed by lawn and agricultural fertilizer run-off, acid rain, and stormwater run-off.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We can all help improve the health of our coastal waters by getting involved:

- Reduce or eliminate fertilizer use at home (see tips from the Falmouth Friendly Lawn program on FACES' website.)
- Support town efforts to develop a Town-wide Wastewater Management Plan. This will include sewerage parts of town.

FACES

Faces (Falmouth Associations Concerned with Estuaries and Salt Ponds) is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to educating and inspiring citizens to preserve the natural environment of estuaries and salt ponds in Falmouth. Visit us on the web at:



<http://www.preservefalmouthbays-ponds.org/>

HOW HEALTHY IS YOUR LOCAL WATERWAY?

Nutrient Related Habitat Health

Eel Pond

Fair

Nutrient related habitat health is a summary of nitrogen-related measures of habitat quality including dissolved oxygen, chlorophyll, macroalgae, eelgrass, and infaunal animals.

Poor = Significant impairment to severe degradation

Fair = Moderate Impairment

Good = Healthy habitat conditions

Habitat health does not include bacteria monitoring and is not an index of public health safety.

Index adapted from Carman et al. (2007)

Format and text adapted from signs by:

THE COALITION FOR BUZZARDS BAY

