

## Chapter 2

# History and Accomplishments of the Project

## What Is the Buzzards Bay Project?

The Buzzards Bay Project is one of the first estuary protection programs in the country. It was initiated in 1985 under the joint management of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA). From the beginning, the Project had a threefold objective: (1) to set up a management structure to coordinate Project activities and help achieve long-term goals; (2) to identify and research the priority water quality problems in Buzzards Bay; and (3) based upon these findings, to develop a management plan for the protection of the Bay's water quality and valuable resources.

On January 29, 1988, Buzzards Bay was officially designated "an estuary of national significance" within the National Estuary Program, in accordance with the provisions of the Water Quality Act. This event represented a renewed commitment on the part of the Project's participants to improve and protect the environmental quality of Buzzards Bay.

The culmination of the information-gathering phase of the Buzzards Bay Project is a long-term management plan, and Buzzards Bay is one of the first estuary programs in the country to draft its blueprint for the future. This document, called the Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP), is the result of five years of research and demonstration activities designed to help understand the most pressing problems in the Bay and to identify the solutions.

### Buzzards Bay Project Milestones

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 1985    | Buzzards Bay Project established. Management, Technical Advisory, and Citizens Advisory Committees established. Characterization, research, and assessment activities begin. Public outreach/education begins. |
| 1987    | Citizens Advisory Committee splits into the Coalition for Buzzards Bay (citizens advocacy group) and the Buzzards Bay Advisory Committee (town officials).   |
| 1988    | Buzzards Bay designated in the National Estuary Program.   |
| 1989    | Project holds management goals workshops to identify goals for the Management Plan.  |
| 1990    | Management Plan Advisory Committee established. CCMP drafted, reviewed by state and federal agencies, and open for public comment.   |
| 1991    | 12 municipalities surrounding the Bay sign the Buzzards Bay Compact for the protection of Buzzards Bay and implementation of the CCMP.   |
| 1991    | CCMP finalized and approved by the Commonwealth and EPA.   |
| 1991-93 | Buzzards Bay Project will guide and oversee implementation of CCMP.  |

## Why Buzzards Bay?

Buzzards Bay is a valuable resource, important for its economic, recreational, and aesthetic values. The economic resources of the Bay range from the harvest of its rich fisheries to its use as a transit route for the New Bedford fishing fleet and for shipping

## Chapter 2: Project History

through the Cape Cod Canal. Its ragged coastline is beautiful and provides many opportunities for fishing, boating, and bathing, as well as critical habitat for a variety of plant and animal species. Buzzards Bay also offers educational and research opportunities to the research laboratories and academic institutions located throughout the region.

The various uses of Buzzards Bay often conflict. Harbors used for swimming and harvest of shellfish double as discharge sites for residential and industrial wastewater. Approximately 18,000 acres surrounding New Bedford Harbor have high levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and are closed to the taking of lobsters, finfish, and shellfish. Burgeoning development has made Barnstable County the fastest growing county in New England and has contributed to declining water quality. Proliferation of boats and piers is causing habitat loss in many of the smaller bays and harbors. Industrial pollution and accelerated residential development combine to threaten the environmental and economic health of Buzzards Bay.

Despite these changes, Buzzards Bay is still considered a relatively pristine estuary. The Buzzards Bay Project developed this plan as a way to prevent further degradation and restore impacted areas.

## What Is the National Estuary Program?

Recognizing the threats to our nation's estuaries, the United States Congress appropriated \$4 million to EPA in 1985 for study and assessment of four major estuaries around the country. Along with Buzzards Bay, the other estuaries selected for study were Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island and Massachusetts; Long Island Sound in New York and Connecticut; and Puget Sound in Washington. These efforts were the precursor of EPA's National Estuary Program — a framework for addressing pollution problems and the effects of overuse and development and for preparing comprehensive management plans to ensure an estuary's ecological integrity.

The goals of the National Estuary Program (NEP) are protection and improvement water quality and enhancement of living resources. To achieve these goals, the NEP works to

- Establish working partnerships among federal, state, and local governments
- Transfer scientific and management information, experience and expertise to program participants
- Increase public awareness of pollution problems and ensure public participation in consensus building
- Promote basinwide planning to control pollution and manage living resources
- Oversee development and implementation of pollution abatement and control programs.

Two major themes of the NEP are (1) a phased program approach to identify and define priority problems, establish their probable causes, and devise strategies to address them; and (2) a collaborative problem-solving process that involves all concerned parties in each phase of the program and secures commitments to carry out recommended actions.

Through 1986, program activities in the four selected estuaries were supported by broad legislative authorities and funding appropriations. Passage of the Water Quality Act of 1987 signaled recognition by Congress that the health of the nation's estuaries had to be protected. The new law formally established the NEP. Section 317 of the Act declares that the increase in coastal population, demands for development, and other direct and indirect uses of the estuaries threaten these unique bodies of water. The law further states that it is in the national interest to maintain the ecological integrity of the nation's estuaries through long-term planning and management.

Section 320 of the Clean Water Act authorizes the EPA Administrator to convene Management Conferences to develop comprehensive plans for estuaries of national significance. The conferees are charged with balancing the conflicting uses in the estuary while restoring or maintaining its natural character.

## What Is the Buzzards Bay Project?

The management structure of the Buzzards Bay Project includes groups that are committed to the development and implementation of the management plan. These groups are the key to the Project's success and together make up the Management Conference (Figure 2.1). They include members from the research community, public interest groups, local government, and state and federal resource-management agencies.

Policy decisions, project management, citizen and local involvement, and scientific advice are all necessary components of a successful Buzzards Bay Project. To accommodate the variety of interests and expertise, organizations and perspectives, the Project is organized into five committees that bring together people concerned with different aspects of a comprehensive estuarine management program. Members of each committee are listed in the acknowledgements section at the front of this document.

### Policy Committee

The Policy Committee sets the overall policy of the Buzzards Bay Project and ensures that a coordinated federal and state effort is made to address resource management decisions in the Bay. The Policy Committee is composed of the Regional Administrator of EPA Region

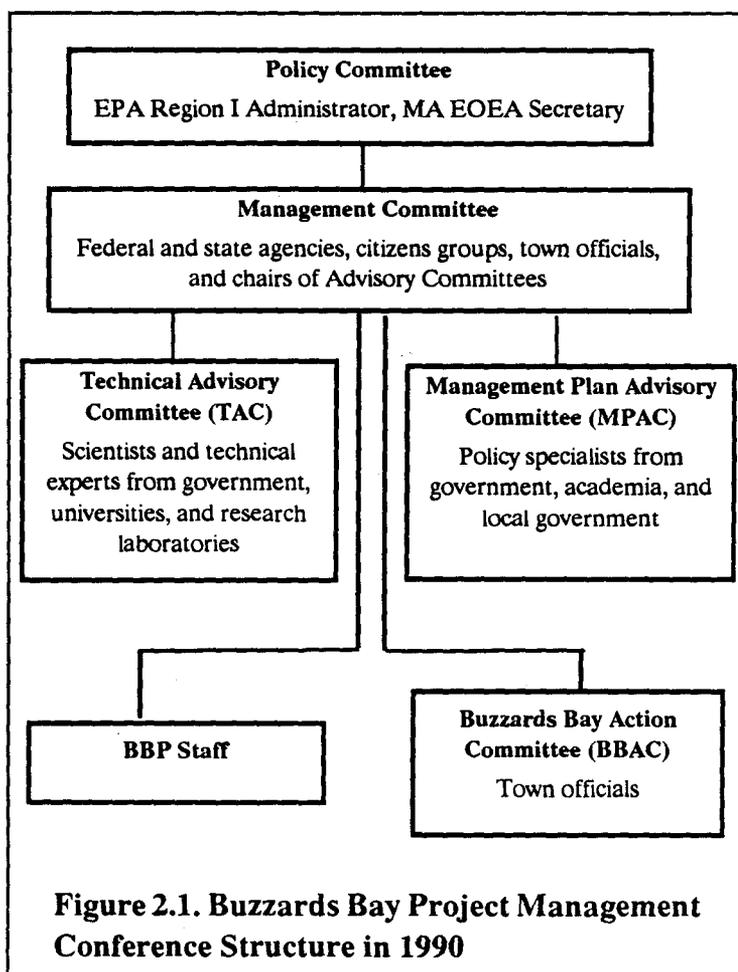


Figure 2.1. Buzzards Bay Project Management Conference Structure in 1990

## Chapter 2: Project History

I and the Secretary of the EOE of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

### **Management Committee**

The Management Committee directs program activities for the Project. It formulates a long-term strategy for the management of Bay resources and develops annual work plans for research, monitoring, and pollution control. Membership includes representatives from various state and federal agencies, regional planning commissions that have responsibility for coastal environmental quality in and around the Bay, local communities, and the public.

### **Technical Advisory Committee**

The Technical Advisory Committee serves as a forum for scientific input and advice on issues relating to Buzzards Bay. Membership is drawn from the academic institutions and state and federal agencies that are active in research, monitoring, and resource assessment. This committee reviews annual work plans, research proposals, and technical reports, and provides overall scientific direction to the various funded studies.

### **Buzzards Bay Advisory Committee**

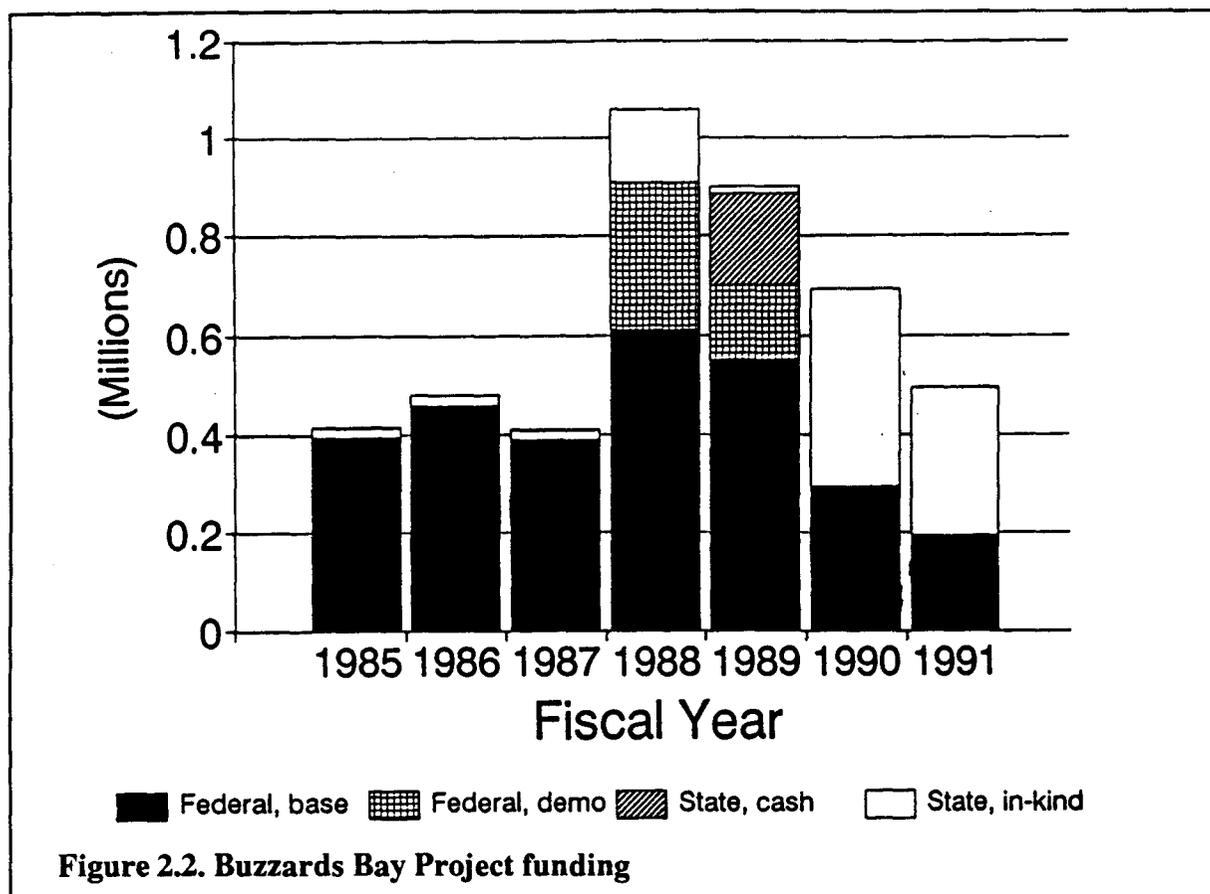
The Buzzards Bay Advisory Committee (BBAC), now known as the Buzzards Bay Action Committee facilitates regional communication and cooperation among municipal agencies concerned with the management of Buzzards Bay and its watersheds. This committee has been instrumental in developing the CCMP and will have a continuing role in its implementation. The group is composed primarily of local officials from the communities surrounding Buzzards Bay. The Action Committee is no longer a subcommittee of the Buzzards Bay Management Conference and became an independent, non-profit organization in 1991. The BBAC does remain a voting member of the Management Committee. The BBAC originated in 1987 when the Buzzards Bay Project's Citizen Advisory Committee divided into two groups, the Buzzards Bay Advisory Committee, and the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, a non-profit citizen's group, which like the BBAC is a voting member of the Management Committee.

### **Management Plan Advisory Committee**

The Management Plan Advisory Committee consisted of administrators and marine policy specialists from local, state, and federal agencies and from academia. Its primary function was to assist with the development of the management plan, particularly with respect to state and local policies. This Committee was dissolved in 1990 shortly after the first public draft of the CCMP was released.

### **How is the Project Funded?**

Prior to 1988, the Buzzards Bay Project received 95% of its funding from the federal government through a grant from EPA. Since 1988, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has contributed at least 25% of the Project's annual budget.



## How has the Project Addressed Priority Problems?

Between 1985 and 1989, the Buzzards Bay Project funded a number of studies to assess and characterize existing conditions in the Bay, including the status of water quality, sediments, and living resources. Based on these studies and results from prior research and scientific investigations, the Management Conference, through the process of consensus-building, identified the three priority problems in Buzzards Bay — closure of shellfish beds due to contamination by disease-causing bacteria and viruses known as pathogens; high nutrient inputs and their impact on coastal ecosystems and habitat; and contamination of fish, lobsters, and shellfish by toxic metals and organic compounds, such as PCBs.

The Buzzards Bay Project began addressing these priority problems in 1985 by collecting and evaluating historical information; conducting baywide surveys of water, sediment, and biota quality; and investigating the relationship between land-use practices, nutrient enrichment, and the closure of shellfish beds. Over the past five years, the Buzzards Bay Project has funded a number of studies designed to better understand the relationship between pollutants in the environment and their impacts on the resources of Buzzards Bay, including its water quality.

### **1989 Community Minigrant Awards**

The Community Minigrant Program was established by the Buzzards Bay Advisory Committee to support local efforts at addressing priority issues in water quality, resource management, and land use. In July, 1989, seven grants totaling nearly \$100,000 were awarded; eight communities received funds in amounts from \$5,000 to \$25,000. These projects are intended to serve as models for other communities facing similar problems.

- **New Bedford and Fairhaven:** Design a plan for pump-out facilities to handle sanitary wastes and used oil from commercial fishing vessels.
- **Dartmouth:** Delineate the Buttonwood Brook Watershed, document land-use patterns, and develop a water quality management plan.
- **Acushnet, Rochester, Marion:** Establish a Regional Health District and hire a regional sanitarian to assist the towns in carrying out state and local requirements for the sanitary code (Title 5).
- **Wareham:** Establish a grid system for moorings in the harbor.
- **Fairhaven:** Educate town boards on legal responsibilities and facilitate coordination between boards within and between towns.
- **Westport:** Establish a mobile marine pump-out program in the Westport River.
- **Marion:** Implement a citizen's monitoring program to collect water quality samples.

Funds from the Buzzards Bay Project have been used not only to study the problems of the Bay, but also to demonstrate the effectiveness of a variety of actions to help clean up the Bay and to educate and involve the public in the Project. For example, the Buzzards Bay Project has funded two large-scale demonstration projects to address stormwater and sanitary wastes. In addition, the Project (through the Buzzards Bay Action Committee) awarded area communities nearly \$100,000 in 1989 to encourage and support local efforts at improving and protecting the resources of Buzzards Bay. In 1990 the Project will award nearly \$140,000 for a variety of activities including coastal resource mapping, oil spill containment, stormwater treatment and boat pumpout facilities.

The Buzzards Bay Project has sponsored continuing efforts to inform the public, interest groups, and local and state agencies about the water quality problems and resources of Buzzards Bay and to stimulate interest and communication regarding the Buzzards Bay Project. The Lloyd Center for Environmental Studies in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts, has worked in this field since the beginning of the Project and has undertaken a variety of activities to carry out a well-balanced program of public education.

Prior to 1991 the Lloyd Center produced quarterly newsletters that contained lists of upcoming events, research updates, and environmental news from around the Bay. The newsletter was distributed baywide to over 1,500 people. Fact sheets on important issues affecting the Bay have also been produced and distributed throughout the region. The Lloyd Center has also arranged and conducted many public events and workshops on behalf of the

## Chapter 2: Project History

Project on such important topics as environmental testing, model bylaws, and the state of Buzzards Bay. A traveling display, which includes a free-standing exhibit and a slide show with audio tape, was prepared by the Lloyd Center. The display is set up at libraries, public buildings, conferences, and meetings. The staff of the Lloyd Center also uses the slide show to give presentations to garden clubs, environmental groups, and other organizations around the Bay.

The Buzzards Bay Project now produces an "in-house" newsletter containing pertinent information about the Project and news stories that affect the protection of the Bay. The project will also continue to distribute fact sheets on relevant subject matter.

The Buzzards Bay Project believes that it is important to educate young citizens about the Bay. As part of the public education program, the Lloyd Center has developed a curriculum for use in local schools. The curriculum stresses the Bay as a resource, the problems facing the Bay, and the role of the individual in protecting the Bay.

A second, and equally important role, of the Project's outreach efforts has been to ensure and facilitate adequate public involvement. In 1985, environmental organizations and municipalities around the Bay joined together to form a Citizen's Advisory Committee to work with the Buzzards Bay Project. One goal of this group was to create an organization that would continue to bring organizations, municipalities, and individuals together on behalf of the Bay for generations to come and would serve as an advocate for environmental issues of concern to the region. On Buzzards Bay Day, October 11, 1986, the Committee overwhelmingly confirmed the establishment of the Coalition for Buzzards Bay, a baywide citizen's advocacy organization.

The Coalition for Buzzards Bay is an independent nonprofit, tax-exempt organization dedicated to inform and involve the public in the cleanup, restoration, and protection of Buzzards Bay. During the past four years, the Coalition for Buzzards Bay has grown to more than 600 members and is a strong and viable force committed to protecting the future of Buzzards Bay.

Since 1985, the Project has sponsored a number of meetings and workshops on problems facing Buzzards Bay. In 1989, the Project held a series of workshops specifically for citizens and local officials of Buzzards Bay communities. At these workshops, scientific findings were presented and the Project entertained suggestions on how problems in the Bay should be managed within the existing regulatory framework at the state and local levels. Many of the initial recommendations in the CCMP were developed from the dialogue that occurred during the workshops.