

## Executive Summary

Section 320 of the 1987 Clean Water Act requires each National Estuary Program (NEP) to develop and implement a Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP). In 1991, the Buzzards Bay National Estuary Program developed the Buzzards Bay CCMP which characterized problems facing Buzzards Bay, established priorities for research, specified monitoring, identified funding, and proposed action to protect and restore water quality and living resources in Buzzards Bay and its surrounding watershed. In 2013, the Buzzards Bay NEP updated the CCMP after reviewing progress and accomplishments in meeting the original goals and recommendations of the plan. Between 2022 and 2025, the Buzzards Bay NEP conducted a similar review, including climate vulnerability assessments, adaptation strategies, changes in laws and regulations. This effort culminated in the 2025 Update.

Chapter 1 describes Buzzards Bay and its setting and provides a brief history of the Buzzards Bay NEP. Chapter 2 summarizes past climate and extreme weather vulnerability assessments. Chapter 3 holds updates to 20 Action Plans. Chapters 4 through 6 describe implementing the CCMP, a finance strategy, and an overview of habitat protection and restoration actions. An appendix includes a side-by-side comparison of changes in goals and objectives between the 2013 and 2025 updates.

The Buzzards Bay CCMP is not a regulatory document. Rather, it is a watershed plan and a detailed outline for action. It not only defines what types of projects or activities the Buzzards Bay NEP may fund or aid; it also defines projects and activities that are priorities and eligible for funding through other state and federal grant programs. As described in Section 320 (b)(7), the Buzzards Bay NEP and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have authority to assess whether other federal grants and initiatives are consistent with the Buzzards Bay CCMP. The CCMP is a dynamic document that reflects the evolving knowledge and understanding of Buzzards Bay and its watershed, changing laws and regulations, changes to the environment, past accomplishments, and changing community needs.

One of the overarching goals of the Clean Water Act is to make waters drinkable, fishable, and swimmable. The law's intent is that water quality provides for the protection and propagation of fish and shellfish, wildlife, and recreation in and on the water. The 20 Action Plans in the 2025 update will help meet these goals in Buzzards Bay and its watershed. Actions are directed at all levels of government, non-profits, business, industry, and the public. Each Action Plan defines the problem, describes goals and action-oriented objectives to help meet the named goals. The Goals are aspirational and without a deadline, and the Objectives are key intermediate steps needed to achieve the overarching goals. The objectives are not meant to be an exhaustive list of all actions in support of the goals but identify important action items that should be implemented and supported by funding and technical assistance by all levels of government. New research-related objectives were added to identify essential information needed to achieve the goals and objectives of that Action Plan. The Action Plans also identify management approaches. A single agency or level of government may be required to act, but in other cases all levels of government, the public, and private entities may have a role. Each Action Plan also describes costs, how those costs will be financed, and what the NEP or partners must monitor to track progress toward meeting the Action Plan goals.

In implementing the CCMP, the Buzzards Bay NEP's primary responsibility is to develop plans to help implement CCMP goals, and to monitor the effectiveness of actions taken. The Buzzards Bay NEP also facilitates action through its grant and technical assistance programs.

The CCMP stresses the importance of public awareness of environmental problems and the need for all stakeholders to engage in dialog to develop consensus solutions to the many environmental problems facing the bay and surrounding watershed. Among these partners, under Massachusetts Home rule, municipalities often have the greatest authority and burden to implement most Action Plans. However, municipalities also often lack the staff or financial capacity to act. It is for this reason that most action plans include objectives for state and federal agencies to increase financial and technical support to Buzzards Bay municipalities to help them implement CCMP action objectives to protect and restore Buzzards Bay.