



Alert: New US Census urbanized area maps now include all Buzzards Bay municipalities. Communities must prepare Phase II Stormwater Management Plans by March 2003.

July 29, 2002

To: Boards of Selectmen, Public Works Departments, Shellfish Wardens, and Boards of Health of the Buzzards Bay watershed
Re: New Phase II Stormwater Permit Areas

Dear Municipal Officials:

In June 2002, the US Census released new "urbanized areas" maps for the United States. These maps are used by many state and federal agencies to define eligibility for grant and aid programs. Most importantly, the US Census has adopted new definitions of "urbanized areas," resulting in large areas of Southeastern Massachusetts and most of Cape Cod being classified as urbanized areas.

While the new classification may help towns obtain more aid or grants for certain social services or public transportation programs, it will also affect how two federal environmental programs operate.

The first program affected is the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System program, or NPDES for short. In 1999, the US EPA adopted new regulations requiring municipalities to prepare and apply for Phase II Stormwater Management Permits for all stormwater discharges in their community that they control. Municipalities must prepare and submit a permit application to the US EPA no later than March 10, 2003. When the EPA selected this date, a late June 2002 release of urbanized area maps by the US Census was not expected. Now more municipalities must file permits and prepare stormwater management plans. Buzzards Bay watershed towns newly included in the Phase II stormwater program are: Mattapoisett, Marion, Rochester, Wareham, Plymouth, Middleborough, Carver, Falmouth, and Bourne. New Bedford, Westport, Dartmouth, Acushnet, and Fairhaven had already expected to prepare plans based on the 1990 Census designations.

The permit application that the towns must submit to the EPA is called a Phase II Notice of Intent. As part of the application, a town must prepare a written 5-year program that defines what actions the town will take to meet the terms of the permit application requirements. Whatever actions the town proposes in their application must be implemented by March 10, 2008.

The second environmental program affected by the Census urbanized area designation is the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution grant program. Because stormwater discharges become designated "Point Sources" under the Phase II program, they are no longer eligible for funding under the 319 grant program. The 319 grant program has been very popular with towns trying to stop stormwater pollution. Since 1995, municipalities in Southeastern Massachusetts and Cape Cod received millions of dollars in grant funds from the 319 program. Nearly all the projects funded in the past were located in areas that will be ineligible once EPA accepts Phase II plans from the towns. EPA has not yet publicly reacted to the effect of the new US census urbanized area designations.

The Buzzards Bay Project is alerting the towns about this development because we have prepared many 319 applications on your behalf, and for the past several years have been mapping coastal stormwater discharges in all Buzzards Bay towns. The Project has also offered to prepare Phase II stormwater plans for Buzzards Bay municipalities on a first come first serve basis, but we do not have the capacity to prepare 14 watershed management plans by next year's March deadline.

Enclosed is a fact sheet that provides additional information on the Phase II program, and a map of the newly designated areas. For more information about the Phase II program, visit our website at www.buzzardsbay.org. Please do not hesitate to call me if you have any questions regarding Buzzards Bay Project technical assistance.

Sincerely,

Joseph E. Costa, Ph.D.
Executive Director