Executive Summary:
Provincetown Harbor Management Plan Amendment 2018

The Town of Provincetown is uniquely defined by the natural environment. Waves, wind, and currents constantly shape and re-shape the shoreline and seafloor of a community that has been drawn to the water for travel, recreation, and livelihood for more than four centuries.

Recognizing the significance of Provincetown Harbor, this 2018 Harbor Management Plan Amendment builds on and incorporates elements of past harbor management plans (completed in 1999 and 2012) and identifies current and anticipated opportunities and challenges associated with the harbor planning area. The Plan also provides recommendations for policies, regulations, research, education, investments, and other actions to protect the health and continued use of the Harbor and waterfront.

This Plan was funded by the Town of Provincetown through the Harbor Access Gift Fund.

I. Purpose, Scope, and Authority of the Plan

The purpose of the Provincetown Harbor Management Plan Amendment is to provide the Town and other stakeholders with the information and resources needed to understand, protect, and enhance the harbor’s economic, cultural, and natural resources within the context of relevant laws, policies, and regulations. The Plan identifies existing and anticipated issues and opportunities in Provincetown Harbor and Hatches Harbor, and provides short-term and long-term goals, objectives, and recommendations related to: beaches, climate change, water quality, public access, recreational boating, tourism, natural resources, commercial and recreational fishing, navigation, dredging, swimming, regulatory coordination, and Chapter 91 licensing.

As a municipally-approved document that incorporates public input as well as existing plans and studies, various entities in Town should use this Plan as a tool to guide and support their actions relative to the harbors.

As a state-approved plan, this update will guide the decisions and actions of the agencies of the State’s Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, including the regulatory decisions of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) under M.G.L. Chapter 91, the Public Waterfront Act.

The Provincetown harbor management planning area includes Provincetown Harbor and Hatches Harbor. It is worth noting that planning area was used as a way to focus planning efforts, however the issues and impacts of the recommendations identified in the Plan may extend beyond the planning area.

II. The Planning Process

Town staff and the Provincetown Harbor Committee, with assistance from the Urban Harbors Institute (UHI) at the University of Massachusetts Boston, guided the 2018 Harbor Management Plan development process.
The Committee collected citizen and stakeholder input at three public meetings which occurred in May, June, and July of 2017, as well as at a Select Board hearing in May of 2018. More than 45 members of the public participated in these meetings.

In addition to the public meetings, the Plan was also discussed at the regularly-scheduled twice-monthly meetings of the Provincetown Harbor Committee, which are open to the public. Information about the planning process was available on the Provincetown Harbor Management Plan website at www.umb.edu/uhi/provincetown_harborplan_2017. Stakeholders could also provide input to the Harbor Committee and UHI at any point via email and phone.

The planning team also interviewed harbor stakeholders and town officials to ensure that all key issues were considered and that the Plan reflected current and anticipated projects that were in keeping with the goals and objectives of the Plan.

The Harbor Committee released a draft plan in April 2018, considered all public comments received, and incorporated all relevant and appropriate comments.

Documentation of the public process is available in Appendix 6 of the Harbor Management Plan.

III. Key Findings

The Plan identifies existing and anticipated issues and opportunities in Provincetown Harbor and Hatches Harbor, and provides short-term and long-term goals, objectives, and recommendations related to each topic area. While many recommendations in this updated plan are new, others have been carried forward from previous plans. In addition, this Plan documents and recommends the continuation of some ongoing activities in and around the Harbor.

Recognizing the significance of climate change impacts such as sea level rise, increasing ocean and air temperatures, intensifying storms, and elevated flooding, a new feature of this updated plan is the inclusion of sidebars discussing how climate change-related events could impact each topic area. Climate change relevance is also incorporated into recommendations throughout the Plan.

A summary of the issues and recommendations covered in the Plan for each topic area is below. More details on each of these topics can be found in the full body of the 2018 Provincetown Harbor Management Plan.

Water Quality: Provincetown strives to maintain and improve water quality and keep the beaches clean. In the last decade, Provincetown has made enormous progress in improving water quality in the Harbor. That said, a number of water quality issues still impact the Harbor, including: plastic pollution; clogged stormwater outfall pipes; a sewer system almost at capacity; and pollution from stormwater runoff. The Plan recommends that the identified entities address these issues through actions such as continued efforts to prevent and remove plastic pollution and identifying and addressing any remaining stormwater runoff pollution sources.

Public Access & Town Landings: The Town has had a long-standing goal to provide and improve public access to and along the shoreline. Reflecting this public access goal, the Plan describes 14 town landings and access points within the planning area, with varying amenities (e.g., boat storage, signage, trash receptacles) at each site. Additionally, public access is a condition of many Chapter 91 licenses for properties along the Harbor. Despite ongoing efforts to provide physical and visual access to the Harbor, a handful of sites continue to have obstructed views, limited physical access, and a lack of appropriate amenities. In addition, measures are needed to minimize damage or obstructions caused by storms. To address these issues, the Plan recommends that identified entities reclaim, maintain, and protect all Town Landings and public access ways; enforce visual...
access requirements; and create new public access points.

**Aquaculture:** While Provincetown has a strong interest in expanding its shellfish aquaculture industry in a sustainable manner, the industry is facing a number of challenges. The harbor’s capacity to support aquaculture is not fully understood, and the process of applying for and obtaining the necessary permits for an aquaculture lease is lengthy and complex. The Plan recommends that identified entities determine the harbor’s capacity for additional aquaculture activities, develop a manual that describes how to obtain an aquaculture lease, and expand opportunities to increase shore-side infrastructure for aquaculture activities.

**Commercial Fishing:** It is a Town priority to maintain and support a vibrant commercial fishery. Local groundfish landings have declined in the past few decades; however, landings in the intertidal and offshore shellfish industries have increased. There is a recognized need to ensure that the Provincetown waterfront can accommodate and support commercial fishing activity (e.g., dock space and infrastructure) as it changes over time. The Plan recommends that identified entities explore opportunities to enhance commercial fishing infrastructure, which includes improving vessel haul-out options and conducting research to better understand the needs and opportunities for commercial fishing in Provincetown.

**Recreational Fishing:** Provincetown values recreational fishing, recognizing it as an important part of the local economy and culture, yet issues such as conflicting uses, stock levels, and safety are concerns. The Plan recommends that identified entities explore the possibility of extending the recreational shellfish season, post signs to promote the safety of shellfish harvesters, continue propagation efforts, and consider building artificial reefs to increase habitat and productivity in the Harbor.

**Beaches:** Provincetown has a strong interest in improving the conditions of local beaches by preventing and removing pollution and debris. Additionally, Provincetown would like to continue and expand efforts to nourish beaches in need of sand, and preserve public beach access. The Plan recommends that identified entities take actions including the continued implementation of marine debris prevention and education initiatives, and make efforts to ensure that necessary beach nourishment projects are adequately sited, funded, and completed.

**Navigation and Dredging:** Provincetown strives to maintain navigable and safe waterways in the Harbor for all users. That said, there are shallow areas and sediment build-up in certain parts of the Harbor which can impede navigation and create safety hazards. Moorings, wrecks, and other hazards can also cause navigation and safety concerns. The Plan recommends that identified entities establish a regular dredge maintenance program, seek funding to support dredging and beach nourishment projects, and remove any hazards that are safety concerns in the Harbor.

**Recreational Boating:** Recreational boating is an important cultural and economic use of the Harbor. Provincetown would like to ensure that the harbor’s conditions and facilities support different forms of recreational boating, and that the Harbor is safe for all water-dependent uses. Existing boat congestion and traffic; difficulty accessing the boat ramps; safety hazards caused by conflicting activities; and a lack of boat storage are among the issues raised during the planning process. The Plan recommends that identified entities determine the availability of adequate facilities and services for recreational boating (e.g., boat storage racks, ramps, floats, restrooms); improve the safety for all water-dependent uses (e.g., additional signage, education, enforcement); and ensure that shoreside infrastructure is prepared to withstand the impacts of climate change.

**Mooring and Anchorages:** There is an increasing demand for moorings in the Harbor, though in the past decade there has also been a proliferation of both private and rental moorings. These moorings and anchorages can cause conflicts with other water-dependent uses and damage natural resources. The Plan recommends that identified entities establish a uniform
mooring and anchorage system in the Harbor that meets the demand, but which does which not conflict with other uses and natural resources.

**Culture and Tourism:** Provincetown endeavors to celebrate the Town’s history and traditional harbor uses, while enhancing tourism and the visitor economy. Issues pertaining to this topic include a lack of parking, a short tourism season, and insufficient tourism-related infrastructure adjacent to the Harbor. The Plan recommends that identified entities ensure that the town’s past and long-time uses (such as swimming, fishing, and boating) are promoted; support opportunities to expand tourism-related infrastructure and activities along and near the Harbor; extend the tourism season with new and creative offerings; and improve the safety of those visiting the Harbor.

**Administration and Regulatory Coordination:** The Harbor Management Plan is a tool to guide development on private and Commonwealth tidelands in a way that promotes water dependent uses and public access. Development in the tidelands is reviewed at both the municipal and state levels, and the Plan expands the Harbor Committee’s scope of project review to include all planning, zoning, or building permit applications on the water-side of Commercial Street to promote development consistent with the goals of the Harbor Management Plan.

The Plan also includes special guidelines for Chapter 91 licensing that are specific to Provincetown and allow for accommodation of site conditions while fulfilling the public rights to access and use of the waterfront.

**IV. Implementation**

Recommendations in the updated Harbor Management Plan include details about potential funding resources (if necessary) as well as lists of entities with potential roles in implementing the recommendations. Some recommendations – mostly pertaining to public access and development at Fishermen’s Wharf and Rose’s Wharf – will be implemented through state and municipal permitting. Other recommendations are more discretionary, and successful implementation will depend on factors such as public and political will, funding, and the ability to secure permits. As an implementing entity identified for many of the plan’s 95 recommendations, the Harbor Committee has reviewed and prioritized the recommendations to help guide implementation. Most recommendations were ranked as either high (41%) or medium priorities (42%), while only 17% were ranked as low priority. In addition, the Committee felt that 60% of the recommendations should, at a minimum, be started in Year 1 – though the “Year 1” category also includes many actions already underway. These priorities may be adjusted as factors change, and should not be interpreted as a demonstration of a lack of support for any given recommendation. Instead, the prioritization should be viewed as a way to organize efforts around Plan implementation in order to ensure progress is made during the five-year planning period.

The Harbor Committee recommends that the Town focus its limited resources to advance the recommendations in support of town-wide goals regarding sea level rise and coastal inundation, infrastructure protection, revenue generation, public safety considerations and support for commercial activities particularly around job creation.

The Committee would like to thank Kristin Uiterwyk, Jack Wiggin, Alison Novelly, and Kimberly Starbuck of Urban Harbors Institute at UMass Boston. Their support gathering and coordinating all the public comments into a cohesive package has allowed us to provide an “all in” Harbor Management Plan that speaks to the wide variety of opinions and uses of this busy little Port of Provincetown.

Respectfully submitted,
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