GREAT POND foundation ®

January 21, 2026

Martha's Vineyard Commission
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RE: DRI #780 Katama Meadows

Dear Commissioners,

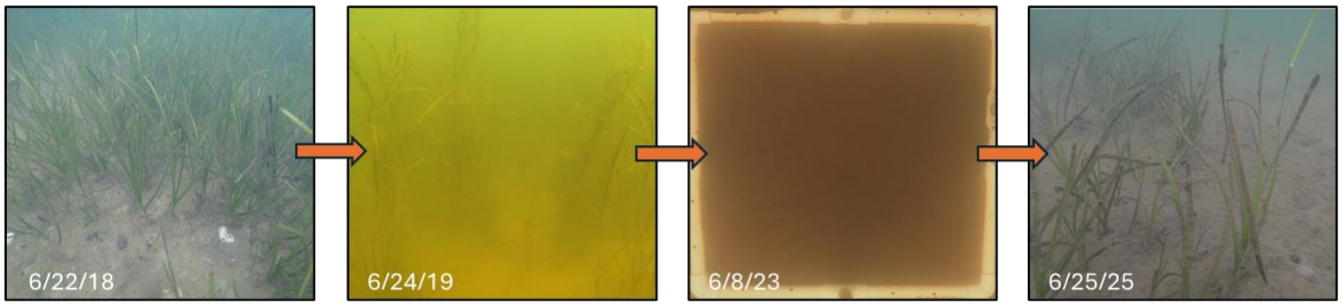
I am writing today on behalf of Great Pond Foundation and our constituents to share scientific data about the current health of Edgartown Great Pond and to document the detrimental impacts this proposed development would have on the future health of the Pond's ecosystem.

Nutrient pollution (nitrogen & phosphorus) is the greatest driver of impairment in the Island's great ponds. The excess nitrogen that is pushing Edgartown Great Pond past its tipping point is from three main sources 1) wastewater, 2) fertilizers/farm animals, and 3) atmospheric deposition. In 2022, with then current levels of development, the nitrogen flowing into the Pond via groundwater exceeded the 0.5 mg/L total nitrogen (TN) limit and hundreds of acres of precious eelgrass meadows were lost.

Prior to 2022, eelgrass meadows, the gold standard for ecosystem health, came back to the Pond following a decade of community-led restoration. Eelgrass can only grow when the ecosystem is stable for a long period of time. Once present, eelgrass gives back to the ecosystem by further cleaning the water, absorbing nitrogen and phosphorus, sequestering carbon, stabilizing sediments, adding oxygen, and providing nursery habitat for fish and shellfish.

In the fall of 2024, following two years of ecosystem impairment, Edgartown Great Pond showed its first signs of resilience with improved water quality. In 2025, eelgrass meadows were observed for the first time since early 2022.

State of Eelgrass in Lyle's Bay: 2018-2025



June of 2018: Eelgrass beds thriving in clear water conditions.

June of 2019: Eelgrass beds present but under turbidity stress.

June of 2023: Eelgrass beds absent after a significant rise in nitrogen and turbidity.

June of 2025: Scattered eelgrass beds present following more than 2 years of absence.

Figures from the forthcoming 2025 Ecosystem Monitoring Report for Edgartown Great Pond, courtesy of Owen Porterfield.

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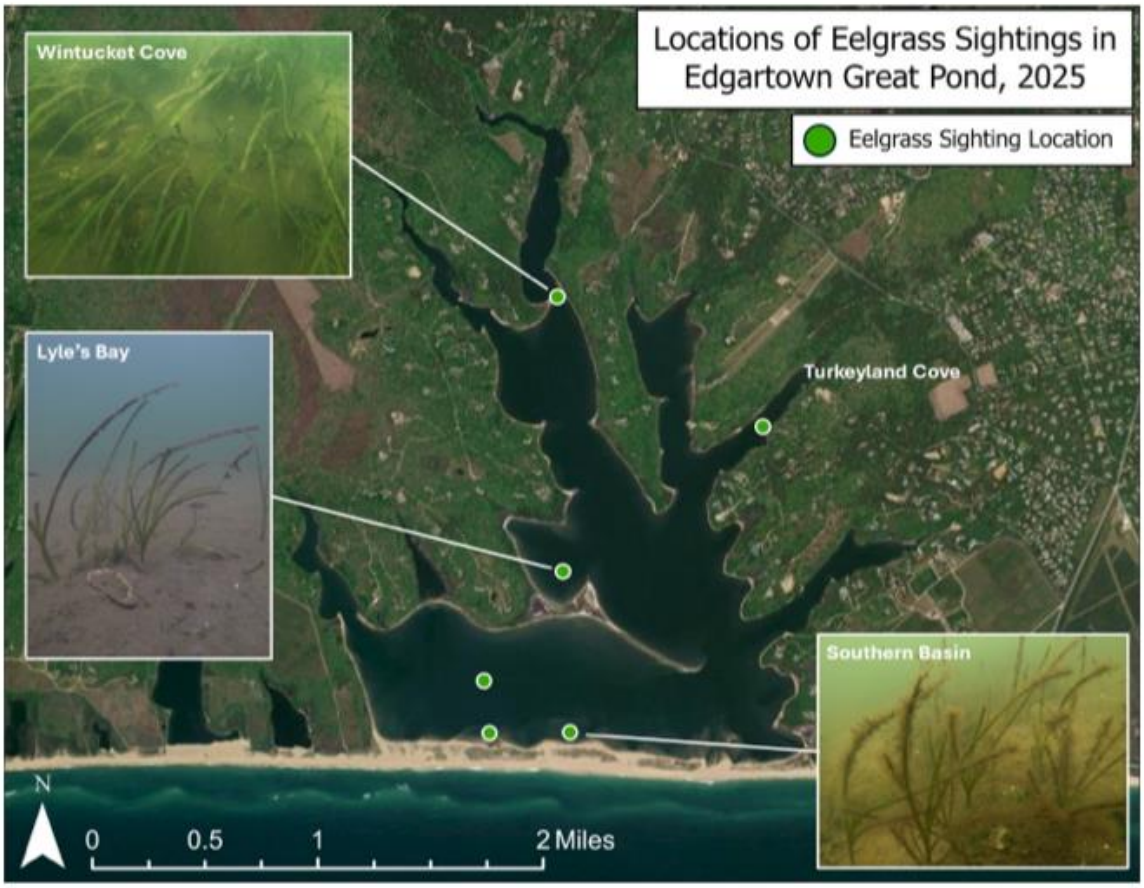

The Pond is still full of life, and our community has the opportunity to ensure its future well-being. The proposed development will increase the nitrogen stress on Edgartown Great Pond (EGP) by:

1) removing native intact habitat that currently mitigates nitrogen,
2) adding impervious surfaces that contribute to nitrogen run-off,
3) using current wastewater capacity for new homes rather than existing ones within the watershed, and
4) adding 52 dwellings worth of wastewater to the WWTF which discharges effluent into EGP.

The Edgartown WWTF does as wonderful job decreasing the concentration of nitrogen before it discharges it into the groundwater of Meshacket Cove of EGP. Nitrogen load consists of both the concentration of nitrogen in the water and the volume of water flowing. There is a large volume of water entering Meshacket Cove and our measurements of groundwater nitrogen, in collaboration with Marine Biological Laboratory in Woods Hole, MA, indicate that **>40% of the nitrogen load for Edgartown Great Pond is entering the Pond via Meshacket Cove**. Current development within the watershed has already pushed EGP to its limit. The Pond needs your help to thrive.

We appreciate the care with which the Martha's Vineyard Commission conducts the DRI process, and we thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully yours,

Emily Reddington

Emily Reddington | Executive Director

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