



**TOWN OF WEST TISBURY
CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

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Climate Advisory Committee
Town Hall
West Tisbury, MA 02575

Dear Climate Advisory Committee Members,

This letter is in response to a letter from Kate Warner requesting that the Conservation Commission create a 1-5 year plan with respect to action items geared toward sea level rise and climate change.

The Commission welcomes the opportunity to discuss this important management issue with the Climate Advisory Committee (CAC) members and to provide information about plans in this arena.

As a starting point, it is useful to recognize several items of interest with respect to the Town of West Tisbury that clearly will have impacts on how climate change and sea level rise control will be approached.

- The Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) shows that West Tisbury is more vulnerable from the threat of wildfire rather than sea level rise. The HMP shows that approximately four people live in an area that would be directly inundated by 4' of sea level rise, 38 people live within the 100-year flood zone, and 110 live within Slosh Category 4. According to the HMP, these figures could increase to over 300 people under buildout.

- Unlike its down-island neighbors, West Tisbury does not have any municipal or commercial infrastructure along the coast, and does not have a harbor that is bordered by commercial and or residential development. Thus, management of these types of areas is not an issue for us.
- Lambert's Cove Beach, the only town owned beach, is on the north shore where the rate of erosion is far less than that on the south shore.
- Retreat of salt marsh is a natural process that cannot be planned for but can be addressed with shoreline stabilization projects identified and approved on a case-by-case basis.

With these parameters in mind, the Commission is well equipped to work with residential applicants to build as far back from the coast as possible, rather than building right at the 100 foot buffer zone (as defined in the West Tisbury Wetlands Protection Bylaw and the state Wetlands Protection Act). This is a long-standing approach used by the Commission with respect to development in coastal areas. It is appropriate to continue to put our efforts toward limiting residential development in vulnerable areas and to work the current owners with respect to salt marsh retreat.

Looking forward to future management items, the board would like to clarify several areas that your letter indicates are within the domain of the Conservation Commission. Here is a brief overview of the status of these items. We have identified the town board/department may be better suited to be the primary lead. These items include:

Storm water infrastructure management: This subject will need to be coordinated with the Board of Selectmen and the Highway Department. Many roads in town are privately owned. The only town owned roads are Lambert's Cove Road, Indian Hill, Tiah's Cove Road, Old Court House Road, and Old County Road. It will be up to private road

associations to determine what their road needs are and to bring any projects within Commission jurisdiction to us for permitting.

Storm water collection and discharge: This is a subject to be discussed with the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) and the Highway Department. Perhaps the MVC can help with the mapping of existing drains on town roads and work with MA DOT to ensure drains on State Road and the Edgartown-West Tisbury Road are properly maintained. This would be a primary responsibility of the Highway Department.

Dams: Priester's Pond dam is privately owned as is Looks Pond dam. The town owns the Mill Pond dam. We have worked with private dam owners around town regarding maintenance of vegetation on the face of dams. The inspection of dams is currently done by Kent Healy and follows the Dam Safety Board regulations.

The HMP plan identified critical infrastructure that could potentially be inundated by hurricanes including "a few hundred feet of Tiah's Cove Road." Replacement of the culvert on Tiah's Cove Road has been permitted by the Conservation. A grant application has been submitted to the Division of Conservation Recreation for \$85,000 to cover the cost of replacing this culvert. It does not include funding for raising the road except as it relates to the replacement project. Given the current situation with COVID-19, it is uncertain when, or if, the grant will be awarded. If we are not awarded funding, it is unclear that the town will have the needed funds for any capital construction projects in the near future.

We hope this information provides the CAC committee with an overview of this board's current work in the areas of climate action and preparedness. We look forward to working with the CAC when we are able to move beyond social distancing and worries surrounding this global pandemic.

Very truly yours,

Whit Griswold, Chair