

# STRATEGIC PLAN

2023



Cover photo: Gerald Beetham



# CAPE COD AND APCC



Gerald Beetham

**THE GLOBALLY RARE** and outstandingly beautiful environment of Cape Cod draws many visitors and residents. The irony is that the same people who are passionate about the Cape are often damaging the health of the land they love, often without knowing.

Thoughtless development patterns, climate change, poor wastewater treatment, and a lack of essential environmental stewardship all contribute to degrading Cape Cod's natural resources. Consider what is at risk: almost 900 freshwater ponds, 53 estuaries, 559 miles of wide sandy beaches and shorelines, extensive salt marshes, sprawling freshwater wetlands, as well as the plants, fish, shellfish, and other animals that they all support.

The Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) is dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the natural resources of Cape Cod. Lean, nimble, and rooted in science, APCC understands how local, regional, state, and federal government policies affect the environment. Since our inception in 1968, we have been firmly grounded in Cape Cod's social, economic and environmental fabric. Our insights into the challenges facing the environment here are formed by paying close attention—in the field as well as in the halls of government at the local, state, and federal levels. We are staffed by an interdisciplinary team of professionals who are engaged in anticipating, diagnosing, and solving Cape Cod's evolving environmental problems through **knowledge, advocacy, collaboration, and education.**

This short document captures our key programs, strategies, and growth opportunities—many of the latter will be advanced through the planned opening of the Koppel Center to Preserve Cape Cod in 2024, which is addressed in the last section. This plan is intended to guide our judgment as we consider whatever new environmental challenges are around the corner and to help us prepare for, and define our role in, meeting them.

**KNOWLEDGE   ADVOCACY   COLLABORATION   EDUCATION**

# FOCUS

The land and waters of Cape Cod will always be the focus of APCC's attention. Challenges to both resources are continually evolving and APCC's approach to environmental protection is opportunistic and fluid—though always informed by knowledge, advocacy, collaboration, and education, which are our four key strategies.

Today, the following areas present the severest threats to Cape Cod's environment and are the areas of greatest opportunity for our work to deliver on our commitment to protect and preserve the Cape:

## WATER QUALITY AND NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Excess nutrients from inadequate wastewater treatment, excess fertilization, and poorly managed stormwater are destroying fresh and marine surface waters. APCC's highest priority is to improve water quality. We will do this by working to:

- *Advance municipal wastewater management projects.*
- *Secure the money to fund municipal-scale water resource restoration projects.*
- *Advance better land use practices by homeowners.*
- *Promote necessary local, state, and federal legislation and rulemaking.*

## LAND PROTECTION

Pressure on Cape Cod's landscape has never been greater, not just from conventional developers, but from those seeking to address the need for affordable housing and to repurpose publicly owned lands for non-conservation purposes. To promote land protection, APCC will focus on:

- *Preserving critical habitats.*
- *Expanding the number of acres that are permanently protected.*
- *Directing future development to areas already disturbed or underdeveloped, and which are supported by modern wastewater infrastructure.*
- *Restoring the ecological functionality of altered or degraded wetland resources.*
- *Promoting and encouraging better stewardship, especially among property owners, to support a healthier environment.*

## CLIMATE CHANGE

Cape Cod is already feeling the effects of climate change in the form of warmer water temperatures promoting cyanobacteria blooms and stressing cold water species, increasing sea levels accelerating erosion and degrading salt marshes, and more intense precipitation events degrading water quality. APCC's response will focus on:

- *Preserving and restoring salt marsh habitat through our Ecosystem Restoration Program.*
- *Promoting the development of alternative energy at the industrial scale as well as supporting policies that promote adoption of solar capacity with homeowners.*
- *Ongoing environmental monitoring to maintain our knowledge and understanding of the changes in baseline conditions.*



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PRESSURE ON  
CAPE COD'S  
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HAS NEVER  
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# STRATEGY



APCC'S WORK is guided by four key strategic values.



KNOWLEDGE  
SUPPORTS  
ALL OF OUR  
WORK

## I. KNOW THE ENVIRONMENT OF CAPE COD

Research and knowledge are critical to understanding, and developing solutions to, the Cape's environmental threats. APCC invests heavily in increasing its knowledge. For example, we are advancing our organizational understanding of the freshwater environment by monitoring for toxic cyanobacteria, reviewing standard water quality parameters, and continuing to assess the well-being of river herring populations. APCC is also working with a broad spectrum of partners, from citizen scientists to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to understand the current state of environmental quality on Cape Cod. We will continue to work with partners and share information to understand the impact of climate change on resources of concern, and to inform our approach to restoration, climate resilience, and general advocacy.

Because knowledge supports all our work, including determining programming and staffing as well as planning for solutions and forming collaborations, APCC is committed to continuing to:

- *collect data and share it by publishing our annual State of the Waters: Cape Cod analysis;*
- *run our annual herring count;*
- *conduct field work to measure pond water quality and salt marsh health;*
- *follow due diligence by attending town, community, organization, and group meetings where local resources are discussed and decisions are made; and*
- *consult with local, state, regional, and national partners, and review and share data with them.*

## IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH:

Data from our Pond Health Program is detecting new growth patterns and genera of cyanobacteria, probably due to higher temperatures and increased nutrient pollution. Increased monitoring is needed to get ahead of the threats to human and pet health, while more information from pond samples will support advocacy for better wastewater treatment policy. We have identified two resources needed:



- *an increase in the number of interns employed seasonally to collect field samples and train volunteers to collect field samples; and*
- *additional and better equipped water quality monitoring facilities, which we will achieve in 2024 through the opening of the Koppel Center to Preserve Cape Cod.*

## II. ADVOCATE EFFECTIVELY

APCC distinguishes itself by being Cape Cod’s leading environmental advocacy organization focused on local as well as regional environmental challenges. As noted above, we are paying close attention to both science and policy, and our programs and positions are informed by what is happening in town halls and meeting rooms, as well as in the field.

Effective advocacy requires thoughtful deliberation and the ability to act quickly. APCC excels at both. Through our policy research and position papers, we take time to think through, research, and debate the emerging and continuing federal, state, and local policies that will affect Cape Cod’s environment. Our positions are thoughtful, clearly stated, and disseminated through the multiple channels that will most effectively communicate and convince.

But new challenges can come out of the blue, such as the proposed development of a multipurpose machine gun range directly above the Upper Cape Water Supply Reserve, or the proposed release of one million gallons of radioactive wastewater into Cape Cod Bay by the owners of the recently decommissioned Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station. At those times, APCC needs the capacity to react quickly, take decisive action to protect the environment, and build support for our position. Whether being deliberative or responding quickly, we rely on good information and good judgment.

To support all our advocacy efforts, APCC is committed to continuing to:

- *closely monitor local, state, and federal government legislation;*
- *consult with leading environmental thinkers and local experts;*
- *build relationships with critical elected and appointed leadership at the local, county, state and federal levels;*
- *show up and be a reliable and consistent presence at important public meetings on issues of concern; and*
- *expand our personal relationships and on-line network to build support for our positions.*



## STRATEGY

### IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH:

Advocacy is successful when it convinces others. Improving our outreach and ability to communicate effectively will help all our advocacy efforts. APCC is implementing the results of a professional survey designed to help us improve communication strategies so we can better motivate people to take action.

### III. COLLABORATE

Cape Cod is, in many ways, a small town. APCC's long history of success is due to the value we put on collaboration and partnerships. APCC employs experts in environmental policy, advocacy, science, and education and we supplement staff expertise through partnerships with towns, fellow non-government organizations, and where needed, contracted third parties. One of our strategies is to strengthen smaller, grassroots organizations because their hyper-focus on local or single topic issues is essential to achieving local resource protection. At the same time, as a mid-sized organization, partnering with larger regional or national organizations at opportune times can be critical to realizing shared goals.

Our ability to work effectively with local, regional, state, and federal government agencies is central to APCC's proven track record and ability to achieve success. We maintain a deep institutional understanding of, and appreciation for, the processes of rulemaking, appropriations, and project financing at every level of government—and this knowledge supports our mission by allowing us to work effectively with government.

APCC is committed to:

- *enlisting, managing, and sustaining complex, multi-partner programs;*
- *helping other organizations achieve shared goals;*
- *attending open meetings, paying attention to the details, and engaging with and supporting local, state and federal agencies formally or informally;*
- *amplifying achievements of others that align with our goals; and*
- *working to strengthen grassroots and volunteer organizations.*

### IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH:

APCC has not had the physical space to convene the kind of in-depth, consensus building meetings that would better support our role as a collaborator—but we soon will. The Koppel Center to Preserve Cape Cod will provide us with a venue for collaboration, and a place where our partners can have room, when they need it, for meetings. We will take full advantage of this new resource in promoting collaboration.

#### IV. EDUCATE

Science-based education and outreach are pillars of APCC. Our education initiatives address the regional environmental issues that face the Cape in an informative manner and provide direction and constructive actions needed to care for the Cape's natural resources. In our mission to inspire a regional environmental ethic, we engage the public through workshops and lectures, making use of all forms of media, a robust volunteer program, and citizen scientist programs.

We are a membership-based organization and our members, who also support our operations, greatly strengthen our advocacy by standing behind us. But our members are not a passive group and APCC has used environmental education as a primary means of changing personal behavior and to encourage their own citizen activism and ability to successfully demand change. We find that when we educate our members, we also reach the families and communities connected to them.

We will continue to:

- *produce our online newsletter and communicate through social media;*
- *educate and engage our membership about opportunities for direct personal action;*
- *offer APCC speakers bureau to libraries and civic groups free of charge;*
- *reach out to venues throughout the Cape and put on workshops and educational programs for the general public;*
- *offer free webinars to reach a larger audience;*
- *produce educational and guidance materials both in print and digitally; and*
- *disseminate special reports on environmental quality and threats.*

#### IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH:

APCC, through the Koppel Center, has an exciting opportunity to grow its educational programs and increase outreach. We will:

- *Expand in-house programming through exhibits, workshops, lectures, and meetings.*
- *Expand our living landscape around the refurbished building with further examples of Cape-friendly landscape choices.*

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# A NEW RESOURCE

Because so many of our growth opportunities have in common the need for appropriate space, 2024 will see transformation of the historic barn at our headquarters in Dennis into a modern facility that also respects its original character. Our new state-of-the-art Koppel Center to Preserve Cape Cod, in addition to providing new workspace for APCC's growing staff, will support a wide variety of activities foundational to our evolving mission, including:

- *A fully equipped water quality monitoring facility.*
- *Convening space to support conferences and collaborations.*
- *Room to showcase Cape Cod's rich environment and the challenges we face in protecting it.*
- *Space to exponentially expand our education program, promote eco-friendly landscaping, the use of native plants, and environmental stewardship.*
- *Space to expand our seasonal intern program—the engine of our pond monitoring and eco-landscaping programs.*
- *Space to provide for expansion, as needed, of staff.*

The Koppel Center to Preserve Cape Cod will be environmentally friendly, fully powered by solar energy with vehicle charging stations powered by the sun. The use of composting toilets will eliminate impacts to groundwater. The historic appearance of the building will be preserved, and original wood will be reused and redeployed wherever possible. In that way, the Center will embody its purpose and encapsulate APCC's mission: respecting, preserving, and adapting the historic Cape for a bright, healthy future.

## CONCLUSION

The essential attribute that APCC needs to meet the challenges of its mission is preparedness. This document is intended to ensure our preparedness through a thoughtful review of the environmental challenges we face, and the programs, strategies, and opportunities we meet them with. Both our staff and board of directors have contributed to this strategy, and we are grateful to everyone whose work has advanced this effort.



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