PROJECT NAME: Falmouth Wastewater Treatment Facility

PROJECT LOCATION: Falmouth, 154 Blacksmith Shop Road

PROJECT PROPOSENT: Town of Falmouth Utilities Department

This finding for the Falmouth Wastewater Treatment Facility has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of M.G.L. c. 30 §61 and 310 CMR 11.00. On March 16, 2001, the Secretary of Environmental Affairs issued a certificate stating that the project’s Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) complied with the MEPA statute and regulations.

This finding acknowledged the impacts to West Falmouth Harbor associated with the discharge from the then existing treatment works and development within the watershed. It also acknowledged that the recommended plan as described in the FEIR appeared to have the ability to restore water quality in the harbor by upgrading the existing treatment works, reducing nitrogen loading to the harbor, installing on-site denitrification systems in the eastern portion of the watershed and implementing a nitrogen management plan for the entire watershed. These findings also required that the Town develop a schedule for sewering in the watershed.

Project Impacts and Mitigation

Over the past several years West Falmouth Harbor has experienced a significant decline in water quality, much of it attributable to increased nitrogen loading from the discharge of the wastewater treatment works and increased development. The proposed project seeks to restore the Harbor’s water quality to its pre-discharge state by upgrading the treatment works capability and capacity while also limiting the amount of nitrogen it introduces into the watershed. Furthermore, the Town will implement a watershed-wide nitrogen management plan, sewer portions of the West Falmouth Harbor Watershed and develop discharge sites outside the West Falmouth Harbor Watershed.

As a result of the FEIR, the Town upgraded the then existing treatment works to improve its Class III discharge (allowing up to 50 mg/L of total nitrogen) to Class I standards (10 mg/L of total nitrogen). The facility has been upgraded and was designed to discharge an average of 3 mg/L total nitrogen at 1 MGD and not to exceed a discharge of 9,132 lbs/yr of total nitrogen. The groundwater discharge permit being issued reflects the new discharge standards.

The Town is currently developing a nutrient management plan for Falmouth’s south coastal watersheds; however, it will also include an evaluation for sewering appropriate portions of the West Falmouth Harbor watershed and to substantially complete an evaluation of additional discharge sites outside the watershed. The permit requires that the Town submit a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) by February 28, 2012 for MassDEP’s review and approval. The CWMP will address a schedule for compliance with the TMDL issued.
for West Falmouth Harbor ("Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for West Falmouth Harbor (Report #95-TMDL-1 Control #243.0"). Upon acceptance of the CWMP, the permit will be modified to incorporate the TMDL compliance schedule as a permit condition.

Section 61 Findings

The Department has reviewed the MEPA documents and the documents submitted in connection with the application for a groundwater discharge permit. Based upon its review, the Department finds that the implementation of the terms and conditions of this permit constitute all feasible measures to avoid damage to the environment and will minimize such damage to the maximum extent practicable for those impacts subject to the Department’s authority. Implementation of the mitigation measures will occur with the terms and conditions set forth in the groundwater discharge permit.