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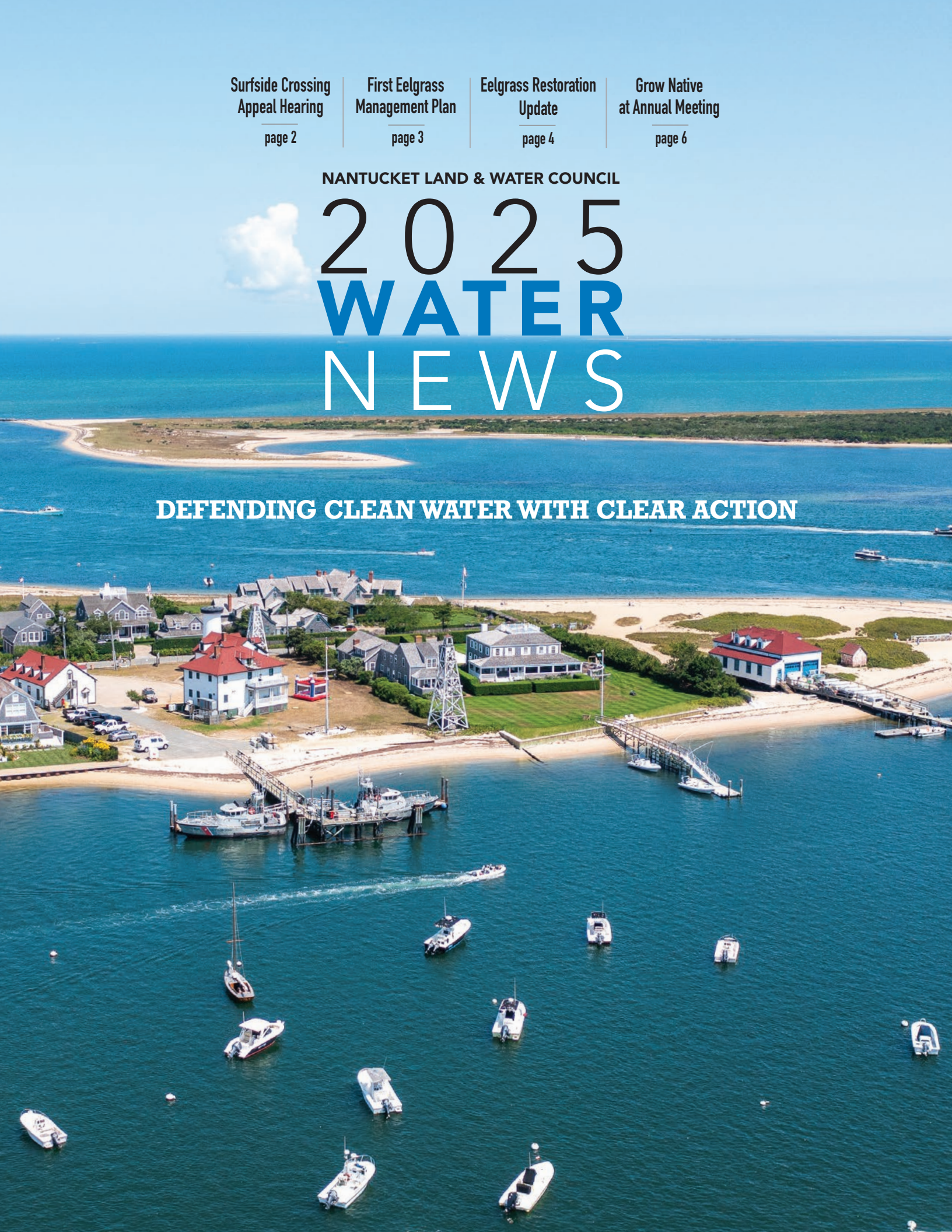
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NANTUCKET LAND & WATER COUNCIL

2025 WATER NEWS

DEFENDING CLEAN WATER WITH CLEAR ACTION



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ADVOCACY NEWS

**Surfside Crossing Appeal Hearing Completed—
NLWC Defending Clean Water for Nantucket!**

In late September, the appeal hearing for the Surfside Crossing 40B development was conducted remotely by the state’s Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). The NLWC participated as an intervening party to defend clean drinking water for Nantucket. The proposed 156 condo unit development on 13.6 acres known as Surfside Crossing (SSX) off of South Shore Rd is of inappropriate density (13 x the local zoning) and would compromise our drinking water supply. Following the comprehensive permit review by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) that took place throughout last fall and winter, the application for SSX was unanimously denied by the ZBA. This denial was subsequently appealed to the state by the developers, Jamie Feeley and Josh Posner, in April of this year.

During the comprehensive permit review last year by the ZBA, the NLWC hired an engineering expert and water quality specialist to review the project’s stormwater management plans. The review and testimony of these experts revealed that the stormwater infrastructure proposed for the Surfside Crossing development does not meet the specific state and local standards for projects within the Nantucket Wellhead Protection District (the area where groundwater contributes to the public water supply wells), or for projects that meet the state’s criteria as a Land Use of Higher Potential Pollutant Load (LUHPPL). Given recent public well contamination by elevated PFAS levels, it has become abundantly clear that these standards are incredibly important to uphold, especially for a project of this scale within our public water supply recharge area.



Site of the proposed “Surfside Crossing” development

The local ZBA agreed with the importance of protecting clean water, and asked the developers to address the stormwater management design to ensure that it meets state and local standards and protects not only the residents and direct abutters of the development, but the public water supply that we all share. Unfortunately, the developers refused to make any changes to their proposed design, in part because it would require a reduction in the number of units to make the necessary changes, and in part because they have already installed their stormwater infrastructure, “at risk”, without the benefit of a permit, and without a water quality certificate issued by the Water Commission as required in Nantucket’s Zoning Bylaw. They simply do not want to have to take it back out of the ground.

Based on concerns for the health of the community’s drinking water and other concerns relative to public safety and traffic, and considering the developers’ refusal to consider any changes to their proposal, the ZBA unanimously denied the project. As an intervening party in the developers’ appeal of the ZBA’s decision, the NLWC has been working closely with the counsel for the Town of Nantucket’s ZBA, and the residents group, Tipping Point, to file written testimony from the NLWC’s engineer,

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ADVOCACY NEWS

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the ZBA’s engineer, and several water quality and PFAS subject matter experts. During the HAC hearing last week, the developers’ counsel chose not to cross-examine any of these witnesses, and so their written testimony stands unchallenged, leaving the hearing office no basis to question their expert opinions.

This hearing on the Surfside Crossing matter follows a similar appeal by developers in the Town of Walpole for a Chapter 40B development that was also denied by the Town’s ZBA due to similar concerns over improperly designed stormwater infrastructure, and the degradation of the Town of Walpole’s public water supply.

As we await a decision from the HAC, we are grateful to Nantucket’s ZBA for their due diligence during the public hearing process, and for the opportunity to prepare for the appeal hearing in partnership with Town Counsel for the ZBA, as well as the residents’ group Tipping Point.



Christy Bassett Baker, Assistant Harbormaster with dye tabs

**NLWC & Nantucket’s Harbormaster
Are Working Together to Keep
Nantucket Harbor Clean**

The NLWC Water Fund continued to support the Nantucket Harbormaster, Sheila Lucey, and her team in 2025 by purchasing a resupply of Dye Tabs. This is the third year the NLWC has partnered with the Harbor-master and her team to provide Dye Tabs to vessel operators when they enter Nantucket Harbor. The Dye Tabs are presented to vessels with an information card to describe their purpose and also to clearly identify the various options available for free pump-out services via water or land. The Dye Tabs are then placed in the vessel’s holding tanks to identify vessels with unauthorized leaks or dumping. If the vessel’s holding tank is illegally pumped out into the harbor, the discharge is stained with a bright, visible, fluorescent color, providing clear evidence of the release.

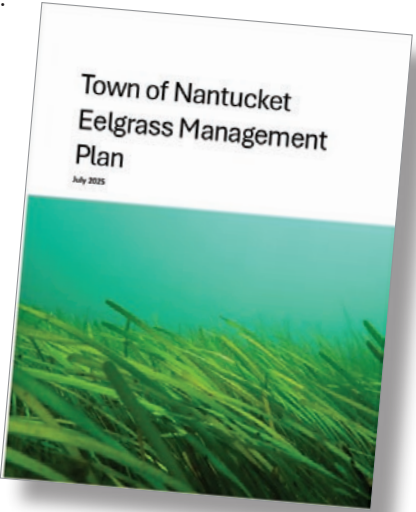
This collaborative initiative is supported by recommendations in the Draft Harbor Plan Update and the newly adopted Eelgrass Management Plan and helps us protect Nantucket’s waterways and water quality.

Eelgrass Management Plan Completed

Earlier this year, the NLWC was pleased to support the Town in developing Nantucket’s first Eelgrass Management Plan. After many years of discussing the need for such a plan, the Town of Nantucket Natural Resources Department (NRD) received a generous grant from the Great Harbor Yacht Club Foundation to fund this process. Under the leadership of the Town’s Shellfish & Aquatic Resources Manager, Tara Riley, and with consulting support from the Urban Harbors Institute, NLWC’s Emily Molden and RJ Turcotte participated in a small work-group with other members of the NRD and UMass Boston Nantucket Field Station to complete the plan in a swift six-month timeframe.

The Plan was reviewed by the public and approved by the Select Board, and now the committee is working to prioritize the various goals and create timelines for their completion. Some of these are short-term, such as standardizing the data collected in water quality or eelgrass health assessments across projects and organizations, applying for grants, and developing educational programming. Other goals are longer-term, such as changing harbor use regulations and collecting data on the impacts of the significant “stressors” facing eelgrass in our harbors.

The Eelgrass Management Plan will be an incredible resource to help unify the island around shared goals and objectives to preserve our harbors’ vital eelgrass habitat.



RESEARCH NEWS

A Busy Summer for Eelgrass Restoration in Nantucket Harbor!

Contributed by Caitlin Sughrue, NLWC Eelgrass Program Manager

It was a busy summer for eelgrass restoration in Nantucket Harbor!

We began the season with a week of monitoring at our primary restoration site off Monomoy. Our team measured key plant characteristics such as canopy height, shoot density, and percent cover. Since the site was first established in 2017, eelgrass has expanded to 1.5 acres!

Throughout June and July, we conducted twice-weekly surveys at sites off Monomoy and Wauwinet. In addition to counting vegetative and reproductive shoot densities, we tracked the development and maturity of seeds found on reproductive shoots. This effort is part of a larger study across Massachusetts. Understanding when seeds reach maturity is critical for restoration, as we aim to harvest the seeds once they are fully mature but before they naturally drop from the shoot.

This summer, we harvested over 10,000 reproductive shoots from locations in Nantucket Harbor and Madaket Harbor. Much of July was dedicated to processing these shoots by separating seeds from excess vegetation. We are especially grateful to the Town of Nantucket Shellfish Hatchery for providing tank space and the volunteers who contributed their time and energy to this effort.

Later in September and October, we planted seeds at six test plots in Nantucket and Madaket Harbors. The results of these trials will help guide the selection of future restoration sites. While protecting and promoting the health of existing eelgrass is always our first priority, the NLWC will continue to work with the Town and other partners to research and explore the most effective tools for eelgrass restoration on Nantucket.



Nantucket Island Ponds—A Season of Drought and Research

This season, NLWC has conducted water quality sampling at Gibbs Pond, Capaum Pond, and Great Point Lagoon. We’ve also been monitoring the impacts of the continuing drought and the corresponding drop in our water table at Crosby Pond, Pout Pond, Quaise Pond, Squam Pond, and Reyes Pond. While most inland water bodies have seen a drop in water level due to the lack of rain, the ponds mentioned above have gone completely dry. Many members of the community and abutters to these ponds have reached out with concerns over the plants and animals, especially fish, that call these shallow waters home. The groundwater level data we collect in partnership with the United States Geological Survey indicates that this is the worst drought Nantucket has seen in a decade, and the water table impacts are obvious.

At Capaum Pond earlier this year, we had consultant Dr. George Knoecklein out on the water and touring the pond’s watershed to help us plan for further research in 2026. The pond experienced continuous Harmful Algal Blooms throughout the monitoring season, and we will continue to explore additional options for management both within the pond and throughout the watershed

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Donate to the NLWC’s 2025 Water Fund Challenge Grant and make Double the Difference!

In 2025, some dedicated members of the NLWC board have, once again, come together to offer a generous Water Fund Challenge Grant to the organization. The NLWC’s Water Fund supports our extensive water quality research, programs, and initiatives.

Projects supported by the NLWC’s Water Fund in 2024 include:

Eelgrass restoration in Nantucket Harbor • Monitoring of municipal zoning, planning, and conservation meetings • PFAS research and education • Island pond sampling • Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) monitoring • Weekly rainwater sampling • Dye tab distribution for vessels in Nantucket Harbor • Eelgrass-friendly mooring initiative
State of the Harbor Forum • Island youth education programs

Any gift to our Water Fund will be matched on a 1:1 basis up to \$75,000.

Thank You to our 2025 Water Fund Challenge Grant Donors!

Susan and Michael Baer • Cox Family Foundation • Lucy Dillon
Robert and Barbara Friedman • Peter and Bonnie McCausland
Alan and Virginia Nathan • Lars and Jane Soderberg

RESEARCH NEWS

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Gibbs Pond, on the other hand, had one of its best years in anyone’s memory; during our first sampling in April, the water column was so stunningly clear that it allowed us to see all the way down to the bottom at over 18 feet, and it did not experience a single recorded HAB. In assessing all the water quality data we’ve collected, the pond appears to be trending toward an oligotrophic kettle pond since the Nantucket Conservation Foundation began using well water instead of water from the pond to flood the adjacent cranberry bogs. This has allowed the pond waters to trend much more acidic, which we believe creates an environment that is not favorable for the growth of algae and aquatic vegetation. Although it will take years for the pond to consistently settle into such an ecosystem pattern, we are thrilled at this trend. It is an example of how our ailing water bodies can, in some cases, recover if the source of the influx of nutrients is removed, and they are “left alone”—an outcome the NLWC is always advocating for by promoting stronger regulations and better management practices on private properties across the island.



NLWC’s RJ Turcotte, with NCF Staff members Jisun Reiner and Coleman Miller on Capaum Pond

COMMUNITY NEWS

CLEAN WATER CLASSIC Increases Awareness & Support for NLWC Water Fund!

Despite the windy weather on June 14th, which unfortunately prevented our participants from getting out on the water and *paddling for a purpose*, we are very grateful that the process of planning for and promoting the inaugural Clean Water Classic event enabled us to raise awareness and support for the NLWC's Water conservation efforts, including eelgrass restoration, PFAS research and advocacy, and youth education programs!

We would like to extend a HUGE THANKS to Our Event Sponsors:

SPINDRIFT • PURE Insurance • White Elephant Resorts • Haul Over • Broad Street Surf Shop • Bar Yoshi • Lemon Press • The Sunken Ship • SEA Nantucket Paddle Sports • Nantucket Athletic Association, and The Town of Nantucket's Office of Culture & Tourism and Public Safety Team for their invaluable assistance in planning this event.

We would also like to thank, ALL of our participants, contributors, and volunteers! Plus a Special Shout-Out to our Fundraising Award Winners:

Emma Young, Mary Bergman, Gwendoline Elnaggar, Carson Cunningham, and Hesham Elnaggar



2025 State of the Harbor Forum: Our Harbor Our Responsibility

Thank you to everyone who attended for your support of Nantucket Land and Water Council's 9th Annual State of the Harbor Event, providing the latest information on issues impacting the health of Nantucket Harbor.

After opening remarks by our NLWC Executive Director, Emily Molden, an update on our eelgrass restoration efforts in Nantucket Harbor was provided by Dr. Alyssa Novak, Research Assistant Professor of Boston University. We heard about Nantucket's first Eelgrass Management Plan with Tara Riley, Nantucket's Shellfish and Aquatic Resources expert, and Kimberly Starbuck of the Urban Harbors Institute. Our presentations concluded with an update on the progress of the Nantucket Harbor Plan by Jeff Carlson, the Natural Resources Director for the Town of Nantucket. After the presentations, our speakers offered their expertise during an engaging Q&A where we had informative discussions on green crabs, more sustainable mooring alternatives, and eelgrass health.

We concluded our sunny evening together on the beautiful Great Harbor Yacht Club Lawn where our guests and presenters enjoyed the scenic views, delicious YOHO raw bar, and libations.

Thank You to our 2025 Business and Event Sponsors!

Yoho Raw Bar • Nantucket Shellfish Association • Great Harbor Yacht Club Foundation • Spindrift September Productions • Anderson's Stillwater Moorings • Ernst Land Design • Nantucket Engineering & Survey Nantucket Marine • Nantucket Catering Company • Surfing Hydrangea Nursery

Grow Native & Edwina von Gal Featured at Annual Meeting

This August, the Nantucket Land & Water Council hosted our Annual Meeting at the Nantucket Hotel, featuring a keynote presentation by Edwina von Gal, the renowned ecological designer and founder of the Perfect Earth Project. Edwina shared insights from her decades of work advancing toxin-free, nature-based land care, emphasizing the vital role of native plants, healthy soils, and regenerative practices in restoring ecological balance. Her presentation inspired thoughtful discussion about how these principles can be applied right here on Nantucket.

This presentation was part of our Grow Native for Nantucket initiative, which continues to encourage residents, landscapers, and homeowners to embrace native plants and sustainable landscaping practices that protect our island's unique environment. The NLWC is grateful for the support of Remain Nantucket which made this presentation possible.



Grow Native: A Smarter Way to Weather Drought on Nantucket

This summer, Nantucket experienced an extensive officially designated drought by the Massachusetts Drought Task Force. With hotter, drier seasons becoming more common, it's time to rethink what we plant in our yards and landscapes.

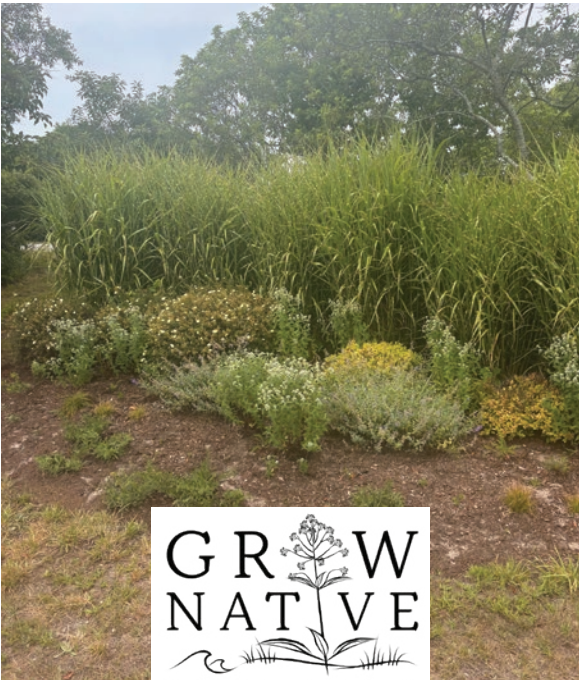
Native plants offer a natural solution. Evolved to thrive in our sandy soils, salty air, and seasonal droughts, they don't need constant watering or chemical support to flourish. By planting native plants, you're not just conserving water; you're creating a resilient landscape that supports biodiversity and protects our island's drinking water supply.

Why do native plants handle drought so well?

The secret lies underground. Unlike shallow-rooted turfgrass, which quickly browns without irrigation, native grasses and wildflowers grow deep root systems that reach moisture far below the surface. Even during dry spells, these roots sustain the plants, and in turn, support the pollinators and wildlife that depend on them.

Protecting Nantucket's water

Every drop counts, especially during a drought. Nantucket relies entirely on a sole-source aquifer for drinking water. Excessive irrigation stresses this vital resource. Choosing native plants means using less water, reducing the need for fertilizers and herbicides, and helping to keep our groundwater clean. Plant native and skip the sprinkler. Invest in plants that are built to survive here and help safeguard our island's future.



NANTUCKET LAND & WATER COUNCIL

2025 WATER NEWS

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Thank You to Our Summer Staff!

Georgia Fanthorp—Eelgrass Program Intern

Supported our Eelgrass Restoration Program through field monitoring and seed work at the Brant Point Hatchery.

Noelle Finlay—Policy and Land Use Intern

Assisted with policy research, conservation restriction management, communications, and advocacy efforts.

Kelly Fietz—Eelgrass Program Intern

Helped advance restoration projects and supported critical field studies.

Audrey Gollan—Waterkeeper Intern

Assisted with water quality protection, field work, and community education, while also helping to create digital media content.

Addie McNear—Junior Intern

Learned the foundations of nonprofit development, communications, and environmental policy while supporting NLWC's broad goals.

Caitlin Sughrue—Eelgrass Program Manager

Lead our ongoing eelgrass restoration project through research, fieldwork, and monitoring.

Claire Youngblood—Development Intern

Worked with our Development Director on fundraising, communications, donor appreciation, and event planning.

Their work in managing conservation land, supporting community education on sustainable practices, and conducting critical field work has made a lasting impact on Nantucket's environment. Their commitment and enthusiasm reflect a deep dedication to protecting our land and water for future generations. We could not have achieved all we did this summer without them, and we are truly grateful for their hard work and contributions.



Above: L to R—Audrey Gollan, Caitlin Sughrue and Kelly Fietz

Below: L to R—Claire Youngblood, Noelle Finlay, and Georgia Fanthorp