

Everyone agrees that water is a vital natural resource and an essential component of infrastructure in any community. During town planning, two elements are typically at play: protecting the water sources already in use and locating sources to support future growth. For Truro and Provincetown, water resources and protection have been a joint undertaking since well before signing an [Inter-Municipal Water Agreement](#) (IMA) in 2010. Truro then agreed to lease land for two wells at North Union Field (NUF) to Provincetown for 99 years, and the towns share this pristine water, with the larger volume going to Provincetown. The NUF wells, located in the northeast corner of the Walsh Property, supply Truro Central School, the Public Safety facility, Beach Point, and areas of North Truro.

In the last two years, the towns have collaborated further with the creation in 2024 of the [Joint Water Resources Working Group](#), committing town staffs to “sharing technical resources related to water supply research, technical studies, community needs analyses, sustainability goals, and engaging in a dialog to encourage joint decision-making for future priority setting...The goal of the working group is to assist the leaders within each municipality to establish a long-term, cooperative partnership in the development and practice of integrated water resources management.” Negotiations to revise the IMA are ongoing, and include developing a watershed management plan and updating the current water system master plan, supported by a joint grant of \$300,000. Truro and Provincetown also collaborate at meetings of the Provincetown Water and Sewer Board (PWSB). The Board consists of four members from Provincetown and three members from Truro. Representing Truro are Truro Select Board member, Nancy Medoff; Chair of the Truro Board of Health, Tracey Rose; and Truro Assistant Health/Conservation Agent, Courtney Warren, who is Vice Chair of the Board. The Board evaluates “current and future demand impacts on both the water and sewer systems and adapt[s] master planning as necessary.”

At the 2025 Annual Town Meeting, Truro voters approved the Walsh Overlay District (WOD). As proposed by the Zoning Task Force (ZTF), the WOD changes Truro’s current zoning bylaws to allow the building of 39 acres of dense housing units and “mixed-use development,” which includes “without limitation, commercial, institutional, industrial or other uses” on the Walsh Property. However, the ZTF proposed the WOD without any consideration of water resources or infrastructure on the property and provided no information about water to voters. This surprising omission recalls the case of the Walsh Property Community Planning Committee’s (WPCPC) 2024 recommendations, which were determined without the benefit of an updated hydrogeological study to show the effects of building housing near the NUF wells.

To the credit of the WPCPC, however, they did recommend “Protect water supplies for future generations.” To their further credit, the WPCPC informed the Town that “The Property has also been identified by the Cape Cod Commission as a potential future public water supply area. Thus, any development on the property needs to consider how best to protect the groundwater resource” (Progress Report for Community Outreach, July 2023, p.5). The Cape Cod Commission (CCC) is currently tightening regulations for public water supply sites. A draft of the CCC August 2025 Technical Bulletin is now open for public comment, and the final directives will have to be followed when planning any building on the Walsh Property.

Despite ongoing collaboration between Truro and Provincetown, recent discussions have revealed a rift between the two towns about the future of the Walsh Property. At the July 15 meeting of the PWSB, the Board reviewed a letter from Truro dated December 17, 2024, requesting a connection to the Provincetown Water System to supply 9,900 gallons of water a day for the first phase of a housing development on the Walsh Property. The PWSB approved the request and sent it to the Provincetown Select Board (PSB) for further discussion. By their August 14 meeting, however, Provincetown members of the PWSB were expressing concern about protecting the water supply on the Walsh Property as “the best source on the Outer Cape,” and calling for “a bit of a pause on this.”

At their July 28 meeting, the PSB raised several questions about Truro’s connection request. A September 3 memo from Provincetown Water Superintendent, Cody Salisbury, and Provincetown DPW Director, Jim Vincent, addresses these questions.¹

First, answering the PSB question about a potential water source on the Walsh Property, Mr. Salisbury reported that Town staffs were working together to identify sites in Truro suitable for future water supply, which would then receive exploratory groundwater computer modeling. The consultant, Apex, drafted a map showing five sites with their Zone I wellhead protection area, which must be a 400-foot radius.² Apex identified two suitable sites on the Walsh Property; a site on Quail Ridge Road; a site near Highland Road; a site identified as “C-5”; and a site on Prince Valley Road. Mr. Salisbury explained that the Provincetown staff “feel strongly that the Walsh property should be included in the modeling exercise” because of favorable hydrogeologic conditions: “the Walsh property is near the peak of the groundwater mound in the Pamet lens.” Groundwater modeling would indicate whether the site would support additional wells and what their effect might be on the existing NUF wells. However, “Truro staff have expressed strong opposition to conducting any modeling on the Walsh Property, because the property was purchased for affordable housing.” As Truro DPW Director, Jarrod Cabral reported to the Truro Select Board on September 9, Truro staff prefers a “multi-straw approach,” meaning that they favor investigating many locations, rather than exploring the possibilities on the Walsh Property.

Mr. Salisbury addressed a second question from the PSB: would Walsh Property development limit the future replacement of NUF Well #2? According to the Department of Environmental Protection a replacement well must be “located no more than 250’ from the existing well in any direction...Additional land on the Walsh property would be required if a well needed to be located 250’ away from the existing NUF #2...” In the Walsh Overlay District plan, a “low-density housing sub-district” would be located in this area. However, as Mr. Salisbury concluded, “Provincetown staff believes this area should be preserved in the event a replacement well at NUF is required and necessitates the expansion of the existing Zone 1 radius.”

¹ See Provincetown Select Board packet, September 8, 2025 at <https://www.provincetown-ma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/33766> .

² According to Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) public water supply regulations, every well must have a [400-foot radius \(800-foot diameter\) Zone I protection area and a larger Zone II protection area](#). All of the Walsh property, as well as all abutting Town-owned land, and other land beyond, sits within Zone II of the NUF wells, meaning that in this area, DEP restricts land use and materials that could contaminate the wells.

At the PSB September 8 meeting, board members emphasized the importance of finding a new water source for “current and future users,” and insisted that talks need to continue with Truro about exploring the viability of new wells on the Walsh Property. They suggested that locating a housing development and a new water supply at Walsh were not incompatible if the housing were moved nearer to Route 6. Member Sandberg said that “we have to educate the Zoning Board [Zoning Task Force]...They need to be part of this...We have an issue about water. Will you work with us to reconfigure it?” Until there is progress on Walsh discussions and “additional considerations,” the PSB will not approve Truro’s request for connection to the Provincetown Water System.

At the September 9 Truro Select Board meeting, Mr. Cabral reported that the Town expects to receive the Walsh wastewater modelling report in early October.³ He expressed confidence that the Town would continue to work with Provincetown on identifying new well sites other than on the Walsh Property. He also expressed optimism about working with the National Seashore administration to explore well sites on federal property.⁴

The big question now is whether the wise voters of Truro intended their approval of the WOD as a mandate to build on the Walsh Property without exploring water sources necessary for supplying future generations of Truro residents. Not only is Walsh a promising site for future wells, but proceeding with groundwater modeling would further inform the Town on how development would impact the pristine water supply pumped daily from the two North Union Field wells, and perhaps additional future wells sited nearby.

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³ The September 25 joint Truro Select Board and Board of Health meeting included presentation of an overview of the [Truro Comprehensive Watershed Management Plan](#) by Scott Horsley, GHD Engineering and Water Resources Consultant. There will be public discussion on Tuesday, October 14, 3 p.m., after which the draft will be finalized and posted on the Town website on Friday, October 31.

⁴ Some of these sites have been considered before. At the February 24, 2025 Joint Meeting of the Provincetown Water and Sewer Board, the Truro Select Board, and the Provincetown Select Board, Cody Salisbury noted that based on the latest technical analysis, 0 Quail Ridge Road, 1500 feet south of NUF, would not be a possible site because of the effect of saltwater up-coning on NUF. Another possible site investigated was the C-5 Wellhead Site/Tract17-3333 on Higgins Hollow Road, but the site belongs to the National Seashore. On February 26, 2008, a letter from the National Park Service to then Truro Town Administrator, Pamela Nolan, clarifies that “The National Park Service (NPS) is in possession of a certified title report that establishes valid title to this parcel in the United States of America.” A link to this letter may be found [here](#).