

At the May 16 Annual Town Meeting Truro voters will consider several articles with significant environmental impact.¹ It is worth pausing to reflect on the principles behind Citizen Petitioned **Articles 38, 39, and 40**. Each article implicitly asks voters to commit to **stewardship of essential natural resources while also addressing the Town’s pledge to build affordable and attainable housing**. Broadly considered, these articles support reliance on careful planning, expert consultation, and collaborative discussion before breaking ground to develop housing.

Many communities continually monitor the balance between environmental protection and development with a Growth Management Plan, integrating the work of various town committees and staff in an annual report.² For Truro, the Walsh Property is a main focus of growth management concerns, because it is both the site of a projected housing development and according to recent studies, the best, most cost-efficient site for a new well needed to support growth in Truro and Provincetown.

Of course, Truro is not alone among Cape Cod communities facing issues of growth management. Town planners can look to other towns and to Cape-wide initiatives for support in integrating environmental protection and development. For example, the collaboration between the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) and the Housing Assistance Corporation (HAC) responds to the problem that “housing and natural resource protection advocates often work separately, and are frequently in conflict with each other...” Together, APCC and HAC have initiated [Grow Smart Cape Cod](#). This is “a mapping project that uses the best available existing data and GIS technology to identify priority areas for natural resource protection and priority areas for affordable moderate-density housing development.” They propose three practical project goals:

1. Identify areas town-wide and region-wide where natural resource protection is a priority and areas where affordable moderate-density housing can responsibly be developed, while protecting water quality.
2. Promote public support for natural resource protection and for more diverse and affordable moderate-density housing development in identified areas.
3. Reduce competition between conservation and housing interests in land-use decisions.

A key point in this process is that basic site analysis happens first, before any development begins. Site analysis includes expert hydrogeological analysis to ensure water protection; location of existing or potential wastewater infrastructure that does not endanger water supplies; and best topographical positions for building.

At the 2024 Annual Town Meeting, Truro voters agreed with the Walsh Property Community Planning Committee that 160 housing units could be built on the Walsh Property. However, this decision to develop had not yet benefited from up-to-date environmental assessment, including recent hydrogeological studies and discussion with Provincetown’s

¹ The Annual Town Meeting Warrant may be viewed at <https://ma-truro.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/3280/2026-ATM-Warrant-FINAL>

² Truro had a Growth Management Bylaw until it expired on December 31, 2021. See Provincetown’s current Growth Management Bylaw, whose purpose is to “maintain the rate of development in the Town at a level which will allow the Town to provide in a planned and rational manner adequate public services and facilities to meet the needs of its current and future population without overburdening the Town’s natural resources or the capacities of existing and planned public facilities, particularly with respect to provision of potable water, wastewater disposal, and solid waste disposal.”

consultants and Water Department. The two towns share a long history of drawing water from the Pamet Lens. In the 2010 [Inter-Municipal Water Agreement](#) (IMA), Truro agreed to lease North Union Field (NUF) to Provincetown for 99 years for the purpose of protecting “the water resources within the Town of Truro in such a manner that both the Town of Provincetown and the Town of Truro provide the people of both towns with present and future adequate and potable water supplies.” These NUF wells are located at the northwest corner of the Walsh Property, and they provide pristine water to Truro Central School, the Public Safety facility, parts of North Truro, Beach Point, and Provincetown.³ To avoid polluting these wells with wastewater or other contaminants, groundwater protection measures would need to precede any development plans on the Walsh Property.

But in addition to protecting existing wells, Truro must also establish new water sources to support future growth—and the well-being of future generations. Complicating ongoing discussions between Truro and Provincetown during meetings of their [Joint Water Resources Working Group](#) are the results of Provincetown consultants’ report, *Drinking Water and Wastewater: Regional Water Supply and Watershed Management Study*. After analyzing all possible sites for new sources of water to support future growth in the two towns, Apex consultants determined that “Walsh Site A, which is located as far as possible from NUF wells, was ranked the highest, meeting the criteria best of all the sites studied. It would also be the least expensive site to establish.” Provincetown officials suggest that Truro could still build affordable housing on the Walsh Property, routing wastewater away from the NUF wells or any new well. But Truro officials wish to prioritize development on the Walsh Property, and in a letter to the Truro community in December, 2025, the Select Board firmly rejected the possibility of any new well on the Walsh Property. However, it is likely that alternate sites for new wells will not be established any time soon and that discussion of water resources on the Walsh Property will continue.⁴

How then will Truro hew to the best principles of growth management, protecting irreplaceable natural resources and proceeding with responsible moderate-density development?

The framers of Citizen Petitioned Articles 38, 39, and 40 appear to have some answers:

- re-establish Truro’s Growth Management Bylaw so as to prioritize attention to water resources, water supply, and wastewater treatment before designating building sites
- respect the 2024 ATM vote to limit building on the Walsh Property to 160 units in phased development, beginning with 80 units
- institute zoning that protects moderate-density residential and recreational development on the Walsh Property, requiring full site analysis for water and wastewater treatment before development begins

Without such guidance from growth management principles and without zoning that will limit development, Truro faces a bleak future for protecting its natural resources and ensuring an adequate water supply exists for future generations.

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³ See [Our History of the Shared Water Source](#) on the Provincetown website.

⁴ Truro has claimed ownership of site C-5, but the National Seashore has documented its ownership. Potential impact on the Pamet River may limit the capacity of a well there.