

Why Sign on to the Harwich Ponds Coalition Pond Pledge?

1.) Septic Maintenance and Support of Harwich Sewering

Septic tanks are the largest contributor of excess phosphorus and nitrogen nutrients to groundwater, ponds, and tidal waterways In Harwich. Such excess nutrient loads often lead to elevated E. coli levels, cause toxic cyanobacteria blooms, and result in degradation of aquatic habitat. The EPA estimates that 80% of nitrogen loading on the Cape results from septic systems.

2.) Eco-friendly cleaning products

There are many natural or more eco-friendly cleaning options available now in stores. Cleaning products with phosphates [or bleach] can interfere with waste breakdown in septic systems or end up on ponds and trigger algae growth. Look for the EPA or the “phosphate-free” label. Also, please follow manufacturer instructions for safe disposal of all cleaning products.

3.) Cape-friendly lawns and landscapes

Fertilizers and pesticides are the second greatest driver of nutrient and chemical load in our ponds and tidal estuaries. All fertilizers contain plant nutrients, including organic fertilizers, which when not taken up by plants in the landscape, leach out into the groundwater and ultimately into our ponds and estuaries. Nitrogen-rich fertilizers are commonly used in lawns, contributing to eutrophication of our saltwater estuaries and embayments. Native plants should thrive without fertilizer and use less water. Many landscapers use fertilizer and pesticides, so have that conversation about your commitment to embrace Cape-friendly lawn and landscaping and instruct them to do the same.

4.) Other practices that work with nature, not against it, for the benefit of all:

- Avoid other nutrient-rich soil treatments
- Preserve trees
- Minimize lawn area
- Plant for diversity
- Leave the leaves, stems, and seeds
- Recycle, repurpose, reuse
- Compost at home or at Harwich Transfer Station
- Minimize soil disturbance and leave wild areas
- Manage stormwater and consider a rain barrel