

# An Act Relative to Failed Septic Systems & An Act Relative to Nitrogen Impaired Embayments (HD.3177 & HD.3183)

House Sponsor: Paul Schmid

## The Problem

**Nitrogen pollution poses one of the greatest economic and environmental long-term threats to coastal communities, whose businesses and residents rely on clean water for both tourism and fishing.** Unfortunately, current state regulations allow the installation of on-site septic systems, which discharge more nitrogen into waterways, exacerbating this problem.



Algae blooms form because of nitrogen pollution in Wareham, MA.

In areas that lack sewer service, homeowners use septic systems. However, most septic systems do not remove much nitrogen. Nitrogen seeps from the leach field into groundwater. From there, nitrogen can travel underground for many miles to the nearest waterway.

Nitrogen pollution fuels the growth of algae: tiny plants that bloom rapidly, making the water cloudy and murky. Eventually, eelgrass beds die, and fish and shellfish slowly disappear. This is disastrous for recreation and the environment.

## The Solution

These bills would 1) require the installation of on-site septic systems to reduce nitrogen and 2) make upgrades of on-site septic stems eligible for loans. These bills would institute the following changes:

- Allow MassDEP to approve loans to upgrade on-site septic systems to reduce nitrogen.
- Require that on-site septic systems installed in nitrogen-sensitive areas remove nitrogen to reduce the amount of nitrogen pollution entering waterways.



Perch Pond in Wellfleet, MA closed to shellfishing operations due to nitrogen pollution.

### For more information contact:

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