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Novel Watershed Permit Issued for Cape Cod towns.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has issued a first-of-its kind “watershed” permit. Instead of issuing individual permits, the Cape Cod towns of Brewster, Chatham, Harwich and Orleans were issued a joint permit that addresses water quality concerns. None of the towns has a municipal public sewer system, and most homes rely on septic systems. The towns have grown, and the additional septic systems installed have leaked excess nitrogen to the point where fish and their habitats are being harmed.

The 20-year permit, issued after consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), allows the towns to reduce nitrogen pollution through efforts like fertilizer reduction and improved aquaculture. Each town has its own nitrogen removal target, and the towns must meet and show progress through reports every five years.

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