

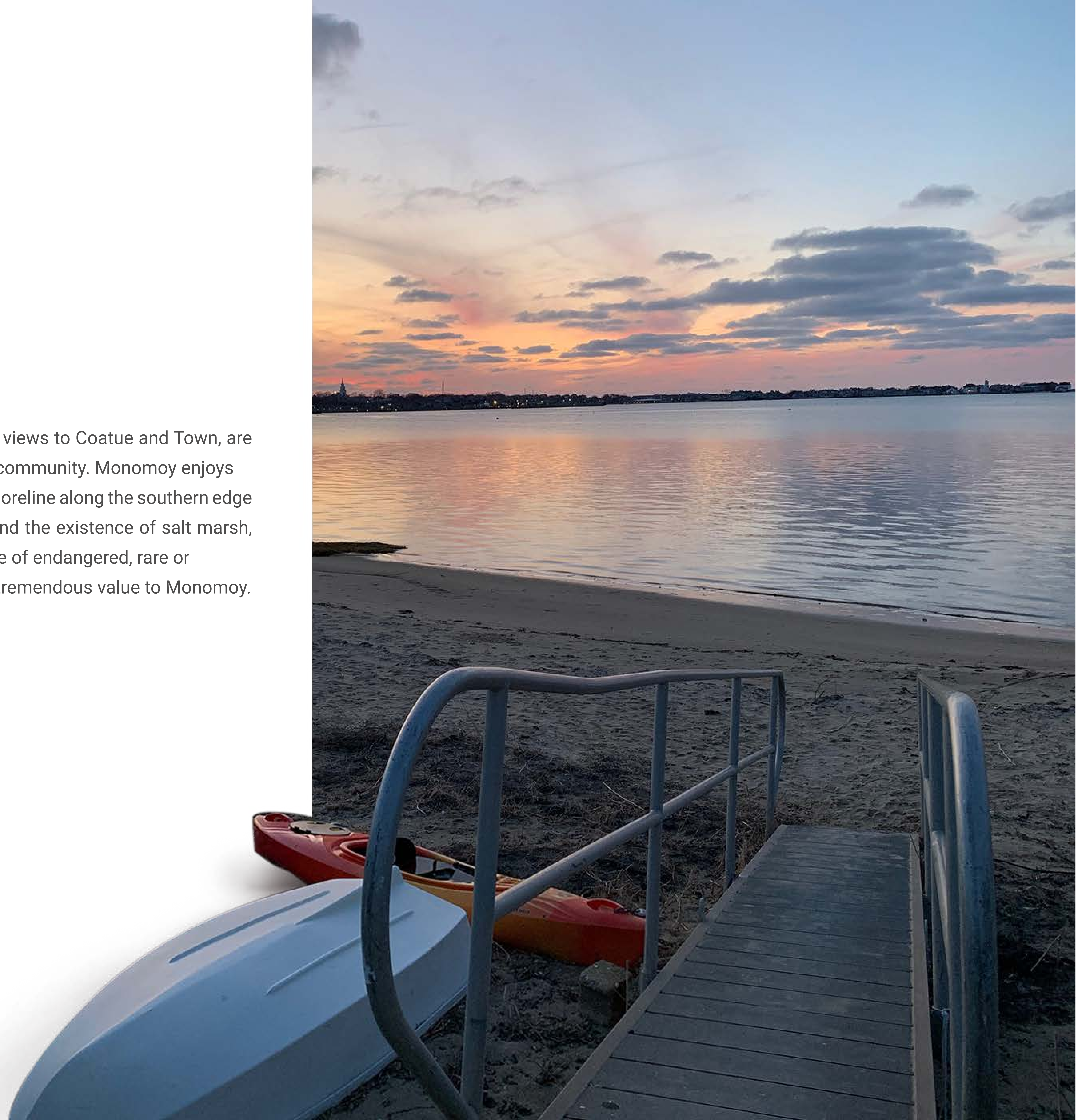
# Open Space & Recreation

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- Recreational Boating and a “No Wake” Zone for The Creeks
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## MONOMOY BEACH

The pristine and calm beaches, coupled with stunning views to Coaticook and Town, are some of the most attractive aspects of the Monomoy community. Monomoy enjoys approximately 3,500 feet, or 0.66 of a mile, of coastal shoreline along the southern edge of Nantucket Harbor. With its proximity to wetlands, and the existence of salt marsh, beach barrier dunes, fragile eelgrass and an abundance of endangered, rare or otherwise common wildlife, it is an amenity that adds tremendous value to Monomoy.



## Beach Access

The beaches at Monomoy are accessible at two points: the publicly-owned Monomoy Beach parking lot on Berkeley Road, and just outside the Monomoy Area Plan boundary, via Cathcart Road, where beach access is provided by the Land Bank, along with nearby public parking.

Beyond those two points, most of the beach frontage is privately owned, typically to the mean high water line, unbeknownst to many who visit. Pedestrian access is available to the visiting public without conditions.

As Monomoy's beaches become increasingly popular, they are often overcrowded during peak summer months and operating at or beyond their capacity. Issues have come to the fore related to unattended vehicles, trash and littering, and the lack of public toilets. Residents are often relegated to cleaning up the beaches and nearby brush of discarded bottles, cans and other trash left behind by visitors. These emerging issues pose a series of growing challenges to the community, policy makers and conservation managers now and in the years ahead.

A popular party location, Cathcart Beach attracts boisterous crowds that party into the night, with speeding vehicles posing a risk to cyclists and pedestrians along an unpaved and winding single track road that offers limited visibility.

Efforts to limit vehicular traffic on the beach, as well as address unattended vehicles, would ensure better alignment with the carrying capacity of this natural resource. Importantly, Land Bank is addressing this issue through the prohibition of unattended vehicles on Cathcart Beach from June 15 to September 15 each year.



These ideas of carefully managing our fragile and vulnerable coastal resources are neither new nor controversial. Nantucket's 1993 Harbors Action Plan put forward a policy statement, which was reiterated and adopted in the May 2009 Nantucket and Madaket Harbors Action Plan, that "it shall be the policy of the town to pursue opportunities for improving existing and providing new areas for public access to the waters of both harbors consistent with a policy of wise stewardship."

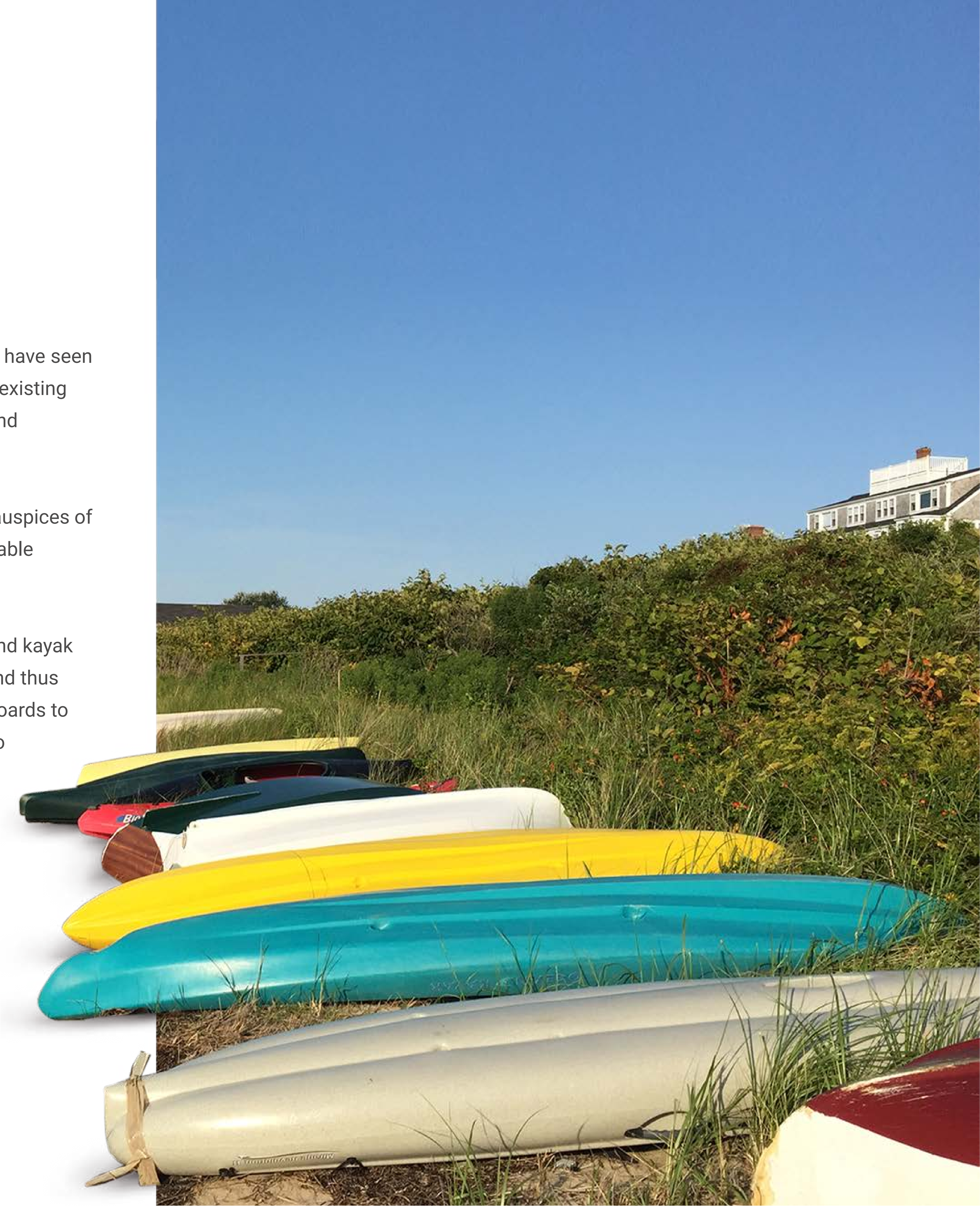
Monomoy residents are strongly in favor of public beach access and encourage responsible, safe and sustainable use of our fragile beach resources under a policy of wise stewardship. To this end, greater public awareness would help through the installation of educational signage at key entry points to the beaches, and dissemination of similar information via other channels.

## DINGHY AND KAYAK STORAGE

With the growing popularity of Monomoy Beach at two points, recent years have seen a dramatic increase in the storage of kayaks and dinghies, in excess of the existing storage racks available through the Land Bank at Cathcart Beach and on land generously provided by a homeowner on Monomoy Beach.

Recent efforts to create a dinghy and kayak registration system, under the auspices of the Nantucket Marine Department, and issue numbered permits, offers a viable solution going forward.

Many Monomoy residents do not have access to such storage, as dinghy and kayak storage has been historically related to those with permits for moorings, and thus related to boat ownership. Today, such watercraft—from kayaks to paddleboards to canoes—are often not related to boat ownership and moorings. Solutions to provide greater access should be explored.



## RECREATIONAL SHELLFISHING

In addition to commercial shellfishing with the Harbor, recreational shellfishing has played an important role in shaping Nantucket's economic and cultural history, and Monomoy has been a key location for these activities. On average, across the island, approximately 1,700 family permits have been issued each year for the past ten years.<sup>8</sup> Recreational fishermen turn out each fall to uphold a long-held family tradition. Their visits help bolster the Island's shoulder season economy through the purchases of rakes, buckets, gear, and lodging. Recreationally harvested species include bay scallops, mussels, quahogs, soft-shell clams, and oysters. The Town maintains a program to enhance the shellfish population through propagation activities (public aquaculture) at its Brant Point Shellfish Hatchery.<sup>9</sup>

But to sustain this important source of recreation, maintaining high water quality and overall the health of the Harbor is paramount. While addressed under the Natural Resources element in this Area Plan, it is important to again emphasize the critical role eelgrass beds play in the health of the Harbor, providing sheltered habitat to many species, and the imperative to reduce nutrient loading and shading that negatively impacts eelgrass health. The decline of eelgrass meadows in the Harbor in recent years has been alarming, while shellfishing activities have resulted in historically low volumes.

The biggest addressable threats come from septic systems, fertilizers used in landscaping, runoff and "on the water" boat use waste (cleaning products and discharge from boats with no heads).

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/88/Final-Shellfish-Management-Plan-PDF?bidId=>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.nantucket-ma.gov/691/Brant-Point-Shellfish-Hatchery>

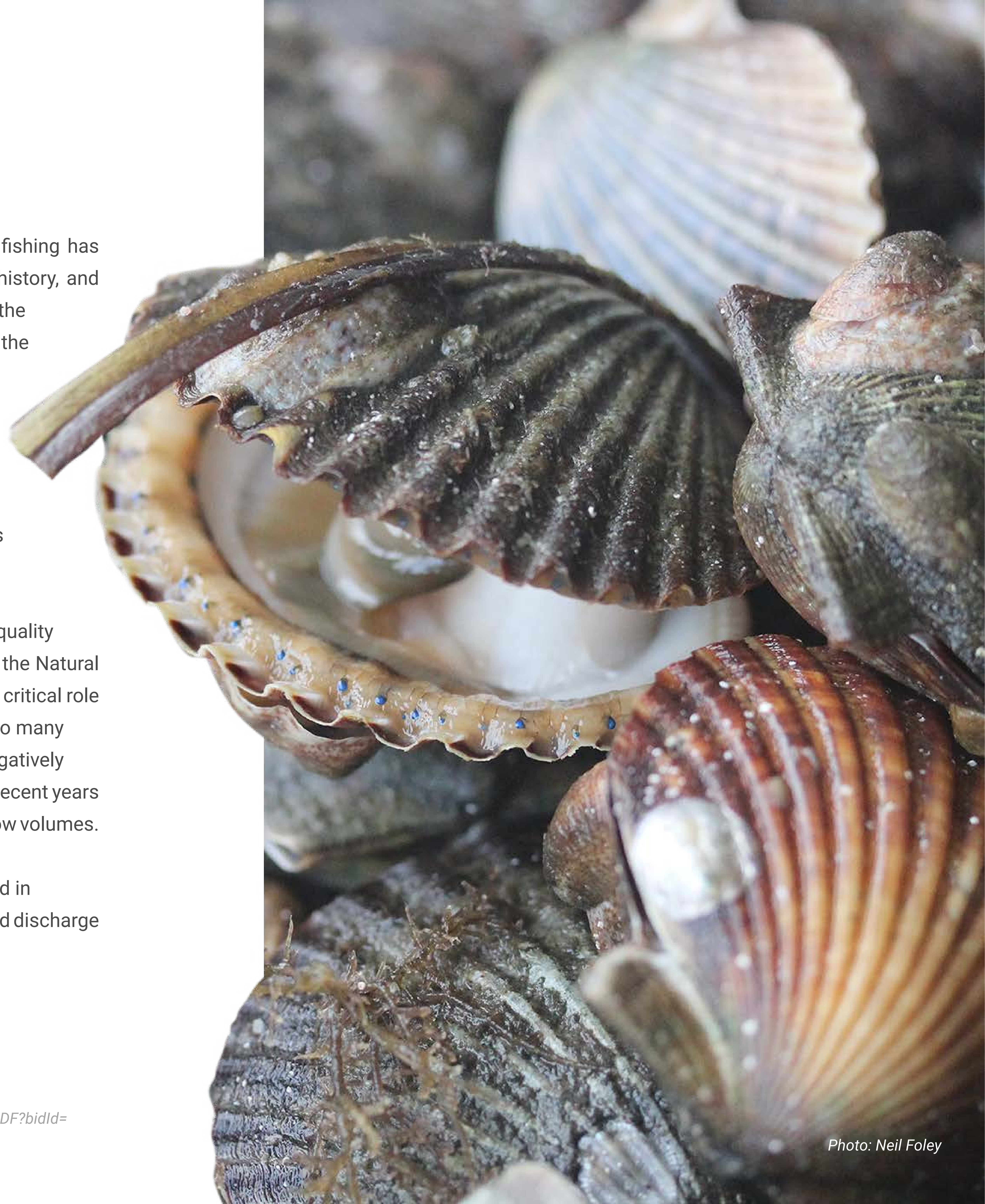


Photo: Neil Foley

## BOAT MOORINGS

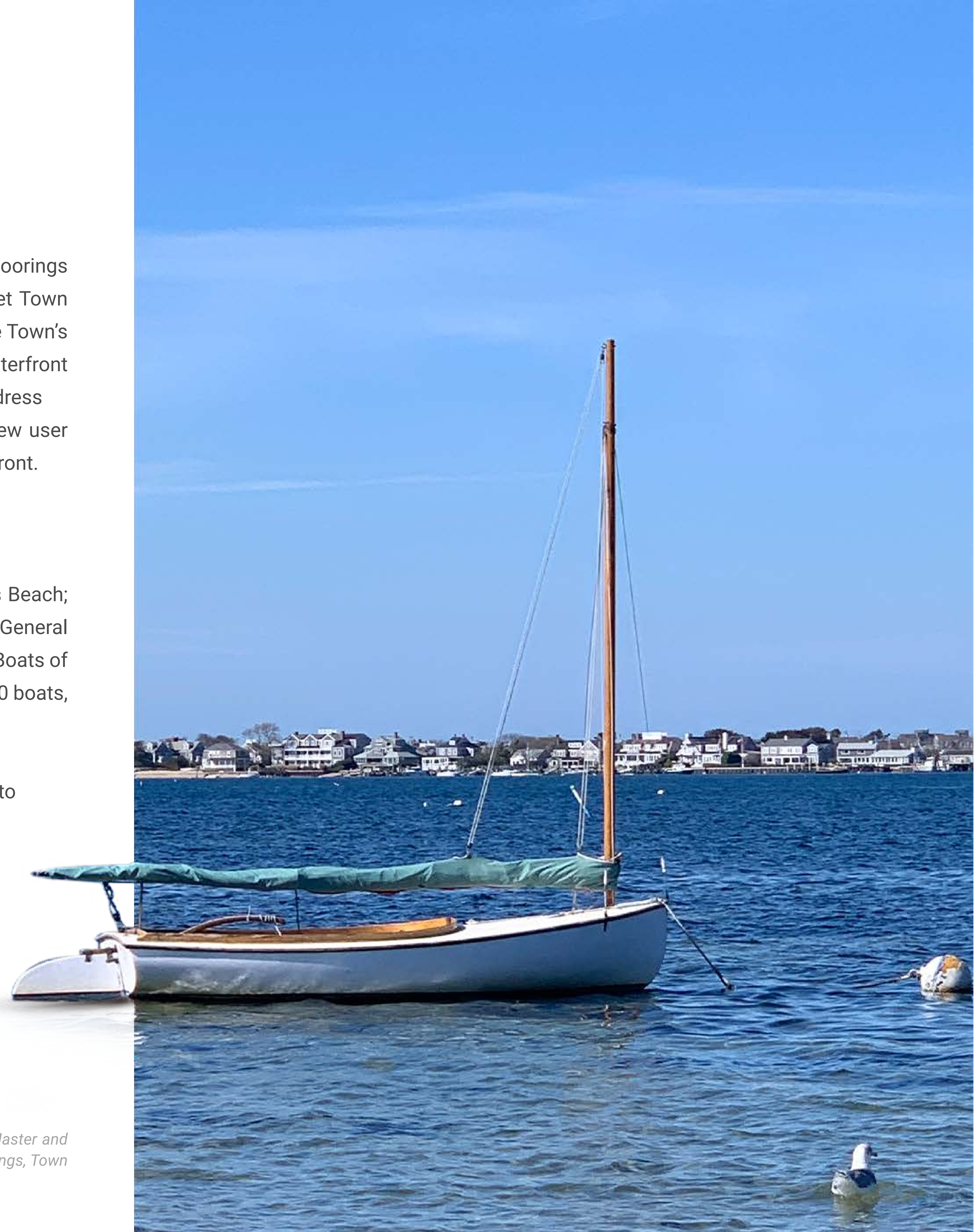
Moorings are the traditional vessel berthing arrangement on Nantucket. All moorings must be registered with the Harbor Master (Section 137-4.B of the Nantucket Town Code).<sup>10</sup> In 2020, approximately 1,706 mooring permits were issued within the Town's designated mooring areas, and approximately 220 moorings were off private waterfront residences. The number of mooring permits issued each year is capped to address potential impacts to water quality and eelgrass, minimize the potential for new user conflicts, and align with the service and infrastructure capacities of the waterfront.

As of 2022, there is a 5-year waitlist for a new mooring.

Moorings are located within eleven mooring fields: Hulbert Avenue; Children's Beach; Easy Street; Swain's Wharf; south of Town Pier; Monomoy; between the Piers; the General Anchorage Mooring Field; Polpis Harbor; Hither Creek; and Warren's Landing. Boats of 23 feet or less make up the vast majority of moored boats (approximately 1,360 boats, or more than 80%).

All private moorings are required to be removed from any shellfish areas prior to October 15. If the mooring is a Helix type mooring, it must be outfitted with an approved cap to avoid snagging scallop dredges.

Boat moorings, too, can have a direct and indirect impact on eelgrass, as chains can scour the sea floor and remove eelgrass, and can be addressed through the use of conservation moorings.



<sup>10</sup> The Town's Division of Marine Safety, under the Police Department, is managed by the Harbor Master and oversees marine search and rescue, supervision of waterways operations and public beaches, moorings, Town Pier, aids to navigation and the lifeguard program.

## PRIVATE DOCKS AND PIERS

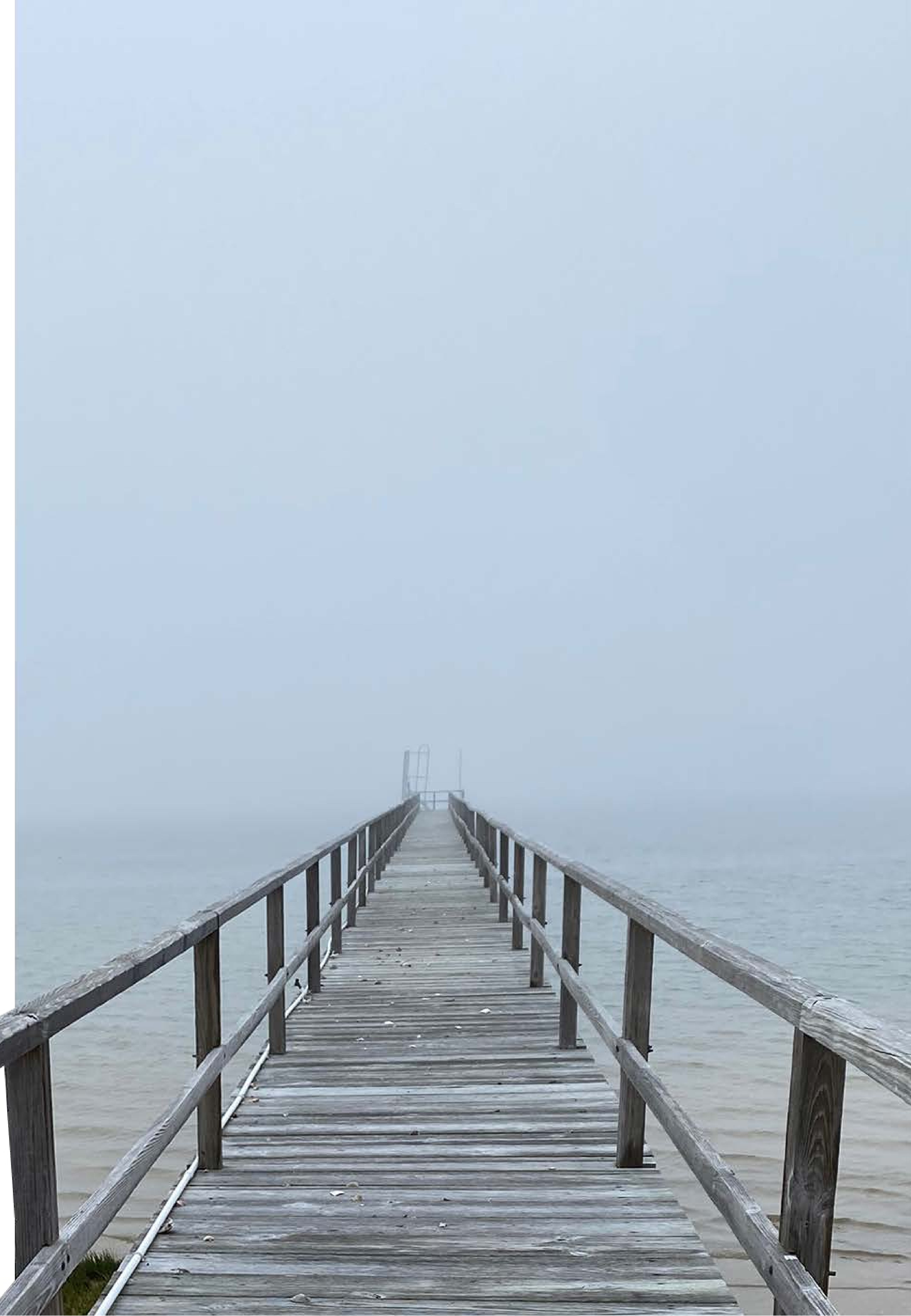
Chapter 139-22 of the Nantucket Zoning Bylaw contains a prohibition on all new private docks and piers or expansions of existing private docks except certain public or commercial water-dependent docks and piers within the Harbor Overlay District.

The prohibition of private docks was developed in part out of concern that the construction of these docks would interfere with and negatively affect commercial and residential shellfishing activities, and more importantly, damage the natural environment and accelerate erosion, in violation of Nantucket Wetland Protection Regulations. Piers and docks have a direct and irreversible impact on marine species such as bay scallops, which directly rely on eelgrass beds for survival.

As a keystone species, eelgrass provides vital habitat to a diverse group of species such as scallops, flounder, quahogs, and crabs. These underwater meadows also serve as nutrient sinks, taking up excess nitrogen from the water and sediment, improving overall water quality in Nantucket Harbor. Healthy eelgrass meadows also protect shorelines from flooding and erosion by stabilizing sediment and physically buffering wave action.

Through State approval of the 2009 Nantucket and Madaket Harbors Action Plan, this same prohibition on private docks outside the Harbor Overlay District is now also part of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Chapter 91 licensing criteria. Expansion of existing commercial docks and piers and those for governmental and public entity use are allowed within the Harbor Overlay District by both the local bylaw and Chapter 91.

Monomoy strongly supports the prohibition on new piers or docks.



## RECREATIONAL BOATING AND A “NO WAKE” ZONE FOR THE CREEKS

Nantucket Harbor hosts a growing number of watercraft each year, which includes craft docked at the Town’s 60-slip marina, seasonal transient slips, and anchored off the hundreds of private and rental moorings. Of concern to Monomoy is the fragile salt marsh ecosystem of The Creeks, and the risks these craft present in exacerbating erosion, stirring sediment and negatively impacting the health of eelgrass.

The imposition of a “No Wake” zone for The Creeks, including posted warnings on a floating buoy for boaters’ information, would help address this problem by requiring all vessels to reduce to the slowest speed possible while still maintaining the ability to steer and make forward progress. When vessels move at these speeds, they produce a minimum wake and are far less disruptive to the surrounding environment. Such speed restrictions are common in crowded, narrow areas like channels or confined harbors, and would be appropriate for The Creeks.





## WYER'S VALLEY SOLAR PROJECT

Contiguous to the Monomoy community is a proposal for the installation of a privately-owned and -operated solar array project on approximately 13.6 acres at the Town-owned Wannacomet Water Company property. In addition to clearing some undeveloped forested lands, it has been determined by the State's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) that the clear-cutting of over 10 acres will result in the take of habitat for six species of moths that are designated special concern or threatened, thereby requiring mitigation at another site.<sup>11</sup>

Monomoy strongly supports of the Town's efforts to promote energy conservation and renewable energy opportunities on the island and is a strong advocate of solar and renewable energy. It is also clear with additional growth and development the island is experiencing a significant increase in energy demand. However, questions remain whether Wyer's Valley is the most appropriate site for the project considering that Monomoy residents believe it is important to preserve, to the extent possible, the remaining undeveloped open land on this property.

An additional concern is the opening of this fragile, undeveloped area for future development once it has been cleared and diverted to revenue-generating uses. The island already faces extreme pressures due to overdevelopment, and every effort should be made to preserve these precious remaining parcels of mid-island open land still in its natural state.

<sup>11</sup> Moths are classified as "Lepidoptera" (meaning scaled wings) and are in the same order as butterflies. Moths play an important role in the natural ecosystem as pollinators and as a food source for songbirds, mammals and other insects. Moths are indicators of healthy environment and healthy ecosystems.



# MONOMOY NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS: OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

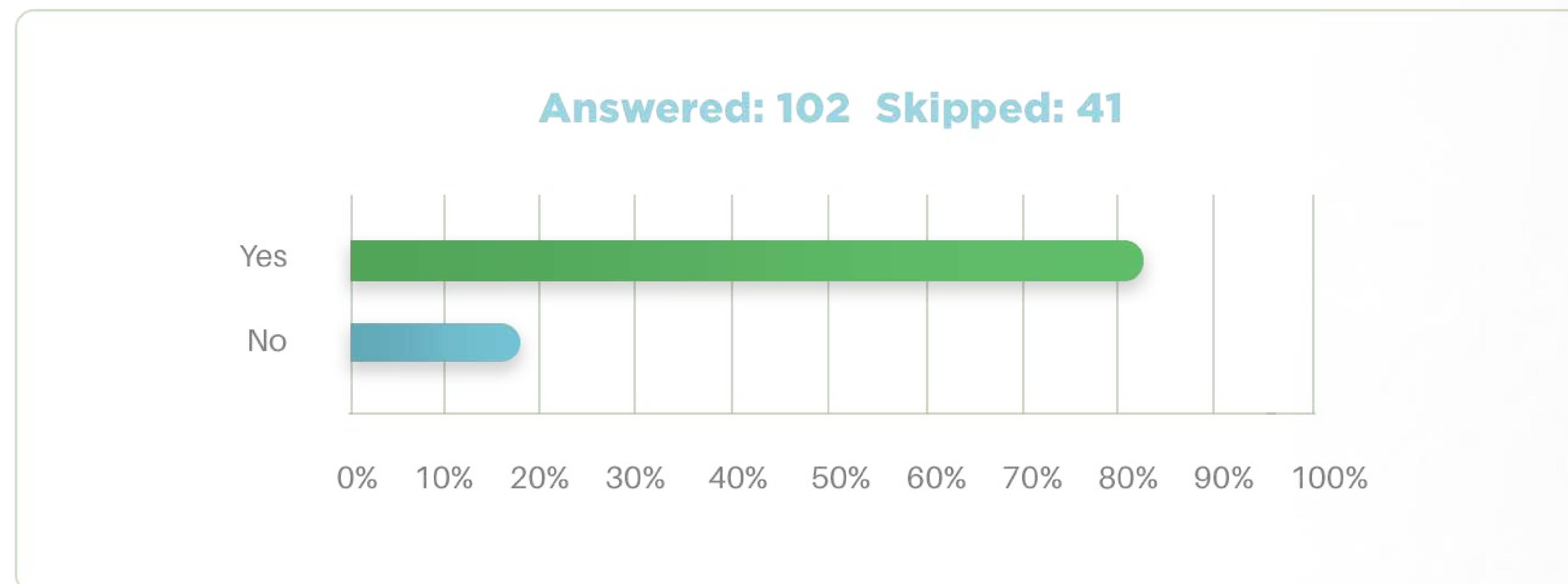
## 1. On Monomoy's Beaches

In relation to Monomoy's beaches, respondents were asked about their level of satisfaction on three topics. On cleanliness, 54% are somewhat or very satisfied, while 27% are not. On parking access, 44% are similarly satisfied, while 26% are not. On the point of access to dinghy and kayak storage, respondents are almost evenly split between satisfied, not satisfied and neutral.

	VERY SATISFIED	SOMEWHAT SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SOMEWHAT DISSATISFIED	VERY DISSATISFIED	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Cleanliness of the beaches	9.80% 10	44.12% 45	18.36% 19	16.67% 17	10.78% 6	102	2.75
Access to Parking	12.75% 13	31.37% 32	29.41% 30	16.67% 17	9.80% 10	102	2.79
Access to dinghy and kayak storage	10.78% 11	22.55% 23	33.33% 34	20.59% 21	12.75% 13	102	3.02

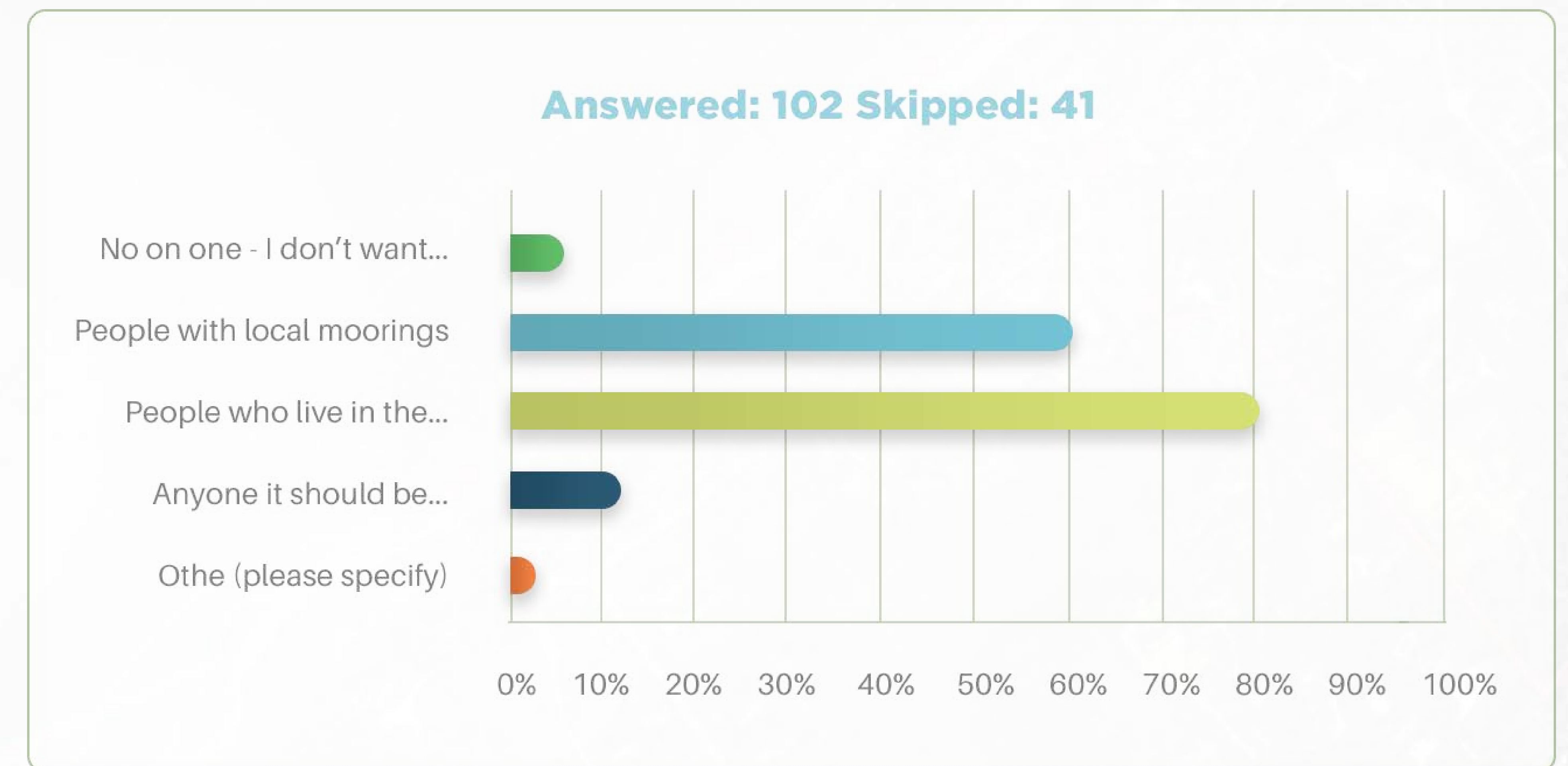
Answered: 102 Skipped: 41

## 2. Trash and Recycling Receptables at Monomoy's beaches



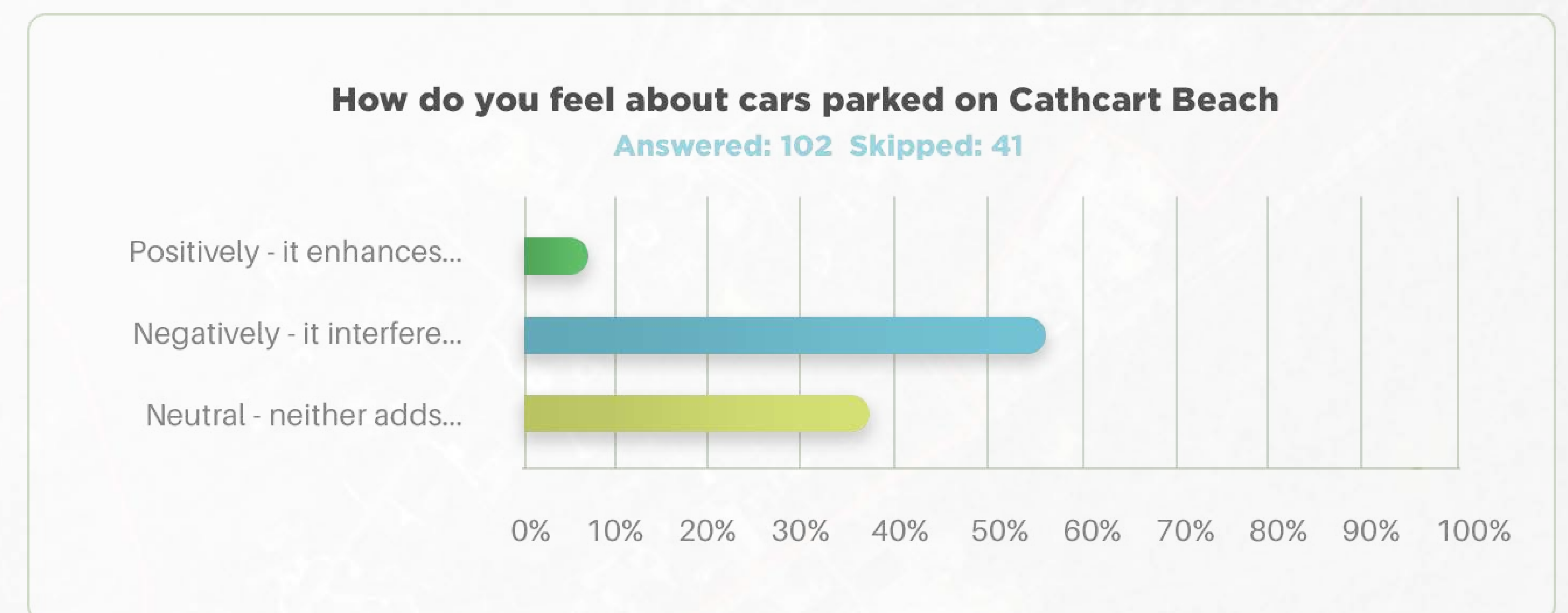
Respondents are in support (82%, 84 respondents) of providing trash and recycling receptables at both entrances to Monomoy's beaches, while 18% (18) are opposed.

## 3. Access to dinghy and kayak storage racks



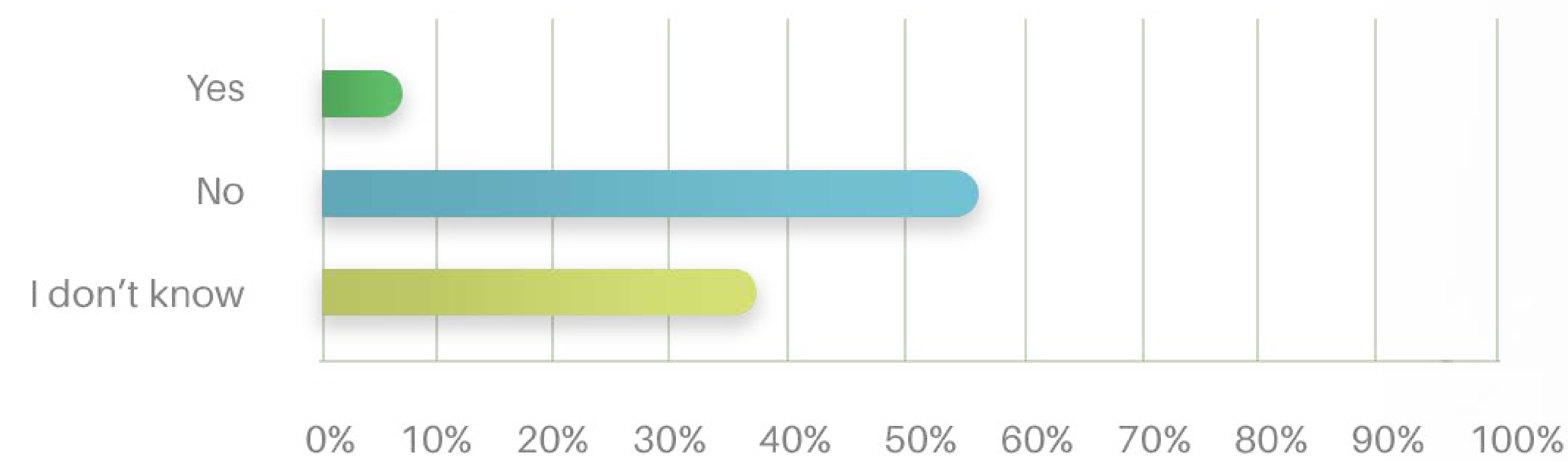
Respondents felt strongly that residents within Monomoy should have the ability to store their vessels on racks at the beach (80%, 82 respondents), while 12% (12) felt it should be open to all.

## 4. Vehicles on Cathcart Beach



**Would you be in favor of adding some regulations to cars on Cathcart Beach, for example prohibiting unattended vehicles?**

Answered: 102 Skipped: 41



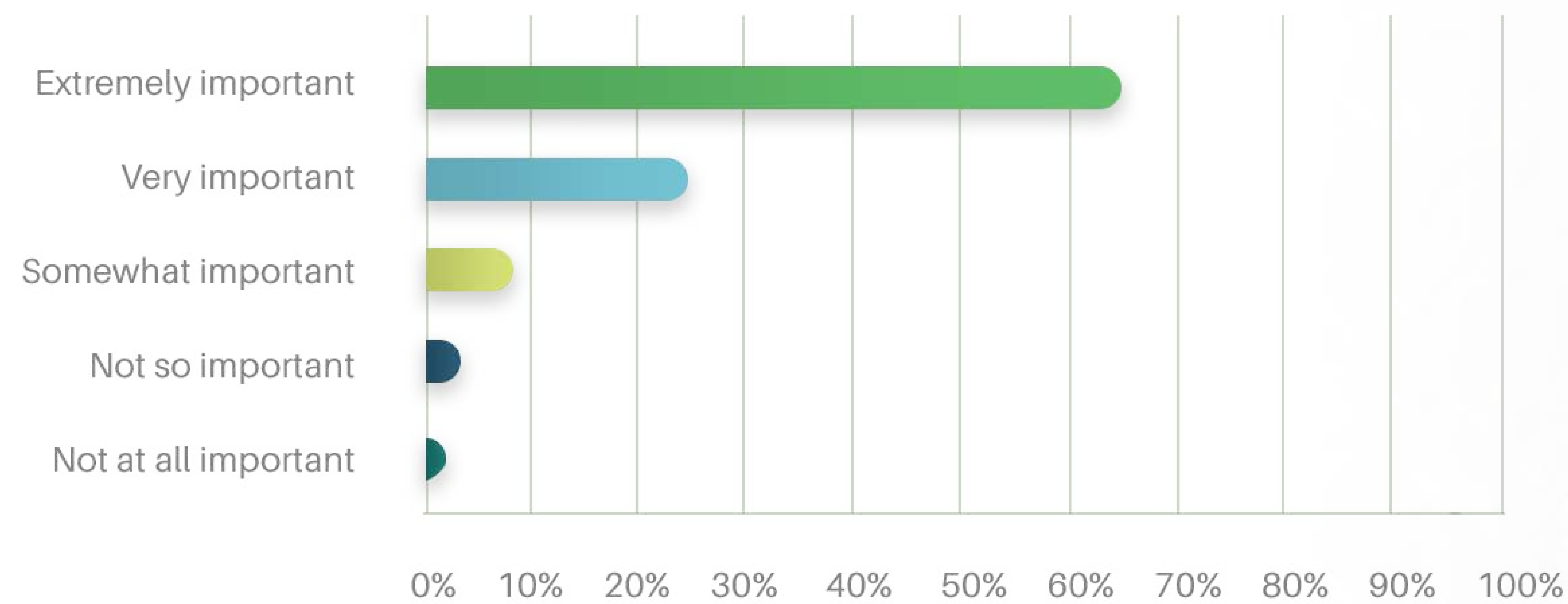
56% of respondents felt the presence of parked cars on Cathcart Beach interfered with their use and enjoyment of the beach, and 75% (76 respondents) are in favor of adding some regulations to control or prohibit specific actions, such as unattended vehicles.

**5. Wyer's Valley Solar Energy Project**

**Just outside of Monomoy, the Wannacomet Water Company property at 1 Milestone Road is a 22-acre property with large amounts of open space. In recent years there have been efforts to develop this land including the proposal to relocate the Nantucket Cottage Hospital there and a more recent proposal for a large-scale solar energy facility?**

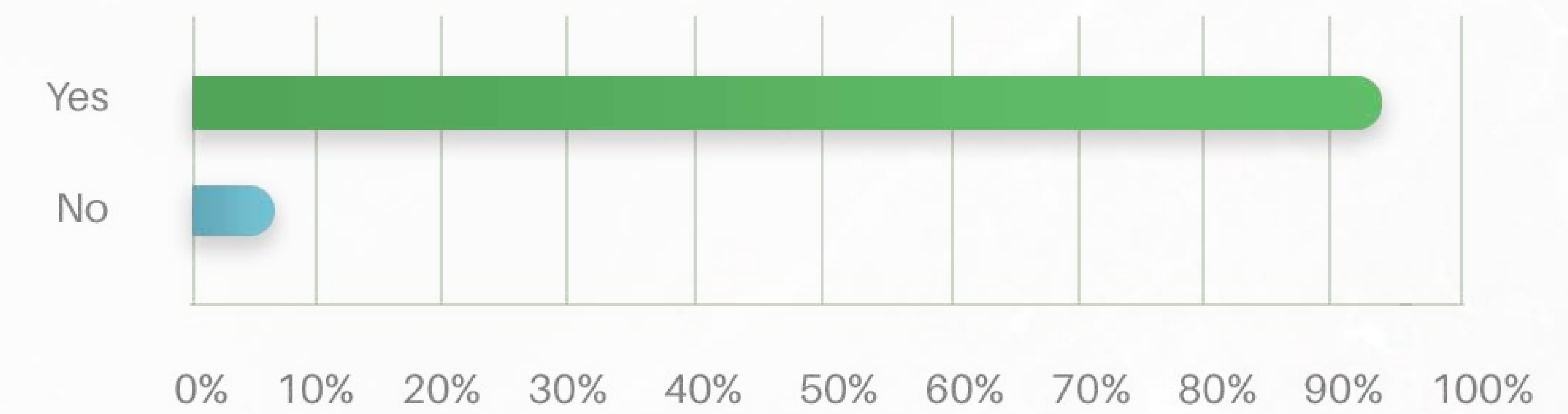
**How important is it to preserve, to the extent possible, open spaces on this property?**

Answered: 102 Skipped: 41



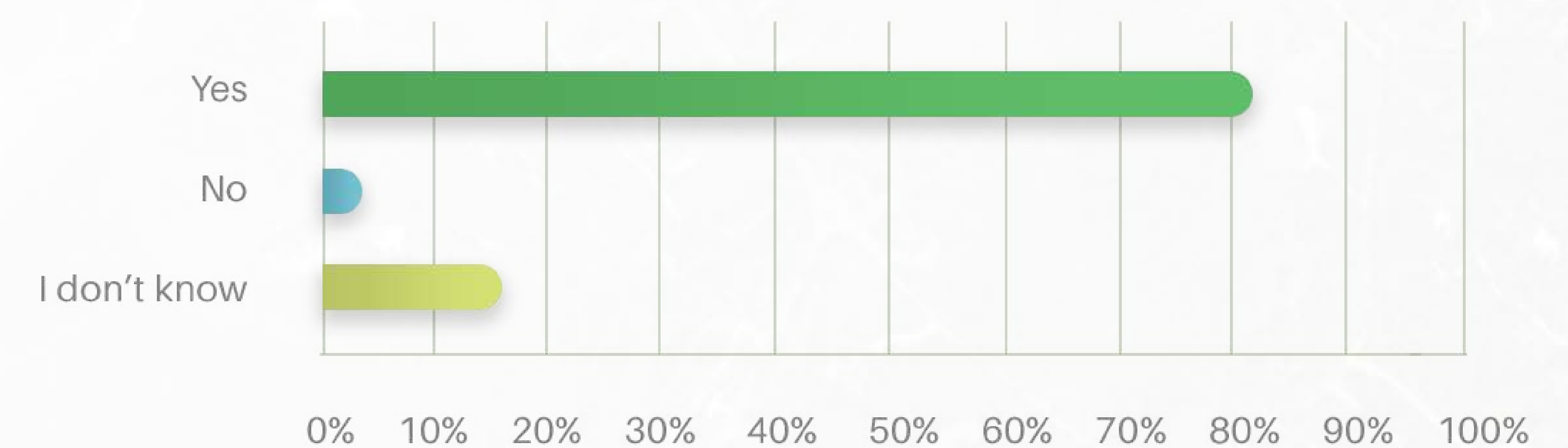
**Should Monomoy have a voice in the potential development of the Wannacomet property?**

Answered: 102 Skipped: 41



**If it were to proceed, should the proposed solar development include covenants to limit future development of the property?**

Answered: 102 Skipped: 41



95% of all respondents (97) expressed the importance to preserve, to the extent possible, open space on the Wannacomet property, while 91% (93) felt Monomoy as a community should have a voice in the project. 81% (83) supported the inclusion in covenants to limit future development, while 16% (16) stated they did not know, suggesting a need to know more about the project.

# RECOMMENDATIONS - OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

## 1 Support education and advocacy for better stewardship of public beaches

Explore options for education and advocacy to promote better stewardship of public beaches as a means to address challenges such as adherence to regulations, littering and damage to fragile beach ecosystems.

## 2 Explore ways to increase kayak and dinghy storage

To enhance the newly instituted permitting system to properly account for, and manage, the growing amount of recreational watercraft stored on Monomoy's beaches, explore opportunities for additional storage racks and greater access.

## 3 Support water quality initiatives in the harbor to preserve the environment and sustain recreational shellfishing

Greater education and advocacy efforts on the importance of higher water quality through addressing the use of fertilizers and hardscape runoff, and supporting eelgrass restoration projects in Nantucket Harbor, would increase community awareness and involvement.

## 4 Support the prohibition on private piers and docks

Respondents strongly supports the prohibition of any new piers or docks along the shoreline.

## 5 Support efforts to manage unattended vehicles on Cathcart Beach

Monomoy supports the Land Bank's prohibition of unattended vehicles on Cathcart Beach from June 15 to September 15 each year.

## 6 Propose the imposition of a "No Wake" zone for vessels at The Creeks

Imposition of a "no wake" zone for recreational vessels navigating the area of The Creeks would help protect the area's fragile salt marsh ecosystem.

## 7 Engage on siting and mitigation issues related to the Wyer's Valley Solar Energy Project

The Select Board should proactively communicate with the public about the planned solar project, and consider their views, including those of the Monomoy community. Every effort should be taken to mitigate its impacts and explore alternative locations and/or methodologies. If the project does move forward, future covenants limiting future development should be in place to protect the area from further development.

