

COMMUNITY CLIMATE DISCUSSION



[Oak Bluffs Climate & Energy Advisory Committee](#)

March 14, 2026 • Oak Bluffs Public Library



Ponds Under Pressure: Background

For over a year now, representatives from all the island towns have been working together as a Land Use Subcommittee of the Climate Action Plan (CAP) to address the CAP listed objective that "Each town adopts regulations for minimum disturbance %." The effort is to reduce clearcutting, save native vegetation and protect natural resources, as much as possible. The Subcommittee found that there is a strong need to guide development and minimize the disruption of inland vegetation for the following reasons:

1. Clean Water

Trees and vegetation absorb rainfall, filter pollutants, and feed clean water over our watersheds to our ponds and groundwater. Without trees, shrubs, and low growing vegetation, stormwater runoff will pollute our ponds and groundwater.

2. Character of the Community

The island's natural character shapes the way we live and experience every day. Without trees, shrubs, or grasslands, monotonous suburban landscapes will diminish the identity of the island. Tree-lined streets and property add to the privacy that homeowners highly desire.

3. Economy

The island's tourist economy depends on its natural and agricultural landscapes that attract residents and visitors. Clearing and grading without any guidance will remove the economic resources on which we depend.

4. Biodiversity

We value our unique ecosystems, including native plants, animals, insects, and even small microorganisms. Clearing native flora and fauna will wipe out the rich ecological resources that sustain human health and wellbeing.

5. Carbon Storage Capacity

Trees and vegetation sequester or lock away large amounts of heat-trapping carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Clearing will accelerate atmospheric warming and contribute to extreme drought, storm events, and sea level rise.

**Proposed OB Bylaw change • to be voted April 14, 2026 • OB Annual Town Meeting
(similar proposals coming to all Island towns)**

PURPOSE of the Oak Bluffs Proposed Bylaw Change*

To update and clarify the current bylaws surrounding erosion control. This update will specifically further clarify and manage land clearing and grading activities associated with development and significant site alteration with the goal of preserving our most environmentally significant trees, vegetation, and soils, preventing erosion and sedimentation into inland and coastal wetlands, ponds and other waterbodies, controlling stormwater runoff, and minimizing fragmentation of native wildlife habitat.

The goal of this bylaw is to make all land clearing intentional and planned.

* [Oak Bluffs Planning Board proposed Bylaw](#) (see **PB#3** & **PB#4** on pages 8 – 14 for full text)