

By Wendy Northcross

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## Cape already transitioning to a 'Blue Economy'

This is in response to an article in the Cape Cod Times ("Business dean: Cape needs to change to survive", Aug. 26, Page 1).

Dr. Elmore Alexander is 100 percent correct: To ensure a sustainable future, the Cape does need to change. However, the transformation has already begun. This is how:

Over the past few hundred years the Cape has undergone a series of economic eras and transitions, from fishing and agriculture to shipbuilding and whaling, and then tourism in the modern era.

For the better part of a century, Cape Cod thrived with a tourism/retirement-centered economy that leveraged its unique and immense natural resources with a geographic position near population centers in the Northeast megalopolis -- the most heavily urbanized region in the country (49 million people).

This strategy brought the Cape back from the brink of a resource failure-based, economic collapse at the end of the 19th century and has been successful in establishing Cape Cod as a world-class travel destination.

The Cape is now undergoing yet another transition as the region moves to supplement its destination economy with one that leverages its 559.6 miles of coastline, world-class research institutions, its quality of life and entrepreneurial spirit to build a sustainable future with private and public sector partners, based on what we are calling a "Blue Economy."

The Blue Economy is a broad descriptor that recognizes the vast role that water, both salt and fresh, plays in our everyday lives from economic, sociological, as well as physical and human geographic perspectives. It is understanding our relationship with the water resources surrounding us, how we interact, and finding a sustainable and symbiotic course for the future.

We believe that a core set of principles of a balanced economy, environmental stewardship and quality of life will provide a sustainable future for Cape Cod. We do this by maintaining our standing as a world-class travel destination with messaging that promotes all of the benefits of not only visiting Cape Cod, but embraces it as a desirable place to live, work, play and create.

With this secure foundation, we can leverage our existing water-based economy to attract and capture future opportunities in the water sector and related industries. We have on our shores what is arguably the premier ocean science and research community on the globe. Through the Blue Economy, we will work with this community of scientists to bring their innovations into the growing blue-tech business sector locally through innovative technology transfer partnerships with entrepreneurs.

Our Capewide challenge in confronting wastewater issues presents one of our greatest opportunities to be leaders in the burgeoning alternative wastewater solutions sector. As Dr. Elmore mentioned, AquaGen, a local algae-based water treatment technology, is leading the charge on this front.

Aquaculture Research Corp. in Dennis will combine a working business with the Living Lab concept, by educating young and old alike on aquaculture farming practices and disease resistance research while at the same time supporting the foundation of the region's shellfish aquaculture sector.

We are also working with our region's professional planners at the Cape Cod Commission to streamline the permitting process for blue-tech companies to get up and running quickly, and to update the Regional Policy Plan and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to reflect the importance of Blue Economy activities.

Over the coming months and years you will see results of this vision. We are planning a Startup Weekend in November focused on the Blue Economy to bring thinkers and doers together to conceptualize, validate and start new companies targeting the largest opportunities presented by the Blue Economy. We are in the planning phases of a venture fund focused on investing in Blue companies to incubate and accelerate their formation and growth with innovative company building curriculum and programming. Next spring we will bring the region together at the SmarterCape Summit 6 to develop the next phase of the Blue Economy.

We love Cape Cod, and believe it is a great place to live, work, play and create and are committed to work passionately with others to ensure a successful, thriving and sustainable Cape Cod. Stay tuned, it is an exciting blue future.

*Wendy Northcross is CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce.*