



To: MVRHS Committee, Superintendent, and Principal:

Mass Audubon opposes the use of synthetic turf for outdoor sports and activities on the High School playing fields and believes grass playing fields are a better alternative. Grass maintains a natural temperature, reduces rain runoff, filters stormwater, and when cared for properly, is safe for people and nature.

We are concerned about the use of hazardous materials for these fields as artificial turf can include lead, antimicrobials, and biocides and herbicides in addition to plastics. Grass is a viable alternative, especially with the support of the Field Fund to plan, install, and maintain natural fields.

Concerns about synthetic turf include the plastics and hazardous materials that go into them and their effects on people and wildlife. Plastic sheds or breakdowns from regular use and these microplastics become part of the soil and waters. Human digestive systems have now been shown to contain plastics that have been ingested up the food chain, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2018/10/news-plastics-microplastics-human-feces/>. With our sole source aquifer and reliance on our surface waters for food, tourism, and recreation, we must consider reducing plastics use in as many ways as possible.

Wildlife is also inordinately affected by plastics and microplastics in the environment. Necropsies of birds, turtles, and other animals almost always show plastics in their stomachs. There is also the heat caused by synthetic turf which affects people and animals alike. A recent study shows the vulnerability of insects to the increased temperatures that turf will create, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/nov/13/heatwaves-wipe-out-male-insect-fertility-beetles-study>

Mass Audubon believes in the benefits of being outside and the importance of healthy lands and waters for people and wildlife. Efforts to protect our environment and human health have been at the forefront for our work both locally and statewide.

On Martha's Vineyard, Mass Audubon maintains two properties, Felix Neck and Edgartown Great Pond Wildlife Sanctuaries that comprise almost 300 acres of wildlands. Our work in the community includes habitat and wildlife conservation, environmental education for children, and education programs, events, and activities for adults and families year-round.

The Island is special, which is why we have the Martha's Vineyard Commission and the numerous conservation organizations that collectively protect almost forty percent of the Island's lands. Please do the right thing for the environment, wildlife, and people and opt for natural grass.

Suzan Bellincampi  
Sanctuary Director  
Mass Audubon at Felix Neck

*Mass Audubon protects 38,000 acres of land throughout Massachusetts, saving birds and other wildlife, and making nature accessible to all. As Massachusetts' largest nature conservation nonprofit, we welcome more than a half million visitors a year to our wildlife sanctuaries and 20 nature centers. From inspiring hilltop views to breathtaking coastal landscapes, serene woods, and working farms, we believe in protecting our state's natural treasures for wildlife and for all people—a vision shared in 1896 by our founders, two extraordinary Boston women. Today, Mass Audubon is a nationally recognized environmental education leader, offering thousands of camp, school, and adult programs that get over 225,000 kids and adults outdoors every year. With more than 125,000 members and supporters, we advocate on Beacon Hill and beyond, and conduct conservation research to preserve the natural heritage of our beautiful state for today's and future generations.*