



Vineyard Conservation Society

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Martha's Vineyard Commission
33 New York Avenue
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October 2, 2019

RE: DRI Checklist Revision

Dear Commissioners,

The board of directors and staff of the Vineyard Conservation Society (VCS) wish to thank the Martha's Vineyard Commission for its leadership in adding overall house size to its list of DRI triggers in the current DRI Checklist revision (Version 14).

As a member-supported non-profit land conservation and environmental advocacy organization, VCS has been working for more than fifty years to preserve the natural resources and unique character of the Island. In more recent years, feedback from our membership has flagged the urgent need to reduce the impact of residential development through regulation of large houses.

The MVC's Island Plan analysis demonstrates that thousands of additional houses will likely be built on Martha's Vineyard under current zoning. Conservation efforts will reduce that number only modestly. Therefore, it is critical that such development be done wisely, which DRI review helps ensure. We support the addition of large houses to the DRI Checklist for at least three reasons:

1. There is a need to protect the Vineyard's scenic and ecological resources against the regional threat of large structures that would impair those values. Such protection is not currently assured through existing regulations.
2. Overly large houses consume more materials and energy, both during construction and throughout the life of the structure. Such over-consumption is especially egregious today in light of the strong and ever-growing local concern about climate change impacts.
3. Beyond the environmental concerns, the scale of the built environment on Martha's Vineyard – the relationship between structures and the natural landscape – is a defining component of Island character. Viewed purely from an economic perspective, over-development in general, and very large houses in particular, run the risk of "killing the golden goose."

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Brendan O'Neill
Executive Director