Search for the Vice President, Bay Science
Buzzards Bay Coalition
Marion, New Bedford, & Woods Hole, Massachusetts

THE SEARCH

The Buzzards Bay Coalition ("the Coalition"), a nonprofit organization headquartered in New Bedford, MA dedicated to protecting and restoring Buzzards Bay, Vineyard Sound, and their watershed lands, seeks a strategic, entrepreneurial, and collaborative leader to serve as its new Vice President, Bay Science ("Vice President"). The Coalition is on a bold growth trajectory fueled by a transformative capital campaign, creating an opportunity to reimagine the scope and deepen the impact of its foundational Bay Science program. Reporting to the President and Chief Executive Officer, the Vice President will provide strategic and innovative oversight of Bay Science to drive organizational growth in alignment with Coalition priorities and ambitions.

The Coalition is home to the oldest and largest, continually running, coastal water quality monitoring program in New England. The Coalition is also the largest private landowner in southeastern Massachusetts, providing unequaled access and site control for science activities. The Bay Science program ("Bay Science") is indispensable to the Coalition's work, providing the scientific basis for all aspects of its advocacy, conservation, and restoration efforts. The Vice President will join the Coalition at a pivotal moment in its growth and will play a key role in elevating its national profile, driving excellence across all scientific functions and building relationships with key external stakeholders to solve critical problems facing the Bay, solidifying the Coalition's reputation in modern coastal science and attracting top scientific talent.

The Vice President will be an essential partner to the President, senior leadership team, and Board of Directors. The Vice President's portfolio includes all aspects of Bay Science's ecosystem monitoring and applied research functions and, to this end, will ensure rigorous scientific standards while strategically guiding scientific priorities, representing the Coalition externally, and growing resources and partnerships.

Working closely with the President, they will set the direction for Bay Science, allocating fiscal resources to new programs, staff, and equipment that will support expanded capacity and modernization.

The successful candidate will possess a genuine appreciation for the Coalition's conservation mission, as well as related scientific expertise. They will be an established scientist as well as a strategic leader with extensive management experience, strong relationship-building and recruiting capabilities, and the ability to develop programs and projects that contribute to the Coalition's mission and scientific reach. Experience with field monitoring, modern research technologies, and the competitive funding landscape will be greatly beneficial.

The Buzzards Bay Coalition has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national search firm, to assist in this important search. All inquiries, applications, and nominations for this opportunity should be directed in confidence to the search firm as indicated at the end of this document.

BUZZARDS BAY COALITION

The Buzzards Bay Coalition ("the Coalition") is a membership-supported non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of the Buzzards Bay ("the Bay") ecosystem for all through education, conservation, research, and advocacy. With operations throughout the entire Buzzards Bay and Vineyard Sound watersheds, the Coalition works to protect the region's coastal, river, and drinking water quality and the upland forests, wetlands, and streams that support a healthy watershed and bay.

The Coalition is currently staffed by a team of 40 professionals, aided by hundreds of volunteers and supported by more than 15,000 members. The dedicated staff is broken into four program teams (Watershed Protection, Clean Water Advocacy, Outdoor Exploration, and Bay Science) and four support programs (Advancement, Public Engagement, Operations, and Finance). In addition to President Mark Rasmussen's leadership, the Coalition is further guided by a volunteer Board of Directors, as well as a Leadership Council of community members who provide expertise, contacts, and resources to advance the mission.

For over a decade, the Coalition has been on an impressive growth trajectory, dramatically expanding its reach and impact. Years of ambitious land acquisition efforts have enabled the Coalition to emerge as the largest land conservation program in southeastern Massachusetts. To date, the Coalition has protected more than 13,000 acres of land in the region—over 2,100 acres in 2025 alone. The diverse land holdings provide unparalleled site access to the region's forests, streams, and freshwater and coastal wetlands for science activities and research.

Programs

Buzzards Bay and its watershed face serious threats, including nitrogen pollution related to inadequate wastewater infrastructure, poorly planned development, and climate change. To respond to the complex and interrelated challenges on the Bay and in the watershed, the Coalition runs four programs:

- **Watershed Protection** works to protect the 431-square-mile Buzzards Bay watershed through land conservation and ecological restoration.
- **Clean Water Advocacy** fights historical and contemporary threats to Buzzards Bay, from oil spills, to nitrogen pollution, to rising sea levels through robust advocacy work across local, state, and federal levels.
- **Bay Science** provides data on the health of Buzzards Bay's harbors, coves, and rivers to better understand the ecosystem and its response to human-related impacts to guide restoration and protection.
- **Outdoor Exploration** maintains a community access focus in the preservation and development of Coalition property. The Coalition runs school programs and free, hands-on, outdoor activities, and its four Centers offer high-quality, on-the-water programming.

Financial Overview

The Coalition enjoys a strong financial position marked by growing revenues and significant assets consisting largely of conservation properties, investments, and other land, buildings, equipment, and vessels. In fiscal year 2025, the Coalition's operating expenses were $19.6 million, with approximately 83 cents of every dollar going towards mission-related programs. On the revenue side, total operating revenue and support in fiscal year 2025 was $27.7 million, with $18 million coming from government grants and contracts. As of June 30, 2026, the endowment stood at $23 million.

Leadership

President Mark Rasmussen

Mark grew up on Buzzards Bay and has dedicated his career to making the greatest possible impact on its restoration and protection. President since 1998, Mark's path with the Coalition flows through an oyster farm, Woods Hole science missions, and positions as a staffer at the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management and associate at the Stockholm Environment Institute. He is a graduate of Boston College and Harvard University.

New Bedford, MA

Located approximately 60 miles south of Boston and with a population just over 101,000, New Bedford boasts 18 miles of shoreline and a rich maritime and abolitionist history. In the first half of the 19th century, New Bedford was one of the world's most important whaling ports. The whaling industry, along with textile manufacturing, made New Bedford one of the world's wealthiest cities per capita in the mid-1800s; however, the waning of these activities led to economic decline in the 20th century. Today, New Bedford is seeing a renaissance and resurgence as the city leans into its maritime past and history of promoting equality. Sites that explore and celebrate the city's deep connections to the sea abound, in addition to artist studios, performance spaces, and restaurants, not to mention incredible parks and recreational areas, all making New Bedford an exciting place to visit, work, and live.

BAY SCIENCE AT THE BUZZARDS BAY COALITION

The Bay Science program ("Bay Science") is indispensable to advancing the mission of the Coalition, guiding all aspects of advocacy, conservation, and restoration. It is comprised of two core functions:

1. **Ecosystem Monitoring:** Starting in 1992, the Coalition's water quality monitoring program has provided data to study the health of Buzzards Bay and its harbors, coves, and rivers. This Bay Health data forms the foundation of all the Coalition's work to restore and protect the Bay and is the largest, longest-running coastal monitoring effort in New England.

   Weekly in the summer, the Coalition monitors over 300 stations in 30 major harbors, coves, and rivers across Buzzards Bay—an area covering more than one-quarter of the Massachusetts coast. This data helps the Coalition and local decision-makers track trends in Bay and Sound health, assess restoration action effectiveness, and identify emerging problems. Monitoring programs include the Baywatchers Citizen Science Program, Nutrient Monitoring Program, Continuous Sensor Network, Buzzards Bay Rivers, and the River Herring Monitoring Program.

2. **Applied Research**: Coalition assets provide a rich base for researchers to address critical Bay conservation issues. The applied research function aims to implement projects that solve these problems and help advance regulatory protections. The Coalition currently has one postdoctoral fellow working on special applied research projects and plans to recruit additional researchers under the leadership of the new Vice President, Bay Science. Recent special projects include analyzing the potential of cranberry bog restoration, developing strategies to prevent climate change-driven salt marsh loss, and assessing successful approaches to eelgrass restoration.

Facilities and Equipment

The Coalition's facilities and equipment provide the space and tools to carry out Bay Science program objectives. They include a Science and Field Operations Center in Marion, the Gidwitz Barn at the Wheeler Forest Reserve in Woods Hole, and the research vessel Helen K.

Financial Resources

Bay Science operates with a $1 million annual budget comprised of government grants and private philanthropy. It is further supported by a variety of endowment funds, totaling $11 million as of September 2026.

The Coalition is currently pursuing a five-year (2026 – 2030) capital campaign, which includes specific targets for growing the Bay Science program's endowment by $15 million, as well as funding for science staff, programs, and equipment by $7 million.

ROLE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, BAY SCIENCE

Reporting to the President and Chief Executive Officer and serving on the senior management team, the Vice President, Bay Science ("Vice President") will provide strategic and administrative oversight of all aspects of the Bay Science program. Working collaboratively with the President, the Vice President will bring vision and an entrepreneurial mindset to sustainably grow Bay Science while redefining its scale, influence, and scientific ambitions in alignment with the Coalition's strategic goals.

As the Coalition enters an exciting period of fundraising momentum, the Vice President will be a key partner to the President and the Board of Directors, responsible for guiding the Coalition's scientific priorities toward high-impact opportunities and positioning the organization as a leader in coastal restoration science. The Vice President will build and steward relationships with external partners including government agencies, academic institutions, and peer organizations.

The Vice President will manage two direct reports—the directors of ecosystem monitoring and applied research—and their respective program staff, and will partner closely with peers in advancement, public engagement, finance, and operations. Given the Coalition's highly collaborative, hands-on culture, the successful candidate will be comfortable rolling up their sleeves, engaging directly with staff, and building relationships to ensure monitoring and research efforts effectively support mission delivery.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR THE VICE PRESIDENT, BAY SCIENCE

The Vice President will be expected to address the following opportunities and challenges:

Advance and Elevate the Coalition's Scientific Reach

The Buzzards Bay Coalition's long-running coastal monitoring dataset and significant land assets make it a premier destination for coastal restoration research. With this strong and storied foundation, the Vice President will be tasked with broadening the Coalition's national influence and profile, solidifying it as a premier hub for modern coastal science. They will serve as a credible and engaging representative of Bay Science through presentations to government agencies, municipal bodies, community stakeholders, and professional conferences. Orienting the Coalition toward focused, meaningful research priorities, the Vice President will further distinguish the Coalition as a dynamic and sought-after scientific authority.

Provide Strategic Scientific and Resource Oversight to Facilitate Programmatic Growth

Leveraging significant planned investments in new science staff, programs, and equipment, as well as the Coalition's numerous recent land acquisitions and strong fundraising momentum, the Vice President will execute a renewed and strategic vision for Bay Science. Working closely with the President, the Vice President will set visionary and relevant scientific priorities to guide the expansion of Bay Science and attract top scientists to advance the Coalition's important work. To support these strategic growth initiatives, they will partner closely with the Vice President of Advancement, identifying and securing

opportunities to expand Bay Science's fiscal resources. The Vice President will be expected to bring a nuanced understanding of federal, state, and philanthropic funding sources and a track record of cultivating relationships with grant-making agencies to sustain and increase external support. To this end, it will also be important for the Vice President to possess financial acumen related to areas including budget creation and evaluation and cost-effective program delivery.

Leverage Technology to Drive Excellence in Monitoring and Data Management

As the Coalition increasingly incorporates real-time sensors and other advanced technology into its ecosystem monitoring function, the Vice President will evaluate, implement, and manage new instrumentation. They will maintain a standard of excellence across all monitoring efforts, ensuring rigorous adherence to collection schedules, data delivery, and quality assurance. Additionally, there is significant potential for the Vice President to optimize data management processes to strengthen monitoring capacity and data integrity. As AI technologies continue to develop, it will be critical that the Vice President harness these tools where appropriate in field monitoring and data management systems.

Build and Refine the Applied Research Function

The Vice President will have a unique opportunity to build out the applied research function and recruit the next generation of Coalition scientists, including the inaugural Director of Applied Research. Capitalizing on the Coalition's historical impact and expansive assets, the Vice President will develop partnerships with universities, research institutions, and other scientific organizations to attract top scientists and recruit postdoctoral and guest researchers who can address mission-critical issues. In doing so, the Vice President will bolster the Coalition's ability to implement projects that solve urgent problems and advance regulatory protections.

As sea level rise continues to threaten New England's coastal ecosystems, the Vice President will need to develop a particular research focus on salt marsh resilience. The Vice President will work with the applied research team to define and advance monitoring, mitigation, and adaptation methods to guarantee marshes remain part of the bay ecosystem while simultaneously leveraging this critical issue to attract new funding and researchers.

Lead, Develop, and Mentor the Bay Science Team

Bay Science staff are engaged in critical work and strongly committed to the Coalition's conservation mission. As the Vice President shepherds the Bay Science program into the future, they will be responsible for thoughtfully expanding the team to meet strategic priorities and increased capacity. The existing team is comprised of both long-tenured staff and more recent hires, which necessitates championing existing talent while also serving as a mentor to new employees. Across all functions, the Vice President will foster collaboration both within their teams and with other Coalition programs. By cultivating a relationship-driven culture and providing thoughtful mentorship, the Vice President will build a high-performing Bay Science team positioned to advance the Coalition's conservation goals, elevate its national profile, and deepen its scientific impact.

QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

While no one candidate will embody every quality, the successful candidate will bring many of the following qualifications:

- PhD in Coastal Ecology, Marine Biology, Oceanography, or related field is required.
- Significant administrative leadership and management experience with progressive levels of responsibility.
- Experience overseeing or supporting field-based, applied scientific research activities, ideally related to coastal ecology/biogeochemistry, marine biology, oceanography, or a related field. Familiarity with complex coastal water quality monitoring programs is a plus.
- Ability to set a strategic vision and serve as a collaborative leader to advance the Coalition and its national reputation.
- Programmatic financial management experience and a corresponding understanding of funding sources and revenue streams.
- Proven record of securing competitive federal and philanthropic funding and an eagerness to increase resources for the Bay Science program.
- Strong written and oral communication skills, with a record of publication and public representation at professional, scientific, governmental, and community venues.
- Experience successfully building and managing partnerships across academic, governmental, and nonprofit sectors.
- Familiarity with leveraging current and emerging technologies to gather sound data and produce scientific results consistent with the Coalition's mission and priorities.
- Strong change management skills demonstrated by a track record of establishing new systems, processes, and policies and the ability to take concepts to action in an effective manner. Experience supporting and scaling a program or organization in a time of growth would be a plus.
- Positive and collaborative attitude and an entrepreneurial mindset. Ability to balance strategy and tactical operations to thrive in a lean and agile environment.
- Demonstrated success in building, developing, and leading teams. Strong candidates will exhibit a highly collaborative and compassionate management style.
- Strong relationship-building skills and a genuine desire to engage colleagues across an organization to understand operational realities and support mission success.

COMPENSATION AND LOCATION

The salary range for this role is $175,000 – 200,000, commensurate with skills and experience. This full-time, in-person position is based in Marion, MA at the organization's Science and Field Operations Center, but will also spend time in New Bedford, MA at the Coalition's headquarters and in Woods Hole, MA.

APPLICATIONS, INQUIRIES, AND NOMINATIONS

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent via the Isaacson, Miller website: https://www.imsearch.com/open-searches/buzzards-bay-coalition/vice-president-bay-science.

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The Buzzards Bay Coalition is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. All qualified persons are encouraged to apply and will be considered without regard to race, national origin, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, or veteran status.

This document has been prepared based on the information provided by the Buzzards Bay Coalition. The material presented in this leadership profile should be relied on for informational purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, the original source documents and information provided by the Buzzards Bay Coalition would supersede any conflicting information in this document.