Draft as of 10/9/12

Analysis of Eastham Voter Comments on Proposed Municipal Water Project

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Eastham Water Resource Committee

Purpose

- Characterize voter comments to help understand why the project was rejected*

* Not intended to debate the validity of the comments today

Caveats

- Video of the Public Hearing on April 28th is not on "Video on Demand"
  - May have been other relevant comments
- Moderator limited comments to things not addressed by prior speakers
  - Cannot gauge which were most important to voters

Voter Comments

Comment	Number
Came to vote on the full proposal ($111M) but it was changed to $38M just before the town meeting. Not enough time to consider the implications. Changed without public comment.	2
Cost and equity – cost is excessive for a small town and it is not equitable to people on fixed income.	2
Need to correct the real problem, which is failed septics and cesspools.	2
Data shows the quality of water is deteriorating even with title 5 septics. Fixing septics isn't the solution. It takes 100 years for the aquifer to move to the bay as it picks up more effluent and waste.	2
Switched from betterments to taxes without public comment. Can pay off a betterment but taxes don't go away.	2
Poor water quality will eventually become a problem and impact resale values. People won't buy in Eastham without clean water.	2

Voter Comments

Comment	Number
Fire hydrants would reduce insurance costs ($400/year cited) and make us safer.	2
Declining tax burden shown is for Phase 1 only. Real burden will either be much higher with subsequent phases or most of the town won't be served. Decide on all or nothing at all.	2
We only test for nitrates but there are other pollutants, such as VOCs, gas stations have leaked, no tests for pharmaceuticals, household chemicals. Renters dump nasty things down toilets.	2
Crisis is made up. Fewer failures. Septics replaced when houses change hands. Of twelve wells over 10 ppm, all but one had either failed septic on property or was near one.	1
VOCs are a dump problem. Give people around the dump town water.	1
Public wells have their problems as well, including chemical treatments and pollutants similar to private wells.	1

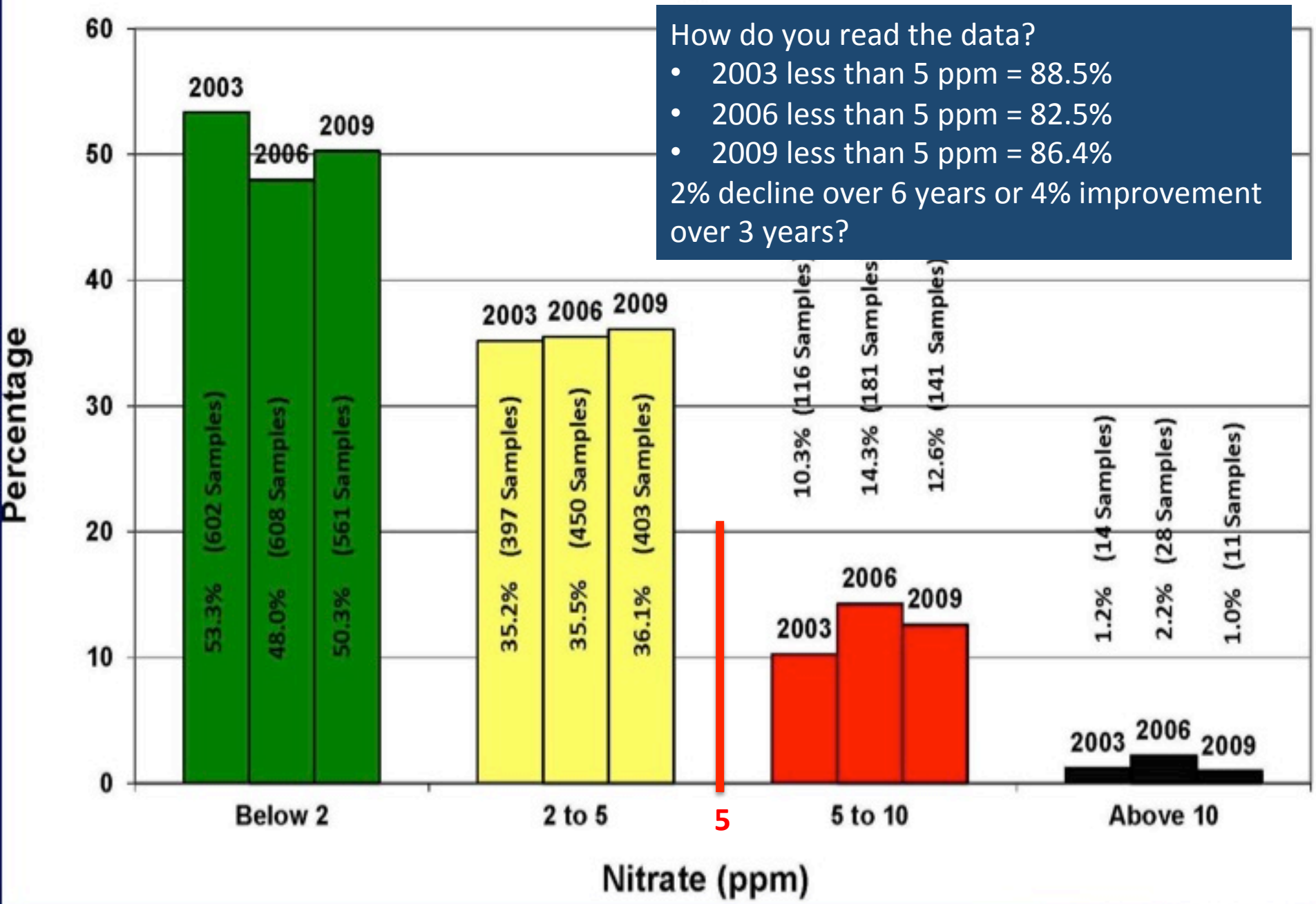
Observations

- Proposal was changed just before the meeting without public comment
  - Resulted in reduced credibility
  - Some people would have voted for full proposal
- Disagreement on whether or not a health issue exists
  - Small number of properties that exceed EPA limit
  - Existence of pollutants with nitrates seemed speculative
- Uncertainty over whether the other phases would be implemented
- Disagreement on cost versus benefit
- Final vote was 289 for, 485 against

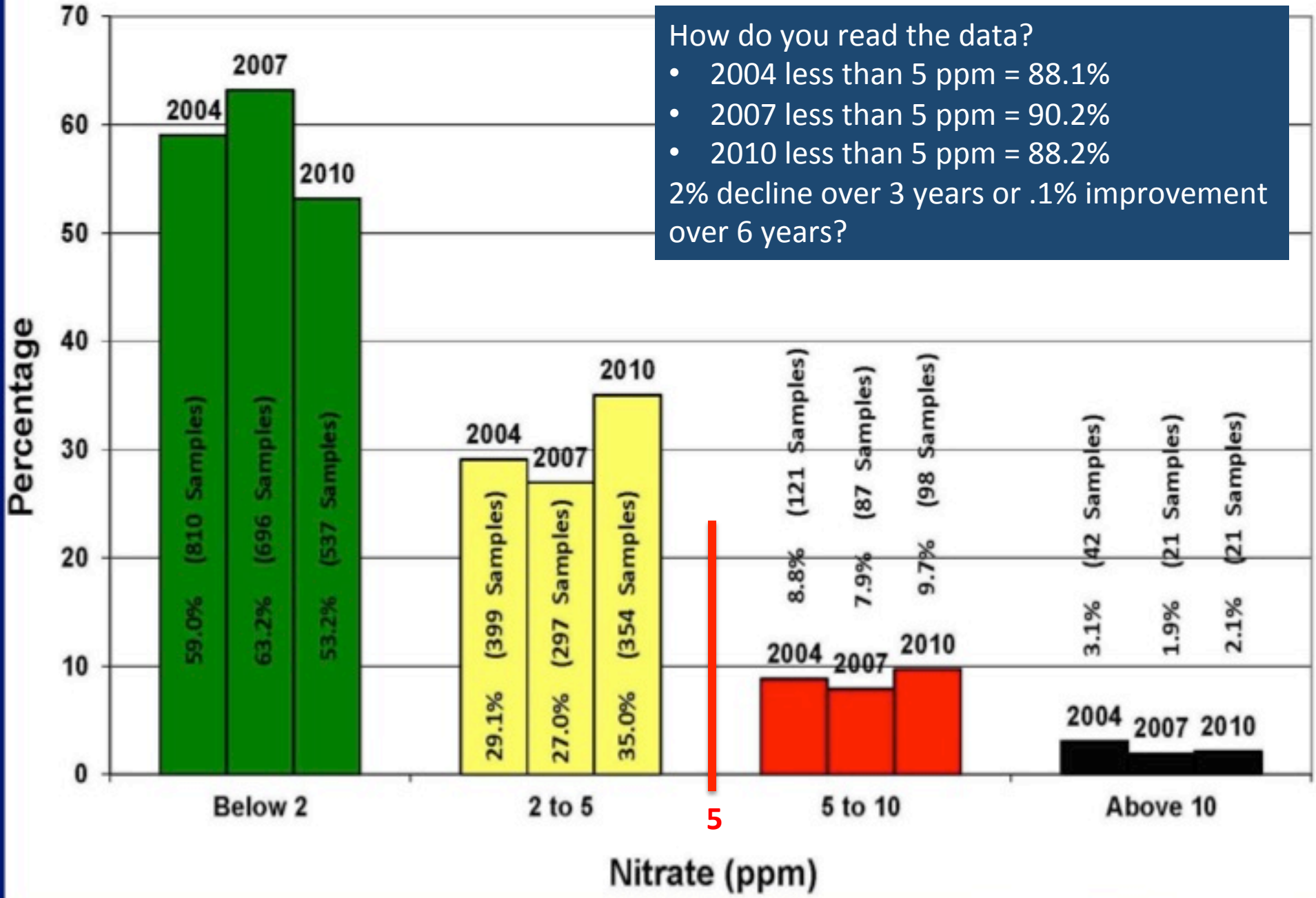
Summary

- People were not convinced enough that there is a pressing health issue
- Late changes to the proposal likely did not influence the 217 votes needed to cross over for a two-thirds majority

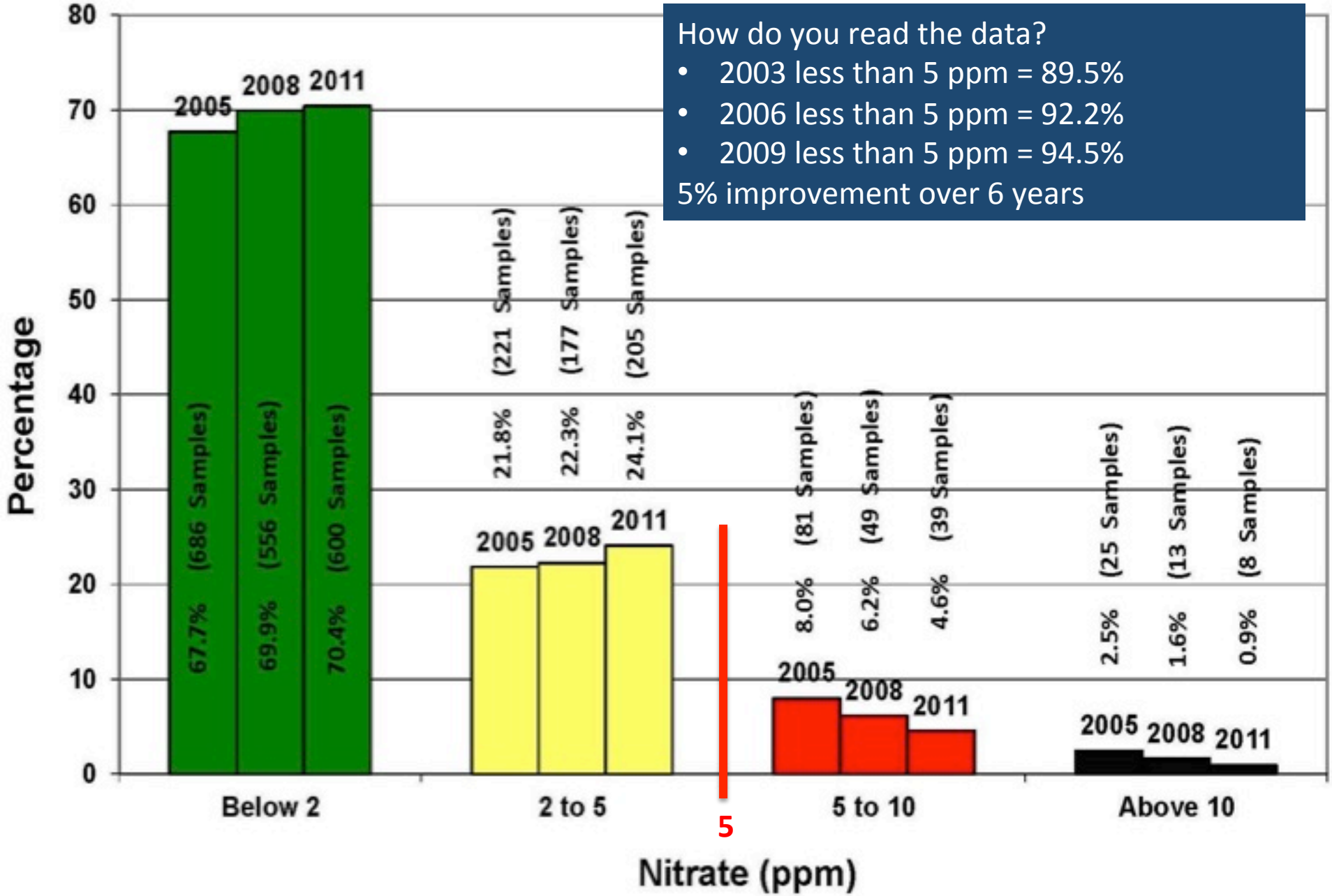
North Eastham 3 Cycle Year Review



Central Eastham 3 Cycle Year Review



South Eastham 3 Cycle Year Review



Possible Follow-on Actions

- Delve deeper into the potential health issues
  - E.g., extensive testing in selected wells > 5 ppm
- Investigate how long it really takes the aquifer to clear (20 years? 100 years?)
- Compare 2012 3 cycle year trend data
- Make a color-coded "weather map" showing locations of wells with > 5 ppm
- Create bylaw to correct failed systems
- Consider town water supply around the dump where the health issue is clearest
  - Everyone uses the dump, everyone should contribute to the solution