



The RIVER Advocate

HEALTHY RIVERS FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

FALL 2018

Rivers win big in state budget

We did it! We made the case, and our legislators listened. For the first time in over a decade, state legislators significantly increased operating funding for the Massachusetts environmental agencies charged with protecting and restoring our rivers. After enduring many years of staff and budget cuts, all three of our budget priorities received additional funding for FY2019. These agencies are the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the Division of Ecological Restoration and the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Office of Water Resources.

These funds will directly help improve river health, climate resiliency, and public health through more removals of outdated and dangerous dams, culvert replacements that improve fish passage, expanded water quality monitoring programming, enforcement of laws that protect against water pollution, and increased flood, drought and climate change resiliency planning. These programs are critical to water protection, river restoration, and climate change adaptation in our state.

Finally, we'd like acknowledge the strong support for these programs by our colleagues at the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers and Scientist



Before and after photos of the Bartlett Dam removal on Wekepeke Brook in Lancaster, MA. Photos by the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration.



Legislature votes to keep water pollution program with EPA - again!

Earlier this year, thanks to the advocacy of our organization and our members, the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture sent to study legislation proposed by Governor Baker to transfer authority from the federal government (Environmental Protection Agency) to the state (Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection) to regulate water pollution. This means the bill (H.2777) did not move forward during this session.

Mass Rivers and nearly all our member groups strongly oppose authorizing the state to take over water pollution control programs from the federal government at this time. Proposed funding for this program was unstable and insufficient, program design was inadequate, and this change could harm water quality – permanently – in our state. We made the case for our rivers, and once again our legislators

listened.

We are pleased that our work with the legislature also increased awareness about staffing and programmatic needs for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and led to more funding to support MassDEP's current water programs. Whether or not Governor Baker tries again to take control of this water pollution program from EPA, it is crucial that MassDEP has sufficient funding to protect our rivers.

A big thank you to you, our member organizations and individual members for testifying, sitting down to talk with legislators, signing on to our letters or sending your own, sending out action alerts, and calling or emailing your legislators to educate them about this issue!



OCTOBER, 2018

From the Director

TEN YEARS OUT FRONT FOR OUR RIVERS

In 2007, the founders of the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance created a new organization to fill a persistent gap in the state's environmental advocacy landscape.

At the time, land, transportation, and energy, advocates were working actively at the state level to improve funding and policies to advance their causes, and our state benefited from their efforts.

Rivers...not so much. While Massachusetts was fortunate to have about 20 watershed organizations working diligently to improve their local rivers, most lacked the resources to take on state policy. Without an organization that worked consistently on behalf of all the state's rivers, when decisions were made about water, the state's 10,000 miles of rivers lacked a seat at the table.

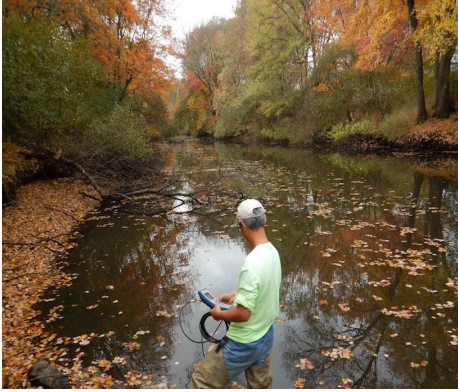
With your support, together we've claimed that seat for our rivers. In the ten years since the creation of Mass Rivers, we've shepherded an improvement in state policies that keep more water in our rivers, increased funding to repair our aging infrastructure, educated civil servants and consultants on engineering solutions that protect wildlife and public safety, improved drought response, and increased funding for state environmental protection agencies. Along the way we have successfully opposed policies that would have hurt our rivers. Mass Rivers is now the go-to organization on water, serving as a resource for our colleagues in the environmental movement, government staff, legislators, and others. We're proud to be fulfilling our founders' vision.

Equally important, the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance connects, convenes, and strengthens our 72 member groups. Mass Rivers staff stay in close touch with these organizations to make sure our priorities match theirs. We owe our success to the vision of our founders, the hard work and talent of our organizational members and our loyal, generous individual donors. Rivers – and the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance – had an unusually successful year in 2018. You can read the good news in this issue of The River Advocate. Thank you again for your support, and I look forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting and Dinner on December 5.

Julia

Mass Rivers Organizational Members:

Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Belmont Citizens Forum
Berkshire Environmental Action Team
Berkshire Natural Resources Council
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate
Blackstone River Coalition
Boxborough Conservation Trust
Buzzards Bay Coalition
Center for Coastal Studies
Charles River Conservancy
Charles River Watershed Association
Charlestown Waterfront Coalition
Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council
Clean River Project
Clean Water Action
Connecticut River Watershed Council
Conservation Law Foundation
Deerfield River Watershed Trout Unlimited
Environment Massachusetts
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Essex County Greenbelt Association
Friends of the Blue Hills
Friends of the Assabet River NWR
Greater Northfield Watershed Association
Green Decade Newton
Groundwork Lawrence
Hoosic River Revival
Hoosic River Watershed Association
Hop Brook Protection Association
Housatonic Valley Association
Ipswich River Watershed Association
Jones River Watershed Association
Kestrel Land Trust
League of Women Voters Massachusetts
Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust
Mass Audubon
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
Massachusetts Watershed Coalition
Merrimack River Watershed Council
Millers River Watershed Council
Mystic River Watershed Association
Nashua River Watershed Association
Neponset River Watershed Association
North and South Rivers Watershed Association
OARS, for the Assabet, Sudbury, & Concord Rivers
Ocean River Institute
Parker River Clean Water Association
River Merrimack
Save the Bay - Narragansett Bay Riverkeeper
Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition
Shawsheen River Watershed Association
Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter
Sudbury Valley Trustees
Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council
Taunton River Watershed Alliance
Taunton River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council
Ten Mile River Watershed Council
The Nature Conservancy
Trout Unlimited, Greater Boston Chapter
Trout Unlimited, Pioneer Valley Chapter
Walden Woods Project
Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee (WSCAC)
Watershed Action Alliance of Southeastern MA
Weir River Watershed Association
Westfield River Watershed Association
Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee
Westport River Watershed Alliance



Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection staff sample for water quality measurements on the Neponset River. Photo by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

Long term funding secured for rivers

This year when the state prepared their five-year capital budget for environmental programs, known as the “Environmental Bond,” Mass Rivers worked with legislators to ensure that key river programs would have the resources they needed over the coming years. Thanks to our advocacy efforts and the work of key partner organizations, we doubled the allocated funding for two crucial programs for river protection in Massachusetts: the Division of Ecological Restoration and the Department of Conservation and Recreation Aquatic Invasives Management Program. The Department of Environmental Protection also received a significant increase in funding, a portion of which will support the expansion of their water quality monitoring program.

This increased funding will enable improved management and removal of aquatic invasive plants, more urban river restoration projects, increased cranberry bog restoration initiatives, expanded water quality monitoring and research, and removal of more failing dams and culverts. These exciting projects will improve environmental health and climate resiliency in Massachusetts for years to come.

Federal lawsuit ends in victory for rivers

Following a lawsuit filed by Mass Rivers and nine co-plaintiff environmental groups, a long-awaited federal stormwater permit went into effect for Massachusetts on July 1st. The permit requires cities and towns to take steps to protect waterways from polluted stormwater runoff. “Stormwater runoff,” or rain and snow-melt that runs over streets, yards, farms or rooftops, does not soak into the ground. Stormwater often contains a mixture of pollutants that flows down storm drains into waterways the public relies on for drinking water and recreation.

At stake in our lawsuit was the revised Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System, or MS4 permit, which was originally supposed to take effect in July 2017. Two days before its effective date, then U.S. EPA Chief Scott Pruitt unilaterally delayed implementing the permit for another year, even though it was already 10 years overdue. In response, we sued the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), arguing that Pruitt’s action was illegal, undermined protections to the environment, and put the health of Massachusetts residents and water bodies at risk. The watershed associations in our lawsuit included the Connecticut River Conservancy, Ipswich River Watershed Association, Jones River Watershed Association, Merrimack River Watershed Council, Mystic River Watershed Association, Neponset River Watershed Association, North and South Rivers Watershed Association, OARS and Taunton River Watershed Alliance.

Faced with our lawsuit, EPA chose not to further delay the permit’s implementation, and on July 1, 2018, allowed the stormwater permit to go into effect. The revised MS4 permit requires towns to update their stormwater management plans, monitor outfall pipes, and prioritize cleanup of the most pressing problems, such as the discharge of untreated sewage into nearby waterways via storm drains.

We were pleased with this outcome and would like to thank our excellent legal team who represented Mass Rivers and the co-plaintiffs in this case, Kevin Cassidy of Earthrise Law Center and Access to Justice Fellow Irene C. Freidel.



Stormwater outfall



A special thank you to our summer Mass Rivers Policy Research Interns, Kayla Patel (UCLA '17) and Thomas Coughlin (UMass Amherst '20).

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MASSACHUSETTS Rivers Alliance



Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Mass Rivers' mission is to protect and restore rivers across the Commonwealth.

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Andrea Franz, *Treasurer*
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Gabby Queenan, *Policy Director*
Dani Keith, *Operations Manager*

Save the date!

Mark your calendars for this year's Annual Meeting and Dinner, Wednesday, December 5, 6-9pm at the Beech Street Center in Belmont. We'll be celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act with nationally-known photographer Tim Palmer and we are delighted to honor five river champions: State Senator Anne Gobi and State Representative Smitty Pignatelli; attorneys Irene Freidel and Kevin Cassidy; and Nashua River Watershed Association Executive Director Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell. Visit our website for details and to register. We look forward to seeing you!

