

# RECLAIMING THE MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED – TOGETHER

## THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

### ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Mystic River Watershed is one of eleven newly selected locations for the nation's Urban Waters Federal Partnership. This partnership will reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve our nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits. Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will:

- Break down federal program silos to promote more efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership, by engaging and serving community partners.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local economies to create local jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

Led by these federal agencies and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council and White House Council on Environmental Quality, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the White House's place-based efforts, including the **Partnership for Sustainable Communities**, to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the nation. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership also advances the work of the **America's Great Outdoors** Initiative (<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>).

For more information, visit [www.urbanwaters.gov](http://www.urbanwaters.gov)

### ABOUT THE MYSTIC RIVER PARTNERSHIP

The Mystic River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership will focus on improved water quality as well as increased access to public open space in the watershed. This Partnership greatly enhances and strengthens the ongoing efforts of the Mystic River Watershed Initiative Steering Committee and leverages more support for EPA's Initiative. EPA will be working with USGS, HUD, ACOE, and FEMA. Find out more about EPA's Mystic River watershed Initiative at: [www.epa.gov/mysticriver](http://www.epa.gov/mysticriver).

### WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

In an effort to improve water quality, provide safe and public access, and restore the watershed's ecosystem, federal and/or local projects the Partnership is currently engaged in include:

**Porous Pavement** – In 2012, EPA Region 1 used regional and national technical assistance funds to construct an educational porous pavement parking lot in Arlington, Massachusetts, in the Mystic River Watershed. EPA and the town will track the success of this type of green infrastructure BMP in New England while promoting its use in surrounding watershed communities. A video detailing the project can be found at:

<http://www.epa.gov/mysticriver/porouspavementproject.html>.

**Chelsea Green Infrastructure** – In January 2012, EPA awarded a \$50,000 technical assistance contract to help the City of Chelsea expand the use of green infrastructure. The contract completed an audit of the city's ordinances, developed green infrastructure guidelines and a workshop for the city's Boards, and produced a public outreach brochure. This was amplified by a \$68,000 green infrastructure planning grant awarded by the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission through a Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND THE MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED

The Mystic River Watershed is one of the most densely populated urban river watersheds in the country and drains an area of approximately 76 square miles and 21 municipalities north of Boston. It is home to three superfund sites and several environmental justice communities. The Mystic River Watershed is challenged by water quality problems including elevated bacteria levels, excessive nutrients, contaminated sediments, and industrial pollution. Through this partnership, we plan to improve this watershed so that it can be celebrated for environmental, educational, cultural and economic benefits.

**Equipment Loans** – Over the years, EPA has loaned nearly \$14,000 worth of monitoring equipment to the Mystic River Watershed in support of baseline and hotspot monitoring. The agency has analyzed over 2,000 samples for *E. coli* and *Enterococcus* bacteria and has deployed a real-time cyanobacteria monitoring buoy in the Mystic River Watershed for the past three years.

**Enforcement** – EPA enforcement efforts have stopped over 14,000 gallons per day of sewage from being discharged to the watershed through illicit connections.

**Water Quality Report Cards** – EPA Region 1 has been issuing the Mystic River Watershed a water quality Report Card based on bacterial contamination since 2006. The report card is a collaborative effort between EPA and the Mystic River Watershed Association and informs the public about water quality issues as well as identifies watershed areas of concern.

## WHAT'S NEXT

**CSOs/SSOs and Flooding** – During times of extreme rainfall from large storms, flooding is a significant issue in the Mystic River Watershed. There are both active Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) and Sanitary Sewer Overflows (SSOs) in the watershed that do overflow after heavy rains. In some areas, residents are impacted by sewage backed up in yards and basements. FEMA and USGS are active in this watershed, and will be important federal partners as we identify ways to deal with flow and flooding problems throughout the watershed.

**Stormwater Management** – The Water Quality Work Group is focused on stormwater management and preparing communities throughout the watershed for EPA's anticipated Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. They recently submitted a draft memo to the Steering Committee that identifies strategies to improve SSO reporting by communities as well as enhance public education and notification of overflow events.

**Open Space** – The Open Space Work Group has identified three initial priority sites where the group is focusing its efforts to improve and increase public access to open space in the lower stretches of the Mystic River Watershed. In these highly urbanized and industrialized communities, there is limited public open space and very few residents have access to the waterfront. This group is focused on creating access to open space in the Malden River, a tributary to the Mystic River (community impacts to Everett, Malden, and Medford, MA), while simultaneously working with the Water Quality Work Group to understand use risks associated with legacy pollution and sediment contamination. It is anticipated that this project will be one where EPA, ACOE, and HUD would participate and coordinate effort.

## THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The partnership includes: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of the Army (Army Corps of Engineers), U.S. Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Transportation

**For more information on the Mystic River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership, please contact the lead agency representative or local organization:**

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