

Mystic River Watershed Initiative

Mission Statement & 2015/2016 Joint Priorities

Mission Statement: The mission of the Mystic River Watershed Initiative’s Steering Committee (“Steering Committee”) is to serve as a coordinating and information-sharing body to help establish strategic direction and priorities as well as to recommend and promote key projects and actions needed to improve environmental conditions in the Mystic River Watershed.

The members of the Steering Committee work collaboratively to improve environmental conditions throughout the watershed. The efforts of the Steering Committee contribute to the protection, development, and use of water resources in a sustainable manner. The Committee’s goals include the restoration and protection of water quality, wildlife and its habitats, and the protection and creation of open public spaces for safe public access to the waterfront. In addition, the Steering Committee promotes sustainable recreational uses on the river and its tributaries.

All organizations participating in this collaborative effort will maintain base program work, to the best of their abilities, with additional targeted involvement that supports the Mystic River Watershed Initiative with a particular focus on the actions and strategies listed below. The Steering Committee members work together to identify resources including funding for needed activities and projects in the watershed.¹

2015-2016 Joint Priorities

The following is a list of priority actions and strategies that support the protection, increase and development of open space and access, as well as improved water quality. Members of the Steering Committee will work together to implement these actions and to increase public awareness, participation, understanding, and access to information about the Mystic River Watershed.

- **Help to make the waters of the Mystic River Watershed fishable, boatable, and swimmable through activities and strategies that reduce and eliminate the occurrence of SSOs, assist municipalities address pollution from stormwater, remediate legacy pollution, decrease phosphorus loading, and increase public awareness of fish consumption health advisories.**

Priority #1: Reduce and eliminate overflows related to SSOs

Strategies: Create long-term SSO control plan that includes:

- i. Identify funding sources to alleviate overflows
- ii. Create an electronic submission form with required fields and conduct outreach to DPWs to ensure provision of data on volumes, duration and locations for SSO events
- iii. Improve transparency of SSO releases by posting release notifications online.
- iv. Collect additional data on current locations and causes of SSOs
- v. Increase opportunities to reduce SSOs

- vi. Create a network or forum for communities to share best practices for SSO prevention and increase the need for addressing inflow

Priority #2: Create Municipal Technical Assistance Program related to MS4 permit compliance (potential topics listed below; municipal subcommittee will need to weigh in on prioritization of these topics)

- i. Workshop or roundtable for discussion of funding mechanisms for MS4 implementation
- ii. Workshop or roundtable for discussion of communication/community outreach approaches
- iii. Workshop or roundtable for discussion of successes and failures with local IDDE program
- iv. Workshop or roundtable for discussion of successes and failures with inflow/infiltration programs
- v. Provide training on compliance and development of “measureable goals” to satisfy the new MS4 permit and Minimum Control Measures
- vi. Promote or identify funding for more pilot/example projects to illustrate Best Management Practices relative to infiltration, onsite retention, etc.
- vii. Provide information on low-cost outfall water quality testing programs (dry and wet weather)
- viii. Develop fact sheets or assemble information on the connection between water quality and water quantity
- ix. Engage town leaders on how town plan impacts stormwater
- x. Provide access to modeling to identify opportunities for ground infiltration
- xi. Provide forum to share best practice
- xii. Provide forum to explore sharing of resources, contracts, etc.

Priority #3: Reduce phosphorus loading in the watershed

- i. Promote the use of low or no-phosphorus fertilizers on public properties through support in the development of Integrated Management Programs
- ii. Educate businesses, institutions, and public on the benefits of low and no-phosphorus fertilizer
- iii. Promote funding for more pilot/example projects incorporating infiltration and onsite retention
- iv. Investigate value and cost of phosphorus treatments and strategies beyond infiltration (aluminum treatments/biomass harvesting)
- v. Identify water bodies with water quality impairments (e.g. depressed dissolved oxygen, elevated chlorophyll a, Cyanobacteria, bio indicators) resulting from high phosphorous availability
- vi. Measure and model the current phosphorous budget and estimate levels of reduction required to resolve water quality impairments.
- vii. Reduce the density and areal extent of aquatic invasive species (eurasion water milfoil, other invasive milfoil species, water chestnut, etc), as well as native species (coontail) at a nuisance level. Track such changes over time by mapping extent and estimating density.

- viii. Leverage partnerships with USGS, FEMA, MassDOT or other state and federal agencies to complete strategies i through vii.

Priority #4: Increase knowledge of legacy contamination, identify impacts on designated uses, educate the public and identify priorities and opportunities for restoration.

- i. Compile information on sediment contamination and identify data gaps
 - ii. Identify health risks associated with exposure to sediment contamination that could occur during recreation (literature reviews and risk assessments)
 - iii. Educate the public on environmental conditions and what activities (fishing, swimming, and boating) are supported and not supported in each water body
 - iv. Identify priorities for remediation of sediment contamination based on threat to human and ecosystem health, cost effectiveness, and emerging opportunities. Prioritization should include consideration of locations where recreation is occurring with high frequency (e.g. Malden River)
 - v. Leverage resources at municipal, state, and federal levels and academic institutions to accomplish I through IV (e.g. Mystic Valley Development Commission, MAPC, MA-DPH, MA-DEP, US-EPA, USGS, USACE, UMass-Boston, Tufts, and MIT).
- **Increase establishment of safe public open space and access to the river and its tributaries (for example, the redevelopment and remediation of brownfields, development of walkways, bikeways and trails) by**
 - 1. Supporting the development and/or improvement of Open Space and Access at targeted sites in the watershed already identified; and
 - 2. Continuing to investigate and search for possible Open Space and Access targets in other parts of the watershed system.

Priority #1: Focus on selected sites in the lower watershed that have been investigated by the open space subgroup and which will be supported by the Steering Committee. The recommended priority sites for 2011-2012 are as follows:

- i. Development and/or improvement of public Open Space and Access at the Chemical Lane (the former Monsanto property on the Mystic River main stem river front), the Malden River GE site, the Malden River MBTA parcel, Draw 7 Park in Somerville and at one selected site in the Chelsea Creek sub-watershed.

Priority #2: Continue a systemic investigation of other segments of the river system to identify other properties or projects which may provide for the development of public Open Space and Access.

The Open Space group will take a five step approach:

- i. Select an area of the watershed to study;

- ii. Identify potential open space and access sites through field investigation and a review of all available open space studies and inventories for that area;
- iii. Evaluate prospects for Open Space where the committee determines there is appropriate potential by a review of the physical, financial and regulatory conditions that surround the selected property;
- iv. Establish collaborative efforts for Open Space planning and funding where possible; and
- v. Develop support for Open Space development at the selected sites through the public process.

As this work proceeds, it is anticipated that each targeted site will be different and will require different actions by the Steering Committee. In the case of Chemical Lane site, the Committee will be starting from scratch, whereas with Malden River GE site clear plans and timelines for development of open space and access have been established. In the case of Draw 7 Park, the effort will be to help redesign current uses and park layout and to support development of Open Space and Access and trail connectivity on nearby private parcels. In every case, effort will be made to approach all property owners with respect and to engage neighborhood stakeholders wherever possible.

Caveats

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