



Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Meeting

February 17, 2022, 10am-12pm

Zoom <https://clarku.zoom.us/j/91977706024> Call: 646-876-9923 Meeting ID: 919 7770 6024

Attendees

Allison Hamel, Nick Cohen, David Tapscott, Stefanie Covino, Peter Stetson, Bill Napolitano, Katie Liming, Rebekah Krieger, Judy Rondeau, Andrew Schnetzer, Eric Breitreutz, Karla Sangrey, Kevin Rice, Donna Williams, Amanda Coffuire, Ted Beauvais, Daniella Marie, Brittany Gutermuth, Kellie King, Adam Menard, Hillary King, Patti McAlpine, Deb Cary, Darcy Young, Mark Nimiroski, John Marsland, Anne Armstrong, Sarah Plutnicki, Casey Merkle, Ryan Saul, Heather Parry

Recording Available

<https://clarku.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=edb8bb22-f70a-40ff-b3a1-afac0111f080>

Presentations

- **MA Envirothon** by **Brittany Gutermuth**, Climate Change Education Program Manager at Mass Audubon bgutermuth@massaudubon.org
- **RI Envirothon** by **Peter Stetson**, Educational Mapping Services, RI Liaison to NCF Envirothon, petestetson8@gmail.com

Subgroup Updates

- Water quality
 - Blackstone River Coalition (BRC)
 - Save the Date! 4/1 morning in Worcester for the annual water quality summit
 - Clickable map coming soon & new website coming soon
 - DEP water quality monitoring grant is still pending
 - Blackstone River Watershed Association (BRWA):
 - Comments due 3/1 for [Worcester's Combined Sewer Overflow Final Public Notification Plan](#). BRWA has submitted a letter – see it [here](#).
 - Upper Blackstone Clean Water
 - 2021 final WQ monitoring data available with a [storymap here](#).
 - RI Dept Enviro Management (RIDEM):
 - DEM is asking for WQ data between 2017 and 2022 to be submitted for consideration to include in the [integrated plan](#) by 4/1 – contact Colin Millar Colin.Millar@dem.ri.gov for more info
- University work
 - Worcester State U: doing pollinator garden in town of Oxford at DPW
 - Planning for global enviro change class and will be reaching out for field trip opportunities. If you have ideas, contact Anne Armstrong at aarmstrong3@worchester.edu
 - Holy Cross:
 - BRC is working with HC: Professor Bill Sobczak has two seniors working on "dam related" topics. One wants to focus on tree cover around dams; the other wants to look more generally, more as a planner to look at multiple users in the discussion of urban dam removal, interested in headwaters, potentially Poor Farm Dam or Electric Dam in Millbury as real world examples with a lot of the study already done. Nobody wants to keep Poor Farm Dam, and it is on the list that the City wants to remove. I think all it needs is a little political push, but there is no local champion for its removal. → Maybe we can apply to be a DER Priority Project?
 - Stef is working with HC course taught by Bryce DuBois on fish passage over the lower four dams on the Blackstone. His students will be putting together an overview of the four dams, a history



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of fish passage permitting/projects, and an overview of the benefits of creating fish passage. They will also be helping plan the 5/21 Fish Passage Migration Parade in Pawtucket.

- Fish passage:
 - The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has a contract in place to do the partial design for fish passage of the lower 2 dams (Main St & Slater Mill), and will continue the other 2 subsequently (Elizabeth Webbing & Valley Falls).
 - RIDEM is also working on this, and Molly Ogren is the meeting coordinator. Stef is working closely with her and will share opportunities for the public to offer comments, support, and other connections.
 - RIDEM & TNC have been meeting with dam owners and will schedule additional meetings once their population dynamic study is complete this spring, which will also include a press release, when ready. This study and the design process are happening simultaneously.
 - In 2018, Fuss & O'Neil were awarded the contract to do a 30% design with NRCS, then got the contract with TNC to continue this work for all four dams, but are breaking it up. Currently, they're working on delineation, surveying, borings, etc. to create a conceptual plan with permit-ready 60% design within the next year.
 - For Slater Mill & Main St dams: They are still working on the QAPP for permit-ready documents, but will move on to create bid-ready documents after that. Current considerations are for a single lander over land and around Old Slater Mill to not touch the dam itself, but that is not finalized.
 - Elizabeth Webbing (owned by RIDEM) and Valley Falls: contractor Fuss & O'Neil will likely continue work on this the year after (2024) to perform exploratory work & explore options for fish passage.
 - Stef will be organizing another meeting to hopefully bring tribal members together and hear a comprehensive update on this topic from RIDEM & TNC.
 - Needs include potentially creating visualization of what fish passage will achieve, regional benefits (economic, historic, cultural, ecological), potential tours/fact sheets/other outreach products, etc.
 - This has been a multi-decade project, and often it's the bureaucracy preventing forward momentum, not lack of technical expertise or even funding. We need to create public support and have this as a legislative and departmental priority – for funding, staff capacity, etc. This river runs through some of the most economically disadvantaged communities in the region and we want to create positive changes in the region that support our communities, our history, our indigenous culture, recreational opportunities, and ecological and community health. We believe that there are win-win situations for all stakeholders and will seek out and pursue those.

Partner Updates

- **May 25** - RI Flood Mitigation Association is hosting our annual meeting and conference on May 25th hosted at University of Rhode Island's Center for Biotechnology and Life Sciences. Every year over 100 people gather to eat great food, discuss future flood mitigation/watershed restoration opportunities, and share lessons learned. Early bird registration is now open - > <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/504501677097> If you would like to be a nonprofit exhibitor, please reach out to rhodeislandfma@gmail.com
- **March 24 at 12pm** – RI Flood Mitigation Association is having a Flood Friday talk by Emily Vogler on her Dam Atlas in the Narragansett Bay Watershed. Registration coming soon: <https://www.riflood.org/7097>
- **April 8** - RI Land & Water Conservation mini summit, coordinated by Audubon Society of RI <https://www.landandwaterpartnership.org/>
- **June 9-10** – RI Natural History Survey's Bioblitz at the Narragansett Indian Reservation in Charlestown, RI <https://rinhs.org/events/ri-bioblitz/bioblitz-2023-charlestown/>



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- **CMRPC** is creating a new waste management action plan. Community survey is available: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JSV3S9P> For more information, contact Sarah splutnicki@clarku.edu or Ian imcelwee@cmrpc.org
- **CMRPC** is drafting a new 5 year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) that helps makes sure Central MA stays economically competitive in the future, bolster our strengths, and leverage more opportunities to improve the quality of life for all. If you work, live, study, eat, or play in the region, please help fill out this preliminary survey to gauge community priorities. For more info, contact Kerrie Salwa: Ksalwa@cmrpc.org
 - <https://www.cmrpcregionalservices.org/ceds>
- If you see a pink plastic container and rubber duckie in the Blackstone, contact Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Bob. **BVTC** is trying to track how long it takes for something to travel down the river. <https://www.rivertourblackstone.com/site/river-scout-capsule/>
 - Note: USGS did some studies on time of travel on the Blackstone
- In regards to the train derailment and chemical spill in Ohio...
 - **MA & RI Emergency Management Associations** have done trainings on train derailment and toxic substance release on waterways – this is something that’s included in hazard mitigation planning
 - In MA, contact Tiffany Skogstrom – safe waste mgmt., response to industrial accidents, community environmental response team, CERT programs, etc. Might be helpful to take this opportunity to follow up and make sure our communities have the plans and training in place to respond to these disasters.
- **It’s conference season!** Check out the list of many environmental and partner conferences coming up this spring! Including...
 - **February 2, 9, 16, 23** – Mass Open Space <https://www.massopenspace.org/2023>
 - **March 4** – RI Environmental Education Association <https://www.rieea.org/programs/annual-summit/>
 - **March 10-12** – RI Saltwater Fishing Show <https://www.nesaltwatershow.com/>
 - **March 15** – Mass Rivers Lobby Day <https://www.massriversalliance.org/lobbyday2023>
 - **March 18** – Citizen Planner Training Collaborative <https://masscptc.org/>
 - **March 25** – Mass Land Trust Coalition <https://massland.org/conference>
 - **May 3** – MassECAN Conference <https://www.massecan.org/>
- **Central Falls Draft Climate Action Plan** posted – review & comment at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xLCh0m8a1-j5M6vmsTtyi7RvxVZX9i6hJ-Mwr86KD2c/edit?usp=sharing>
- **Dam Removal Training TBD** – Interested in dam removal? What are your big questions? Permitting? Community buy in? Engineering? Let us know! We’re planning a training program in a “train the trainer” program on best practices, resources, and answering common questions for Fall 2023. Audience: Local champions, watershed organizers, government officials, engineers, planners, and others providing community technical assistance
- **Keystone Project** – Apply today! This competitive program is an intensive, 3-day, retreat style training which focuses on forest ecology and stewardship, wildlife management, and land protection, held Thursday evening, April 13, through Sunday afternoon, April 16 at the Harvard Forest in Petersham. <https://masskeystone.net/> Contact Paul Catanzaro at paulcat@umass.edu or ask Stef – I’m also a Keystone Coordinator.
- **Mass Rivers Lobby Day** is coming up! Join partners, including the Collab, at the MA Statehouse in Boston on March 15. Learn more & register at <https://www.massriversalliance.org/lobbyday2023>



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Next meetings

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March 17, 2023: Casey Merkle, RI Flood Mitigation Association & Judy Rondeau, Mass DEP, on 604b (watershed planning) & 319 (implementation) grants

April 21, 2023: Amie Shei, The Health Foundation of Central Massachusetts

May 19, 2023: Water Chestnuts in the Blackstone

June 16, 2023: TBD

Legislative/Policy Updates

- There's a new **Massachusetts MVP Coalition** with the goal to increase overall funding for MVP to \$100 million per year and give communities more time to spend it. About a dozen statewide and regional associations who work with municipalities have joined this effort <https://massachusettsmvpcoalition.org> with the goal of increasing the amount of funding available to MVP through the next Environmental Bond. Interested in being involved in this area? Contact Stef scovino@clarku.edu
- Private Drinking Water American Academy of Pediatrics has a new policy statement on "Drinking Water From Private Wells and Risks to Children" recommending states require private well testing. <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/151/2/e2022060644/190540/Drinking-Water-From-Private-Wells-and-Risks-to>
 - Learn more about the [Health Foundation of Central MA's](#) work on [private drinking wells](#) or check out the Coalition for Safe Drinking Water (MA) at <https://www.whatsinyourwellwater.org/>
 - *An Act Promoting Drinking Water Quality for All* ([HD.3322/SD.2387](#))

Tools You Can Use! Tools & Resources

- **Central Falls has published their draft Climate Action Plan** – comment now! <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xLCh0m8a1-j5M6vmsTtyi7RvxVZX9i6hJ-Mwr86KD2c/edit?usp=sharing>
- **Worcester Cyanobacteria Monitoring Collaborative** – become a volunteer in Worcester or your own lake or pond! Learn more and register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/wcmc-information-and-training-session-2023-tickets-523602377807>
- **RI's new Grant Management System** for grantees. The new regs are just about to go into effect – some state agencies and programs may already be using the system, but RIDEM's Office of Water Resources will likely require it starting on 7/1/2023: <https://controller.admin.ri.gov/grants-management/grant-management-system-gms/subrecipients/resources-applicants-and-subrecipients>
- **BIL Grant Funding Assistance!** Partners including National League of Cities and the US Conference of Mayors has created a free "bootcamp" for small city leaders to learn about BIL funding opportunities and help them apply. Learn more at <https://localinfrastructure.org/application-bootcamp/>
Read the news article [here](#).
Sign up for updates at <https://localinfrastructure.org/about/#section-updates-form>
- **Latest MA Climate Assessment** (precursor to the SHMCAP) is now available! <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-climate-change-assessment>
Note: This is also available in Spanish, Portuguese, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Chinese, & Vietnamese
 - To read just the Central MA Region overview, see here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2022-massachusetts-climate-change-assessment-december-2022-volume-iii-regional-reports-second/download>
- **CMRPC Southern Worcester County Trail Hub**



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- [RIDOT Stormwater Map](#)
- [The MA Resilient Lands Initiative](#)
- [The MA Healthy Soils Action Plan](#)

Events

- **February 2, 9, 16, 23** – Mass Open Space Conference <https://www.massopenspace.org/2023>
- **February 22 at 6:15pm** – Worcester Annual State of the Lakes Presentation in person & online: Senior Center, 128 Providence St or register at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-state-of-the-lakes-tickets-517826622367>
- **March 1 from 12-1:30pm** – MEPA & EJ 101 – ascending professionals webinar from Enviro. Business Council <https://ebcne.org/event/ebc-ascending-professionals-webinar-mepa-ej-101-crossing-the-professional-threshold/>
- **March 4 from 8am-12pm** – RI Environmental Education Association Annual Summit in person at RI College <https://www.rieea.org/programs/annual-summit/> (registration includes an annual membership!)
- **March 10-12** – RI Saltwater Fishing Show in person at the RI Convention Center <https://www.nesaltwatershow.com/>
 - **The Collaborative & Friends of the Blackstone** will be partnering with Save the Bay to exhibit and share information on fish passage over the lower 4 Blackstone dams and bring migratory fish like the herring back to the Blackstone! Come by and color a fish and send a postcard to DEM to support this initiative.
- **March 11 from 1-3pm** – Worcester Community Clean up with the Green Corp at Crompton Park (supplies provided!) Register at <https://business.worcesterchamber.org/events/details/community-cleanup-15029>
- **March 15th** – Mass Rivers Lobby Day at the MA Statehouse in Boston. Learn more & register at <https://www.massriversalliance.org/lobbyday2023>
- **March 18** – Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Conference in person in Worcester, MA <https://masscptc.org/>
 - **Stef** will be presenting on how to change your bylaws & regs to be climate-resilient
- **March 24 at 12pm** – RI Flood Mitigation Association is having a Flood Friday talk by Emily Vogler on her Dam Atlas in the Narragansett Bay Watershed. Registration coming soon: <https://www.riflood.org/7097>
- **March 25** – Mass Land Trust Coalition Conference in person at Worcester Tech, plus field trips around the state on 3/28 and sponsor talks via zoom on various dates <https://massland.org/conference>
- **April 1 from 10am-12pm** – Worcester Community Clean up with the Green Corp at Beaver Brook (supplies provided!) Register at <https://business.worcesterchamber.org/events/details/beaver-brook-community-cleanup-15280>
- **Now – April** – Webinar series from [Conservation Finance Learning Lab](#), presented by Highstead Foundation & the Conservation Finance Network
- **May 3** – Save the Date! MassECAN is holding a conference on effective watershed-scale climate collaboratives, hosted at Clark University. <https://www.massecan.org/>
- **April 8** – RI Land & Water Conservation mini summit, coordinated by Audubon Society of RI <https://www.landandwaterpartnership.org/>
- **April 22** – Earth Day! Save the date for lots of upcoming events!
- **May 17-19** – Lincoln Land Use Institute Program on Creating Resilient and Sustainable Communities with Scenario Planning. This \$1700 program is available via Zoom or in-person in Michigan. Learn more at <https://www.lincolninst.edu/courses-events/courses/23-05-scenario-planning-urban-futures>
- **May 21** – Save the date! Fish passage community parade in Pawtucket, RI. Learn more at blackstonecollaborative.org/kittacuck
- **May 25** - RI Flood Mitigation Association is hosting our annual meeting and conference on May 25th hosted at University of Rhode Island's Center for Biotechnology and Life Sciences. Every year over 100 people gather to



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eat great food, discuss future flood mitigation/watershed restoration opportunities, and share lessons learned. Early bird registration is now open - > <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/504501677097> If you would like to be a nonprofit exhibitor, please reach out to rhodeislandfma@gmail.com

- **May 25** – Mass Envirothon at DCR’s River Bend Farm in Uxbridge. Sign up to be a judge with Brittany Gutermuth: bgutermuth@massaudubon.org
- **June 9-10** – RI Natural History Survey’s Bioblitz at the Narragansett Indian Reservation in Charlestown, RI <https://rinhs.org/events/ri-bioblitz/bioblitz-2023-charlestown/>

Grants:

- **Rolling As Available MA Department of Fish and Game’s In-Lieu Fee Program** – land conservation or aquatic resource restoration projects (all of Blackstone in MA is eligible). Municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and state agencies are eligible to apply. Contact Aisling O’Shea at aisling.oshea@mass.gov for more info or to apply. Materials are also available on COMMBUYS under BD-23-1046-COM-COM4-77929. <https://www.mass.gov/in-lieu-fee-program>
- **RFR Open Soon MA MVP** accepting Expression of Interest (EOI) forms for FY24 Action Grant ideas. Potential applicants can provide basic information about their project idea & get feedback from MVP staff prior to the Request for Responses (RFR) release date. Submitting an EOI is not mandatory in order to submit a project application once the RFR comes out (tentatively end of March 2023) but is encouraged. https://massgov.formstack.com/forms/mvp_action_fy24_eoi
- **RFR Open Soon DER Culvert Replacement** Email DERCulverts@mass.gov to set-up a call with DER staff prior to issuance of RFR (this step is recommended, but optional). Full grant info posted on COMMBUYS mid-Jan; Pre-RFR presentation on Monday, January 30 at 1pm; Full application deadline is anticipated mid-March. <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/culvert-replacement-municipal-assistance-grant-program>
- **Due 3/1/23 Sweetgrass Foundation** – to support individuals and organizations working directly for ecological health and cultural diversity and preservation, with a special interest in the protection of pristine wilderness areas and in work that supports young people in gaining respect for the earth; climate action; indigenous leadership and involvement; multi-stakeholder engagement, etc. See more at thesweetgrassfoundation.org
- **Due 3/10/23 Rhode Island Decentralized Wastewater Improvement Grant” (EPA-I-R1-SNEP-2023A)** grants between \$310,000-\$465,000. Informational webinar on 1/26; submit q’s via SECoastalNE@EPA.GOV by 2/2; grant due 3/10; awarded spring 2023 for start date of 6/1/23
- **Due 4/10/23 EJ Collaborative Problem-Solving Program Cooperative Agreements** Up to \$500k for projects supporting community-based nonprofit organizations (CBOs) in their efforts to collaborate and partner with other stakeholders to develop solutions that will significantly address environmental and/or public health issue(s) in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms and risks. <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-collaborative-problem-solving-cooperative-agreement-5>
- **Due 4/10/23 EJ Government-to-Government Program:** Up to \$1M for projects that support and/or create model state, tribal, local, and territorial government activities that lead to measurable environmental or public health results in communities disproportionately burdened by environmental harms and risks. <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/environmental-justice-government-government-program>
- **Due 4/12/23 Activation Fund from the Health Foundation of Central MA** - <https://hfc.org/activation-fund-now-open/> Helps community organizations move to the next level of capacity and effectiveness. Awards \$60-120k. New pilot will provide technical assistance for small/newer orgs with limited capacity/expertise in grant development. Priority for orgs with <\$500k operating budget. Selected orgs will be invited to participate in an Activation-Fund-focused grant writing workshop and receive one hour of individualized consulting.



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- **Due 7/12/23 (LOI) – Synergy Initiative** from the Health Foundation of Central MA – funding for partnership-based projects that target significant health issues, especially inequities and disparities, in Central Massachusetts with integrated, comprehensive strategies with an end goal of systems or policy change. Projects generally progress from planning to pilot to full implementation over the course of three to five years, with grants awarded on an annual basis. Project budgets vary for each phase, and total investment amounts average approximately \$2 million per project over the grant period. <https://hfc.org/synergy-initiative-round-6-now-open/>

Job opportunities:

- Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
 - [MEPA Analyst V](#)
 - [Climate Scientist](#)
 - [Deputy Director of Climate Adaptation & Resilience / Climate Finance Strategist](#)
 - [Deputy Director of Climate Equity and Environmental Justice](#)
- MA Department of Environmental Protection
 - [Environmental Analyst III Bureau of Water Resources](#)
 - [Environmental Analyst IV](#)
 - [Program Coordinator II Bureau of Waste Site Clean Up](#)
 - [Environmental Engineer IV Bureau of Water Resources](#)
- MA Division of Ecological Restoration
 - [Restoration Technical Services Branch Manager](#)
 - [Social Media and Outreach Coordinator](#)
 - [Ecological Restoration Program Manager—Cranberry Bogs](#)
 - [Ecological Restoration Program Manager—Dam Removal](#)
- Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition [Development and Communications Coordinator](#)
- Conservation Law Foundation
 - [Foundation Relations Coordinator](#)
 - [Communications & Grants Coordinator](#)
- Groundwork Lawrence [Development Manager](#)
- Mass Audubon
 - [Coastal Waterbird Program Crew Leader](#)
 - [Education Coordinator](#)
 - [Project Manager, Rivers to Sea](#)
- Merrimack River Watershed Council [Water Quality Project Manager](#)
- Sudbury Valley Trustees [Director of Land Protection](#)
- Audubon Society of RI [Associate Director of Development](#)
- Eastern RI Conservation District [Environmental Field Technician](#)
- Native Edible Designs [Gardener & Crew Leader](#)
- RI Department of Environmental Management [Seasonal Water Monitoring Field Intern](#)