



# Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Notes

March 17, 2022, 10am-12pm

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

**Attendees:** Paul Popinchalk, Sarah Bower, Maryam Al Hakeem, Joseph Haberek, Ted Beauvais, Bryce DuBois, Peter Coffin, Mark Nimiroski, Judy Rondeau, Nathan Cloutier, Casey Merkle, Patti McAlpine, Amanda Coffuire, Kellie King, Allison Perlman, Phyllis Charpentier, Allison Hamel, Cay Denherder, Rebecca Quinones, Deb Cary, Stefanie Covino, Sarah Plutnicki, Adam Menard, Kate McPherson, Peter Ogonek, David Tapscott, Hillary King, Greg Doerschler, Heidi Ricci, Heather Parry

## Recording Available:

<https://clarku.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=6a74f4e6-05a5-49db-8fb6-afc8011151d0>

## Presentations:

- [Casey Merkle, RI Flood Mitigation Association](#)
  - Join [Flood Talk Friday on March 24](#) at noon for Emily Vogler's Dam Atlas, \$10 registration. It will be recorded.
  - Attend the [RIFMA Conference](#) on 5/25 at URI Center for Biotechnology and Life Sciences. Includes a membership to RIFMA, including free Flood Talk Fridays.
- [Judy Rondeau, Mass DEP](#)
  - 604b watershed planning
    - water quality monitoring, assessment, outreach, and planning. Plans incorporating climate resilience & equity get priority.
    - 50k average award (400-600k total available) with no match required (but helps be competitive)
    - RFP anticipated summer 2023
  - 319 implementation grants
    - Once have 604b and have designs/plan, then can apply for implementation funds
    - Also can be used for capacity building and watershed protection, and regional NPS coordinators (even without the prior 604b watershed plan)
    - 50-500k average project. \$2M available. 40% match required, may reduce for EJ communities (TBD)
  - Note: MVP is a good match source for 319 (which is federal funding) so if you are planning an MVP implementation grant for an impaired water, you could consider if 319 could complement and amplify your project

## Subgroup Updates: Focus on Woonsocket Wastewater Discharge

- Bike/greenway
  - The City of Worcester is applying for \$2.5M in funding to reimagine Mill Street, including a road diet, adding green space, bike lanes, and better pedestrian access around Coes Pond. The Collaborative has provided a letter of support.
- University work
  - BRC is working with a Holy Cross student to create a new website! The Collaborative will fund this work.
  - HC working on archive, timeline, and dam overview for fish passage project through Bryce DuBois
  - WPI IQP working on creating a pedestrian bridge at Patch Reservoir with the City of Worcester & Greater Worcester Land Trust. Engineering design complete & GWLT is seeking funds.
  - WPI IQP working with the Collab on assessing culverts in Sutton, MA and interviewing stakeholder on culvert replacement (contact them at [gr-wroc\\_culverts@wpi.edu](mailto:gr-wroc_culverts@wpi.edu) to learn more/be interviewed) and will be creating outreach documents/tools to assist in community replacement/restoration implementation.



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- Fish passage
  - Attended the RI Saltwater Fishing Show and collected ~200 signed postcards showing public support to create fish passage over the lower four dams! Thank you to Save the Bay for sharing your table & RI Saltwater Anglers Association for hosting!
  - Sign up to attend our community fish migration parade on 5/21 in Pawtucket! 1-4pm  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fish-migration-community-parade-tickets-576598310067>
- Water quality: **There has been an ongoing [sewer discharge](#) of partially treated sewage into the Blackstone River from the Woonsocket Wastewater treatment plant.**

## Background:

- This began on Wednesday, March 1 when a no-contact advisory was issued. The issue was noticed from a private citizen's tweet and video of the discharge.
- This is the third time the issue has occurred and resulted in untreated sewer discharge into the river in the past year (March & June 2022), as well as another violation for nutrients (not a solids issue) in November 2021.
- The plant is owned by the City of Woonsocket and they contract its management to two private companies, Synagro (solids/sludge) and Jacobs (liquids).

## What happened & What is required:

- Liquid sludge is dewatered, then filtrate from the dewatering goes into the liquids side. In between, there's a gravity thickener (GT). The GT is the responsibility of City of Woonsocket, not Jacobs or Synagro. It's not been adequately maintained and needs to be rebuilt. That was a contributing factor for noncompliance, but not the only issue.
- In June during the last discharge violation, DEM required that the city bring in additional solids removal equipment through belt presses – there were too many solids accumulating in the liquids side of the facility. The gravity thickener equipment fully failed. They also were required to bring in frac tanks to settle solids and also assist in removing solids from the liquids side.
- They are currently required to bring in a temporary gravity thickener, which is being done ASAP. It's estimated that it will take a year for the existing gravity thickener to be repaired/rebuilt.
- The plant is required to take bacteria samples daily and visual effluent reports 2x/day, morning and afternoon (this isn't typical to have daily contact with DEM).
- Effluent quality has been improved, and "relatively quickly after 3/1," the quality visually improved. Bacteria counts were slightly elevated, but appears to have been within limits. The no contact advisory was kept in place just in case there was a solids wash out, especially with the anticipated storm. It has since been lifted (3/15).

## Enforcement Action:

- DEM's top priority is to bring the plant back into compliance. Their second priority is to ensure violators are held responsible, in this case through fiscal enforcement.
- To this end, the RI Attorney General's Office and RIDEM have been working on this issue for a long time and as of 3/15 have issued a press release that they are suing the City of Woonsocket, Jacobs, and Synagro over their Clean Water Act and other violations. See the press release here: <https://riag.ri.gov/press-releases/attorney-general-neronha-dem-director-gray-file-lawsuit-stop-sewage-discharge>

## Biosolids Background:

- Note: This is a separate, larger issue around biosolids, and should not be confused to be the reason why the Woonsocket plant violated its permits.
- There are only two incinerators in RI for solid sludge, or "biosolids": Cranston and Woonsocket. Woonsocket handles 75% of RI's sludge.



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- This material cannot be put into a landfill without blending with other waste and often has other issues such as gumming up equipment. Many landfills are not accepting biosolids anymore. Maine has stopped accepting them due to PFAS concerns and otherwise, and not performing land application anymore. Otherwise, it's a free market to determine where solids can go and are shipped, but there are limited options.
- RI, the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program, The Narragansett Bay Commission, NEIWPC, and others have and are expanding working groups to dive into this issue and make sure that there's "sludge security" for RI and the region to look ahead into the future.

## Partner Updates

- [The Collaborative is hiring!](#) Please share and apply to Stef! Open until filled.
- The Collab is applying for grants – please let me know if you want to partner &/or provide a letter of support. The focus will be on technical assistance regarding restoration projects
  - [SNEP Watershed Implementation Grant \(SWIG\)](#)
  - [EPA EJ Collaborative Problem Solving Grant](#)
  - In the future, we'd like to work with a municipal or RPA partner to apply for 604b funding to produce a watershed based plan for the Blackstone Watershed. RFP anticipated in summer/fall.
- RIDOT is creating standard operating procedures in order to perform culvert assessments – stay tuned!
- Mass DEP
  - internship program is hiring for June – October, announcement coming out soon via Mass Careers
  - also hiring another 2 interns to incorporate climate resiliency & EJ into the 604b program, working April – August – watch the website to apply or contact [Judy Rondeau](#) for more info
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council (BVTC) – contact Patti for more info [patti.bvtc@gmail.com](mailto:patti.bvtc@gmail.com)
  - hosting Rivers Day, Saturday, June 17 at Central Falls Landing – stay tuned! Contact Patti if you want to have a table
  - hiring deck hands and interns to assist with educational programming
  - organizing walks & clean ups in RI Blackstone communities during weekday afternoons in April
  - working on grants to get equipment to enhance accessible kayaking, more info to come
- Blackstone River Coalition (BRC) contact Heather for more info: [heatherparry.wqm@gmail.com](mailto:heatherparry.wqm@gmail.com)
  - looking for volunteers for water quality monitoring this year, starting in April (3<sup>rd</sup> Sat April – Nov) in all regions, within RI & MA on mainstem and tributaries
  - hosting [water quality summit](#) and volunteer appreciation event at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Worcester on Sat, 4/1 at 8:30am
- Horsley Witten Group is working with Blackstone Parks Conservancy & Seekonk River Alliance – pursuing SWIG grants to create a master plan for Seekonk River. Interested parties in participating or providing a letter of support, please contact Peter Ogonek [pogonek@horsleywitten.com](mailto:pogonek@horsleywitten.com)
- CMRPC – contact Sarah Plutnicki [splutnicki@cmrpc.org](mailto:splutnicki@cmrpc.org)
  - applying for EPA Climate Pollution Reduction grant, please contact Sarah to write letter of support or commitment to assist
  - creating a trail accessibility toolkit for landowners, beyond ADA compliance, including mental accessibility and comfort. Please take survey! <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LN9WFNT> There will be a public forum on this topic 5/18 at 10am to share draft checklist. (Note: CMRPC should connect with Lucy Gertz: [lgertz@massaudubon.org](mailto:lgertz@massaudubon.org) from Mass Audubon – she's a pro on trail accessibility!)
- Blackstone River Watershed Association (BRWA) – contact Joy at [info@thebrwa.org](mailto:info@thebrwa.org)



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- Check out the beta test for a new tool that makes it easier to identify trashed sites, plan to do a cleanup, and then to post the results of the cleanup. <https://blackstone-waterways-cleanups-thebrwa.hub.arcgis.com/>
- Does anyone know...Do we need a waiver for cleanup registration? There's a place holder for something like the photo waiver currently used. If we do want/need one, someone please send me an image file of the waiver and I'll add it to the form for acknowledgement.
- Note: The 'Blackstone Waterways Trash Map' which shows attachments will look better once there are more entries with pictures. Right now, a lot of the test data does not have images, so the preview shows blank thumbnails.
- All the apps should be functional at this point but let me know if you run into any glitches!
- If anyone wants to add trashed sites through the app, you can download the [ArcGIS Survey123 Field app here](#) and then use this link (<https://arcg.is/OCPTra>) to open the survey on your phone. You'll be given the option to open the link in the browser or in the app. Either works, but the app makes it easier to directly add images and location data on the fly.
- Note from Patti BVTC: North Smithfield Heritage Society has been work with the Heritage Corridor in cleaning up the Mammoth Mill Site and have held a few clean ups already and the final goal is to create a park at the site.
- Save The Bay uses Water Reporter for this type of work: <https://www.waterreporter.org/>
- Mass Rivers Alliance
  - April 22 Earth Day – Mass Rivers Alliance event with Wachusett Brewing around 3pm
  - With Mass Audubon & Collab, we'll be presenting at Citizen Planner Training Collaborative on 3/18 about conservation and incorporating resilience into bylaws and regulations. The climate resilience planning/bylaw review curriculum will live on the website here, once complete: <https://www.massriversalliance.org/climate-resilience-planning>

## Next meetings

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

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

**May 19, 2023:** Water Chestnuts in the Blackstone

**June 16, 2023:** TBD

**July 21, 2023:** TBD

## Events

- **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>



# Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Meeting: Agenda

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- **Now – April** – Webinar series from [Conservation Finance Learning Lab](#), presented by Highstead Foundation & the Conservation Finance Network
- **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!
  - Mass Rivers Alliance event with Wachusett Brewing around 3pm – more info to come!
- **May 3** – Save the Date! MassECAN is holding a conference on effective watershed-scale climate collaboratives, hosted at Clark University. <https://www.massecan.org/>
- **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 18** - CMRPC is hosting a public forum on trail accessibility for landowners and others. Take the survey and then join the forum, which will share the draft checklist <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LN9WFNT>
- **May 21** – Fish migration community parade in Pawtucket, RI. Email Stef to table ([scovino@clarku.edu](mailto:scovino@clarku.edu)) and sign up to march with us! <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fish-migration-community-parade-tickets-576598310067>
- **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](mailto: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](mailto: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/>
- **June 17** - BVTC hosting Rivers Day, Saturday, June 17 at Central Falls Landing
- **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. Want to help organize? Contact Stef [scovino@clarku.edu](mailto:scovino@clarku.edu)

## 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](mailto: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](https://massgov.formstack.com/forms/mvp_action_fy24_eoi)
- **Due 3/31/23 MA DER Culvert Replacement** Eligible for culvert replacements that meet stream crossing standards. Eligible for one or multiple stream crossings on one river network. May be used for all project phases, design – construction, with funding from \$25k - \$200k for design/permitting, or up to \$400k for construction.





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<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/culvert-replacement-municipal-assistance-grant-program>

- **Due 4/7/23 (LOI) SNEP Watershed Implementation Grants (SWIG)** \$10k-\$500k depending on type of project. Large project (typically 200-400) or small project (10-15k). Focus on partnerships to improve water quality & restoration in New England region; all of Blackstone watershed in MA/RI is eligible.
- **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.
- **Due 4/14/23 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 4/20/23 (preproposal) NFWF America the Beautiful Challenge.** \$200k-\$2M depending on type of project.  
<https://www.nfwf.org/programs/america-beautiful-challenge/america-beautiful-challenge-2023-request-proposals>
- **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:

- Blackstone Watershed Collaborative [Program Coordinator/Restoration Coordinator](#)
- 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](#)
  - [MVP Program Coordinator](#)
- 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
  - [Ecological Restoration Technical Services Branch Manager](#)
  - [Social Media and Outreach Coordinator](#)
  - [Ecological Restoration Program Manager—Cranberry Bogs](#)



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- [Ecological Restoration Specialist – Coastal Wetlands Restoration](#)
- [Ecological Restoration Specialist – 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](#)