



Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Meeting Notes

June 16, 2022, 10am-12pm

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

Attendees:

Kassandra Florez, Paul Mathisen, Kate McPherson, Sophia Kostoulas, Allison Hamel, Greg Doerschler, Deb Cary, Judy Rondeau, Sarah Plutnicki, Mark Nimiroski, John Marsland, Bryce DuBois, Bill Napolitano, Heather Parry, Phyllis Charpentier, Sarah Bower, Amanda Coffuire, Mariel Sorlien, Paul Popinchalk, Heidi Ricci, Richard Friesner, Darrell Moore, David Tapscott, Peter Coffin, MaryEllen Mateleska, Brianna Joy Stevens, Stefanie Covino, Nick Wentzell, Donna Williams, Ted Beauvais, Patti McAlpine, James Nagaoka, Caleigh McLaren, Nick Cohen, Rebecca Quinones

Recording Available:

<https://clarku.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=0721d5e4-772b-4fc1-97e3-b0230109ee16>

Collaborative Structure:

- Stef drafted a group agreement for us all to work under – thank you for your feedback! This is something that just calls out our goals of being inclusive, welcoming, listening to one another, etc. I’m proud to work with you all and we’ve never had a problem! I just wanted to memorialize this base of understanding.
- [You can see the living document here](#) – feedback welcome!

Presentation:

[Sophia Kostoulas](#), Pretreatment Technician, Upper Blackstone Clean Water, speaking about a storymap of Blackstone water quality.

- Link to storymap: <https://www.ubcleanwater.org/operations/pages/blackstone-river-monitoring>
- Link to the latest 2021 map [here](#).
- Water quality data at 9 sites along the river, including 1 above the WWTP and 8 below.
- In 2021 the average TP and TN loads to the river were 92 and 64 % lower than pre-upgrade (2006 through 2008) loads.
- Could integrate this product with data viewer from NBEP.
- NBEP new website will include Mariel’s Blackstone water quality data.
- 2022 map will likely come out in Dec 2023 or Jan 2024.

Subgroup Updates:

- University work
 - WPI: Flood modeling in CSO system, green infrastructure in Worcester & runoff quality testing
- Fish passage
 - New deliverables from spring 2023 community-based learning course, Contested Waterscapes at the College of the Holy Cross. Questions? Contact Bryce at bdubois@holycross.edu.
 - [Overall study area maps](#)
 - [Fish passage timeline graphic](#)
 - [Fish passage narrative: A fish’s journey](#)
 - [Elizabeth Webbing Dam snapshot](#)
 - [Main Street Dam snapshot](#)
 - [Slater Mill Dam snapshot](#)



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- [Valley Falls Dam snapshot](#)
- Elizabeth Webbing Dam
 - One Drop Hydro has submitted a pre-application to FERC for Elizabeth Webbing Dam (FERC Docket P-15041-001). See the full application in pdf here.
 - We are drafting comments opposing this project as proposed.
 - DEM purchased the dam with the intention to lower it 2' with the goal of providing fish passage over the dam. Hydro power is financially infeasible if the dam is lowered as the covenant currently requires, though if the (federal) license is provided, it may supersede state rights and eminent domain may require the hydro instead of the lowering – attorneys are reviewing this.
 - Fish passage is being created at the lower two dams currently, with a 60% design anticipated by the end of 2023, so the promise of fish passage is closer than it ever has been. Migratory fish passage would provide benefits to the local ecology by restoring the historic range of species such as herring and shad, as well as restore cultural connections and importance for tribes that have had these species as a critical component of life for millennia. Passage would also mean enhancing local populations of fish that would then support populations throughout the entire North Atlantic.
 - Blackstone Hydro Associates, owner of the hydro facility at Central Falls (Valley Falls Dam), submitted comments against this project due to potential impacts of backwatering and energy generation at their facility.
 - These economic, cultural, and ecological benefits far outweigh the small green energy benefits of a single 700kw hydro project which would affect generation at another facility.
 - Comments are due to FERC by 6/20.
- Ashton Dam
 - There was a second preliminary permit application (P-15282) that was filed in the same docket as the Ashton license application by Slater Hydro. Bill Fay, the applicant, has voluntarily withdrawn the preliminary permit application. New England Hydro is now the only applicant.
 - The Collaborative opposes this project as proposed. While we are not opposed to alternative energy production or the use of hydropower, this project offers numerous costs without a compensatory benefit – for our communities, the environment, local ecology, and our historic and cultural resources. The applicant has not met numerous study requests and their stated area of potential effect (APE) is entirely inaccurate and inappropriate to its actual effect. The proposed project would adversely affect the Blackstone River and Canal, including the Blackstone River Natural Heritage Corridor, The Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. The issues are outlined below and include: minimal energy production; impact to historic canal infrastructure; demonstrated unpermitted environmental impacts; impact to bike path and recreational opportunities; impact to required sewer line access; concerns over water control during construction; concerns for construction clean up; concerns for vegetation disturbance and riparian impacts; and the importance of creating diadromous fish passage up and downstream for the original indigenous stewards of the land and communities that rely on the river and its bounty.
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- Water quality
 - Blackstone River Coalition: Monitoring nutrients and bacteria sampling in 75 sites + core sites every other week. New website coming.
- *New! We'll be making a Mumford River Subgroup this summer or fall; stay in touch! Focus on Northbridge, Sutton, Douglas, Uxbridge.*

Partner Updates:

- Friends of the Blackstone: John Marsland won an award from Save the Bay – congrats John!
- Mass Audubon:
 - Conducted a wetland survey and found:
 - Issues: invasive plant removal, dam reveal, river restoration, culvert assessment.
 - Challenges: difficult permitting, lack of guidance, funding needs.
 - There will be a summary to come.
 - Solar and diminishing tree cover report coming out later this summer
- MassRivers: Stormwater Financing workshops coming up!
 - This three-part series is designed to help municipalities (and non-profits) learn about, and take advantage of, short- and long-term funding solutions for stormwater management. The Series has been developed with expertise from partnering organizations OARS, Raftelis, and Tighe & Bond to meet the financing needs and interests of municipalities statewide. The workshops will guide communities in evaluating a variety of funding opportunities and will provide tools for developing long-term revenue streams through stormwater utility fees. This is an opportunity to learn from state and federal agencies, local municipalities, and regional environmental and financial consultants.
 - The target audience for these workshops is Massachusetts municipalities, and non-profits working directly with communities, with interest in securing short- or long-term funding for stormwater management. (Interested members of the public may also join).
 - Register here:
 - Workshop 1 (July 13 – virtual): <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0vdemhpzkrGtBS57f9noROhzwp3UOXdkyZ#/registration>
 - Workshop 2 (July 26 – in person): <https://forms.gle/iXMGtE75zM8pYSs57>
 - Workshop 3 (September 12 – virtual): <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAtd-iuqjgiEtcSouKSnlSqe03GAPqALgtJ>
 - Questions? Contact Sarah at sarahbower@massriversalliance.org
- Blackstone Worcester Visitor Center: Heritage Corridor is working to create a new MOU to be a partner with DCR visitor center. They received support from US Cong. McGovern, MA State Rep Dan Donahue, and MA Sen. Moore. McGovern is planning on a September meeting on the bikeway with high level officials, including MA DCR Commissioner & head of MA EEA
 - Pawtucket possibly closing down their visitor's center.
- [New boating regulations from DEM](#): required to wear a life jacket, slow down for emergency vehicles, can't dangle feet over the side.



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- MassDEP plans to release 604B Watershed Based Planning funding RFP in September. No match required. Anticipate 319 implementation grant released in October, 40% match required; if working in EJ, match potentially reduced (TBD). Questions? Contact Judy at judith.rondeau@massdep.org
 - Mumford River communities applied for MVP 2.0 program this summer with CMRPC to create new plan for climate resilience - overlap with dam removal & restoration.
 - MA EJ Mapper: <https://mass-eoeea.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1d6f63e7762a48e5930de84ed4849212>
- Blackstone Collab got a Community Partnership Resiliency Award from CMRPC!
- Join us at the Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Forum! Tuesday, June 13, 2023 at Bristol Community College: Margaret L Jackson Arts Center 777 Elsbree Street Fall River, MA. The Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Strategic Plan identifies three priority goals to address by 2050: safe and healthy waters, thriving watersheds and natural lands, and sustainable communities. This Forum is designed to solicit community feedback on how SNEP, its partners, and program affiliates can most effectively address the environmental, social, and economic impacts of environmental change through community-based design practices. Register at: <https://ceiengineers.com/snep-forum>
- Water chestnut pulls this summer! Join DEM, Blackstone River Watershed Council, Lake Quinsigamond Association, and others! Pulls need volunteers at the following dates/locations. Sign up for any/all [here](#)! No experience necessary and all equipment will be provided.
 - June 10 – Blackstone River in Central Falls
 - June 17 – Lake Quinsigamond in Shrewsbury
 - June 20 – Blackstone River in Central Falls
 - June 24 – Whitins Pond Falls in Uxbridge
 - July 8 – Lake Quinsigamond in Shrewsbury
- [2023 massFM Annual Conference](#): On 10/23, massFM's 4th annual conference will be covering all aspects of floodplain management. If you would like to be a part of a panel or prepare a presentation, submit an abstract [here](#) by 7/17.
- [Survey from WPI & UMass Amherst Extension on how land use choices affect sustainability goals](#): MA groups that work in land-use management, planning, or advocacy related to sustainability & climate adaptation or mitigation. The project's goal is to support better integration and coordination of land-use to improve sustainability and climate resilience in MA. Note: participants will be entered to win one of 4 \$100 gift cards or 8 \$50 gift cards. Questions? Seth Tuler at ResilientMass@wpi.edu
- [New outdoor classroom in Central Falls, RI](#) at River Island Campground
- Mass ECAN: New videos on watershed climate collaboratives! <https://global-lab.wpi.edu/work/climate-change/>

Next meetings

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July 21, 2023: [Emily Vogler](#) from RISD/Commonplace Landscape & Design, presenting on the Dam Atlas and Dam Decision Support Tool

August 18, 2023: TBD

September 15, 2023: TBD

October 20, 2023: TBD

Legislative/Policy Updates:



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- Last Friday, the SNEP Network invited Jill Carr with Mass Bay's National Estuary Partnership to give an overview and demonstration of the AquaQAPP and MassWaterR.
 - AquaQAPP is a web-based application which helps monitoring program managers develop project-specific Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPPs) for fresh/marine/estuarine water quality, and benthic communities in wadeable streams and coastal near-shore. AquaQAPP can be used regionally, with the understanding that it was developed to meet EPA Region 1 and MassDEP preferences for QAPP formatting and field and analytical methods.
 - MassWaterR is a robust R-based package developed for analyzing and organizing surface water monitoring data collected by watershed associations and citizen science groups. The objective of the package is to automate and streamline quality control and exploratory analysis of data, and to format data for upload to the national Water Quality Portal via EPA's Water Quality Exchange (WQX). MassWaterR was developed by MassBays and rolled out in January 2023, along with training and a web-based Community of Practice forum.
 - The recording of the lunch and learn is available here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vcExu-5t37Zsh5geLMdgUOoHWLVToo5/view?usp=sharing>
 - If you have follow-up questions for Jill, you can reach her at Jillian.Carr@umb.edu.

Tools You Can Use! Tools and Resources

- [New Wildlands in New England Report](#) from Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities partners Harvard Forest, Highstead Foundation, and Northeast Wilderness Trust in collaboration with local groups. This report provides a critical baseline and a path forward for advancing policies and securing funding to accelerate Wildlands conservation in New England. The current status of Wildlands in New England relative to the Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities (WWF&C) goal for Wildlands to cover at least 10 percent of the New England landscape, or approximately 4 million acres by 2060. Wildlands currently cover about 3.3 percent of the New England region or one-third of the goal. To date, no state has established a goal for Wildlands. Check out the [executive summary](#) or the [full report](#) as well as state-level reports, an interactive map and more on the website: <https://wildlandsandwoodlands.org/resources/wildlands-in-new-england/>
- [New Research Links Land Use Changes to Water Quality & Quantity](#) from UMass Amherst. Okay, we're probably not surprised to hear this, but it's good to see more published papers on it! This focuses on the SuAsCo river watershed.
- [Climate Adaptation Leadership Award for Natural Resources](#). This award is for those who build resilience and advance adaptation of America's vital natural resources in a changing climate. Recognize and appreciate the leadership from those around you that has inspired your own work! Submit nominations [here](#) by 6/15.
- [Climate Resilience Story Collection Survey](#), Barr Foundation. Help capture the difficulties, hopes, and solutions of how people are protecting and preparing for climate change. Let's lift up stories from those that are most impacted. Complete by 6/23.

Events:

- **June 17** – Water chestnut pull at Lake Quinsigamond in Shrewsbury. Sign up [here](#).
- **June 17** – Blackstone Valley Tourism Council (BVTC) hosting Rivers Day at Central Falls Landing from 4-7pm. Tabling available from 3-6 pm; contact Patti to sign up at patti.bvtc@gmail.com
- **June 20** – Water chestnut pull at Blackstone River in Central Falls. Sign up [here](#).
- **June 24** – Water chestnut pull at Whitins Pond Falls in Uxbridge. Sign up [here](#).



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- **July 8** – Water chestnut pull at Lake Quinsigamond in Shrewsbury. Sign up [here](#).
- **October 11-12** – Salazar Center for North American Landscape Conservation Symposium <https://salazarcenter.colostate.edu/events/2023-symposium/>
- **October 23** – [Mass Floodplain Managers \(massFM\) Annual Conference](#). To be part of a panel or prepare a presentation, submit an abstract [here](#) by 7/17
- **October 24-25** – [Living Shorelines Tech Transfer Workshop](#) hosted by Restore America’s Estuaries and Galveston Bay Foundation in Galveston, TX
- **October 28** – MACC Fall Conference in Devens, MA <https://www.maccweb.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1751595&group>
- **November 9** – Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Conference at UMass Amherst
- **Oct/Nov TBD** Dam Removal Training – Interested in dam removal? We’re planning a dam removal 101 training this fall (Oct/Nov) for practitioners or would-be practitioners. What are your big questions? Let us know! This program will offer an overview of best practices, resources, and answering common questions, with half of the day dedicated to a hands-on charette. Audience: Local champions, watershed organizers, government officials, engineers, planners, and others providing community technical assistance. Want to help organize? Contact Stef scovino@clarku.edu
- **May 13-16, 2024** – River Rally <https://www.rivernetnetwork.org/events/river-rally-2024/>
- **May 14-16, 2024** – National Adaptation Forum <https://www.nationaladaptationforum.org/>
- **October 6-10, 2024** – Restore America’s Estuaries Conference <https://estuaries.org/2024-rae-summit/>

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>
- **Due 6/30/23 SNEP Stormwater and Natural Infrastructure Grant** Up to six awards of \$400-600k <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=347853>
- **Due 7/11/23 Coastal Resilience Grant Program**, Office of Coastal Zone Management. CZM seeking proposals for innovative and transferable local and regional projects to address coastal flooding, erosion, and sea level rise impacts. Q&A period until 6/13.
- **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/>
- **7/28/23 – SNEP Priority Research Grants 2023 (EPA-R1-SNEP-2023R)** Anticipate 3-6 awards of \$100-300k/each. Priority research topics can be found in Section I.C of the Request for Applications, including: Modeling and Assessing Coastal Lake and Pond Health; Lessons Learned from Implementing Permeable Reactive Barriers; and Eelgrass Viability (Flowering and Seeding, Impacts of Climate Change, Long-Term Prognosis). 06/22/23 (12:30-2:00PM EST): Informational webinar and Q&A. 7/24/23: Deadline to submit questions to SECoastalNE@EPA.GOV



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Job Opportunities:

- New England Environmental Finance Center
 - [Program Manager, Water & Climate](#)
 - [Program Manager, Community Partnerships](#)
- City of Worcester
 - [Zero Waste Coordinator](#), Department of Sustainability and Resilience
 - [Junior Sanitary Engineer Grade 3](#), Department of Public Works & Parks, Sewer Division
- Food Solutions New England (with Wildlands, Woodlands, Farmlands & Communities, via University of NH Sustainability Center) – [Policy Program Director](#)
- MA Department of Environmental Protection
 - Summer Internships (Contracted student intern):
 - Office of General Counsel
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004PK>
 - Water Quality Certification
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004PS>
 - Drinking Water
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004U3>
 - Watershed Planning Program Non Point Source Section
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004U5>
 - Watershed Planning Program Surface Water
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004S8>
 - Watershed Planning Program Total Max Daily Load
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004S6>
 - Watershed Planning Program Data Mgmt & Water Quality Assessmt
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004S5>
 - Bureau of Air Waste/Air Quality
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004S2>
 - Municipal Waste Reduction Branch
<https://massanf.taleo.net/careersection/ex/jobdetail.ftl?job=230004QL>
- MA Division of Ecological Restoration
 - [Ecological Restoration Specialist – Dam Removal](#)
- Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition [Development and Communications Coordinator](#)
- Conservation Law Foundation
 - [Oceans Policy Manager](#)
 - [Fall/Winter/Spring Intern - MA](#)
- [Groundwork Lawrence](#)
 - Development Manager
 - Urban Ag Project Manager
 - Green Team Youth Leader
- Mass Audubon
 - [Coastal Waterbird Program Crew Leader](#)
 - [Field Teacher at Broad Meadow Brook](#)
 - [Land Conservation Specialist](#)
 - [Chief Conservation Officer](#)
 - [Nature in the City Program Coordinator](#)



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- Sudbury Valley Trustees [Director of Land Protection](#)
- RI Department of Environmental Management [Seasonal Water Monitoring Field Intern](#)