



Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Meeting: Agenda

July 21, 2022, 10am-12pm

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

Attendees

Kellie King, Emily Vogler, Cassandra Florez, Patti McAlpine, Danica Belknap, Fiona's OtterPilot, Donna Williams, David Tapscott, Greg Doerschler, Mark Nimiroski, Ed Higgins, Peter Coffin, Elisabeth Cianciola, Nick Cohen, Amanda Coffuire, Sarah Plutnicki, Heidi Ricci, Ted Beauvais, Sophia Kostoulas, Deb Cary, Cayden Herder, Bill Napolitano, Stefanie Covino, Caleigh McLaren

Recording Available <https://clarku.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=9f0d1002-7ea6-4d06-ab4d-b0460114d1a3>

Presentation by Emily Vogler, from [RISD/Commonplace Landscape & Design](#), discussing her new resource – the [Narragansett Bay Dam Atlas](#) and the related Dam Decision Support Tool

- Dam removal is a tricky issue with a lot of social aspects and requires support from the community to achieve successful restoration.
- We need more consistent data and tools across states and consideration of the social sector.
- There's also a need for unbiased information to make decisions around dams (not just automatic removal as goal).
- This report includes consideration of both the social and ecological dimensions of dam removal decision making.
- Final products include a lengthy publication and an interactive website.
- This work highlights data gaps around dams, especially differences between the datasets that neighboring states offer. For example, dam ownership data is nonexistent for RI, and date of dam creation data is nonexistent for MA.
- The report includes lots of maps, overview of data on dams; case studies on removal, fish passage, and other actions; and then a structured decision support tool to help balance local needs and sometimes competing interests of ecological restoration, historic conservation, public recreation, sense of place, cost, public safety, etc.
- Some of the resources in the report provide exercises to shift people's mindsets from position to objective. This means getting to the core of their interests and values instead of focusing on their stance on the issue. This requires delving into how we can find compromise.
- Want to be a reviewer for the report? Share your info here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1671ctWQDgRc-kBiVTvYEz-6h7IMXQ_VKet32JKYu-iQ/edit?usp=sharing
- Website and interactive map coming soon! Check damatlas.org within the next few weeks.
- There is an opportunity to follow up matching Dam Atlas needs with local university students doing GIS, data review, and plan review docs!

Subgroup Updates:

- University Bike/greenway
 - 5/26 article from Patch on the start of construction of 0.5-mile bridge between Blackstone, MA and Woonsocket, RI. This will provide 15 miles of unbroken trails from Uxbridge to Pawtucket. So far in MA, we only have a 2.5-mile section in Worcester/Millbury, then a 3.5-mile section from Uxbridge to Blackstone. There are still 18 miles missing between Millbury and Uxbridge.

- University work
 - Don't forget to share with your students (and colleagues!) to sign up for a poster session at the MassFM Conference by 7/17! Call for Abstracts is open now at www.massfm.org/call-for-abstracts-2023
- Fish passage



- We got some national attention in June! US Sec. of the Interior Deb Haaland visited the Blackstone Valley National Historical Park on Friday, 6/16. Her visit focused on meeting with the federally recognized tribes, but she also made time to meet with National Park Service staff and a few environmental groups, including the Blackstone River Watershed Council and - lucky us! - the Blackstone Watershed Collaborative. Along with RI Sen. Whitehouse, RI Sen. Reed, RI Cong. Magaziner, RI Governor McKee, Pawtucket Mayor Grebien, and others, she discussed the importance of protecting our natural and cultural resources, especially as it relates to creation of migratory fish passage in the river. We were honored to participate and delighted to show her America's hardest working river and how we're working collaboratively to restore anadromous fish passage and improve the health of our watershed for all communities. Note: This visit helped to give some much-needed attention to fish passage on the Blackstone, and this update was featured in numerous newsletters, including EPA SNEP, Network for Landscape Conservation, and the National Park Service.
- We are working to organize the next stakeholder meeting for fish passage. Please let Stef know if you wanted to be added and have not previously participated in a meeting (last occurred in Nov).
- It's time to bring them back: Check out the ClarkNOW story on fish passage over the lower four dams of the Blackstone: <https://clarknow.clarku.edu/2023/07/18/its-time-to-bring-them-back/>
- Water quality
 - Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) in Worcester continues to impact water quality in the Blackstone River. There have been numerous overflows in June. Sign up to receive CSO notifications [here](#).
 - Numerous MA Blackstone communities are receiving funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, via the State Clean Water Revolving Fund and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (SRF). Check out the article to learn more here: <https://www.wbjournal.com/article/central-mass-water-improvement-projects-to-split-152m-in-financing> These include:



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- **Shrewsbury** - \$9.8 million: Rolfe and Maple avenue upgrades to their pump stations and force main replacement. The purpose of these improvements is to restore useful life of the stations and the force main, as well as improve operator safety and system reliability.
- Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District - \$10 million: The project involves the construction of new facilities to provide standby power for the entire wastewater treatment facility, including new standby generators and related elements like switchgear and electrical conduit. It includes additional renewable energy sources to provide resiliency.
- **Worcester** - \$14.1 million: Quinsigamond Avenue will include upgrades to the combined sewer overflow and storage treatment facility to maintain, upgrade, and extend the service life of the facility. The upgrades focus on the replacement of aged systems that have exceeded their useful life and includes improvements to wastewater process, electrical system, HVAC, plumbing, instrumentation and controls, structural, civil site features, architectural, fire detection, protection, and alarm system, and comprehensive active flood proofing of the building. The proposed upgrades will reduce the risk of an interruption to operation, ensuring the facility continues to meet the discharge requirements of its pollutant discharge permit and provide proper overall standard of care.
- **Worcester** - \$6.2 million: Lake Avenue pump station improvements will consist of the removal and replacement of existing sewage pumps, and their corresponding equipment not rated for submersible conditions to prevent damage due to flooding, reconfiguration of force mains and modification of backup float system, and installing separate cellular dialing system. These upgrades will improve the response time during an emergency situation, reduce the frequency and severity of sanitary sewer overflows into the adjacent lake, and reduce the maintenance frequency and corresponding cost.
- **Millbury** - \$3.3 million: The Oak Pond Well treatment facility, which closed in 2019 due to PFA levels, project will include the construction of a 1,125-square-foot building and install two 12-foot diameter granular activated carbon filter vessels, with a treatment design capacity of 530 gallons per minute. The new treatment facility will include a backwash waste holding tank and force main to connect to the existing sanitary sewer, and chemical feed systems for disinfection and corrosion control.
- **Millbury** - \$6.7 million: The Jacques Wells water treatment facility work includes construction of replacing of the existing Jacques water treatment plant with a new facility with sufficient hydraulic capacity for the proposed wellfield expansion of 1,500 gallons per minute. The proposed treatment facility will be capable of treating source water for PFAS, disinfection, and corrosion control.
- Upper Blackstone Wastewater Treatment facility tour coming up, stay tuned for information on dates!

Partner Updates

- **Blackstone River Coalition** – received a water quality grant from DEP and found interesting data on local water quality on some tributaries impacted by bacteria.
- **Blackstone Valley Tourism Council** –
 - Looking for a fun, team building event? BVTC is looking for Dragon Boat teams. There is a fee, but there are prizes, lots of fun and networking. If interested visit <https://www.dragonboatri.com/site/> ! Date of Dragon Boat race and Taiwan Festival is Saturday, September 2nd.



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- Potential purchase of a water chestnut pulling machine. It would be used as a shared resource among partners.
- **Uxbridge Select Board** is having a follow-up Visioning Workshop regarding the future of Whitin dam on Monday 7/24. It is zoom accessible, and the public is welcome to participate in Q&A. Agenda available: <https://www.uxbridge-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf3971/f/agendas/07242023bosagenda.pdf> Contact David for more info: dtapscott@uxbridge-ma.gov Background available [here](#).
- Be a **Flood Watch Volunteer for the City of Worcester!** Join the Flood Watch by monitoring flooding with photos, videos, and field notes to help prioritize improvements to the city's stormwater system. This is a great opportunity for community members and students to volunteer and contribute their time for the community's resilience efforts! On Wednesday, July 12, join the virtual Training Session to learn more about the project and ask questions. The training will be recorded and posted for future participants. Learn more at <https://www.worcesterma.gov/dsr>
- **SNEP Network Stormwater Planning Series (2023-2024)** guides communities in developing a conceptual design for a nature-based stormwater retrofit option in their selected drainage area. Participants will use the tools and techniques presented in the training to identify low-cost stormwater solutions to address the stormwater problem at their specific location. Services are made available at NO COST to communities in the Southeast New England region. The application deadline is September 8th, 2023. Learn more at <https://snepnetwork.org/stormwater-planning-series-2023-2024/> or view the one-pager <https://snepnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Stormwater-Planning-Series-One-Pager-.pdf>

Don't forget to check out the resources & events below! Contact Stef to sign up as a speaker!

Next meetings

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August 21, 2023: Elizabeth Scott, SNEP Network Liaison for Rhode Island discussing the Stormwater Planning Training Series – RFP open in July, due September

September 15, 2023: TBD

October 20, 2023: TBD

Legislative/Policy Updates

- In a letter to Representatives Michlewitz, Cusack, and Soter and Senators Rodrigues, Moran, and Tarr, Massachusetts environmental organizations and local municipalities called for an amendment to the current septic system tax credit. Read the letter here https://drive.google.com/file/d/1 - 0KmYAM_aG7jDn3U28B3GTqDI-s7qeV/view?usp=sharing

Tools You Can Use! Tools & Resources

- **Demystifying Floodplains:** Five things to know about floodplains for non-floodplain managers. Check out the recording of this free webinar hosted by the SNEP Network. I think we all learned something new - and that there's so much more to learn about floodplains! <https://snepnetwork.org/2023/06/22/demystifying-floodplain-management-what-you-need-to-know/>



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- **Increasing Collaborative Capacity and Infrastructure for Landscape Stewardship:** from California Landscape Stewardship Network (August 22, 2022). This paper asks how state and federal agencies can work towards building and sustaining local and regional collaboration necessary to advance landscape-scale stewardship. https://calandscapestewardshipnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/CollabCapacity_and_Infrastructure_Final_August_2022_0.pdf
- **As the climate changes, obsolete dams put Mass. at risk for flooding similar to Vermont:** <https://www.wgbh.org/news/local-news/2023/07/14/as-the-climate-changes-obsolete-dams-put-mass-at-risk-for-flooding-similar-to-vermont>
- Check out our new **GIS Hub** on the Collaborative website! <https://www.blackstonecollaborative.org/gis> Please contact **Caleigh McLaren** cmclaren@clarku.edu with any questions, corrections, or comments.
- EPA Launches **EJSCREEN 2.2**, The Community Environmental Justice Mapping Tool & Trainings: EPA has updated EJScreen, the Agency's publicly available environmental justice (EJ) screening and mapping tool. EJScreen 2.2 makes important improvements to better meet the needs of users, including a redesigned and enhanced report, a new environmental indicator with corresponding indexes, and refreshed demographic and environmental data. Training available, learn more at <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/ejscreen-office-hours-training>. Upcoming office hours on August 16 at 12pm EST - [Click here to join](#)
- **Wildlands in New England:** Past, Present, and Future: This report answers these three important questions Where are Wildlands located in New England? What are the characteristics of these Wildlands? What is their current protection status? Read here: <https://wildlandsandwoodlands.org/resources/wildlands-in-new-england/>

Events

- **July 13, 2023 July 26, 2023; and September 12, 2023** – Stormwater Financing Workshop hosted by the Mass Rivers Alliance, to help municipalities (and non-profits) learn about, and take advantage of, short- and long-term funding solutions for stormwater management. Two events are in-person, one is virtual. This is a three-part workshop. Register here:
 - 7/13: [Register](#)
 - 7/26: [Register](#)
 - 9/12: [Register](#)
- **July 31, 2023; August 24, 2023; September 7, 2023** – When your EJ Grant Requires a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) Workshop. The same workshop will be held three separate times. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EHWY3yxO_t8uTQ73-pwCe8AijZWtWeTj/view?usp=sharing. If you are interested in attending, contact Linda Himmelbauer himmelbauer.linda@epa.gov
- **August 16, 2023** – EPA EJ Screen Tool Training Office Hours <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/ejscreen-office-hours-training>
- **October 11-12, 2023** – Salazar Center for North American Landscape Conservation Symposium <https://salazarcenter.colostate.edu/events/2023-symposium/>
- **October 23, 2023** – 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, 2023** – Living Shorelines Tech Transfer Workshop hosted by Restore America's Estuaries and Galveston Bay Foundation in Galveston, TX
- **October 28, 2023** – MACC Fall Conference in Devens, MA <https://www.maccweb.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1751595&group>
- **November 9, 2023** – Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Conference at UMass Amherst



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- **October 26, 2023** – Dam Removal 101 Training, hosted at Clark University -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. More info and registration coming soon.
- **May 13-16, 2024** – River Rally <https://www.rivernet.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>
- **TBD** – **MA Division of Ecological Restoration** – A new Request for Responses (RFR) is being released by DER in July seeking new early-phase dam removal projects that have not yet been significantly advanced, but where the dam owner is interested in removal. Municipalities can submit potential projects, which will be rated based on potential environmental and community benefits resulting from removal, as well as proximity and potential benefits to nearby Environmental Justice communities. Dam owners who are not municipalities should work with their municipality to submit an application. Questions? Contact Susie Bresney, Restoration Specialist, Dam Removal Program susie.bresney@mass.gov
- **7/21/23** – **Narragansett Bay Estuary Program** – Planning Activities to Improve Freshwater and Estuarine Habitat Quality and Public Access in the Narragansett Bay Region – \$675k available total. <https://www.nbep.org/projects-we-fund> Questions? Contact Darcy Young at dyoung@nbep.org
- **7/28/23** – **SNP Priority Research Grants 2023 (EPA-R1-SNP-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
- **8/13/23** – **National Park Foundation Strong Parks, Strong Communities Capacity Building Grant Program** – open to existing nonprofit partners of National Parks (such as the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park). Funding \$25-50k for one calendar year of work, with \$2M available. Informational session [7/13 at 2pm](https://www.nationalparks.org/uploads/NPF_SPSC_CapacityBuilding_Jun2023.pdf). See more at https://www.nationalparks.org/uploads/NPF_SPSC_CapacityBuilding_Jun2023.pdf
- **8/21/23** – **Section 165(a) Pilot Program for Water Resources Projects for Small or Disadvantaged Communities** – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is launching a pilot program to fully fund small water resources projects for economically disadvantaged communities. See more at https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Project-Planning/Legislative-Links/wrda_2020/
- **Nomination Period 7/17/23-8/4/23** – **2023-24 Climate Justice Microgrants Program** – to help document and lift up lessons learned from past or completed initiatives that advanced equitable, community-based solutions to the climate crisis. This grant will fund projects between \$10,000–\$15,000. See more at <https://climateadvocacylab.org/climate-justice-microgrants>



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Job opportunities:

- State of RI – [Chief Resilience Officer](#)
- United States Biosphere Network – [Network Coordinator](#)
- 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](#)
- Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition – [Development and Communications Coordinator](#)
- Conservation Law Foundation
 - [Oceans Policy Manager](#)
 - [Fall/Winter/Spring Intern - MA](#)
- [Groundwork Lawrence](#)
 - Development Manager
 - Urban Agriculture Manager
 - Urban Environmental Project Manager
 - Pa'Lante Resident Task Force
- Mass Audubon – [Field Teacher at Broad Meadow Brook](#)
- Merrimack River Watershed Council – [Water Quality Project Manager](#)
- Sudbury Valley Trustees – [Director of Land Protection](#)
- RI Department of Environmental Management – [Seasonal Water Monitoring Field Intern](#)