



# Blackstone Watershed Collaborative Meeting Notes

October 20, 2023, 10am-12pm

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

## Attendees

Heather Parry, Peter Coffin, Caleigh McLaren, Kevin Rice, Hillary King, Heidi Ricci, Sarah Bower, Sarah Plutnicki, Donna Williams, David Tapscott, Bryce Dubois, Greg Doerschler, Susie Bresney, Amy Mosher Berry, Judy Rondeau, Sarah Bertrand, Nick Cohen

## Recording Available

<https://clarku.hosted.panopto.com/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=038283c9-f3d1-4d3f-8c7f-b0ae00ec7829&start=0>

**Presentation** by Peter Coffin & Heather Parry of the Blackstone River Coalition about the Coalition's new website, <https://www.blackstonerivercoalition.org/>

## Subgroup Updates

- Bike/greenway
- University work
  - Holy Cross students from Professor Bryce Dubois' course Contested Waterways, continue to explore CSO knowledge in Green Island, as well as looking at educational & outreach examples from other regions and communities. Keep in touch for their findings!
- Fish passage
  - DEM and TNC are submitting a \$20M grant to further the design, permitting, and construction of passage around the lower three dams.
    - A [one pager](#) on the project is here.
    - A [powerpoint](#) Stef recently gave on fish passage on the Blackstone at the NBEP Annual Symposium on biodiversity is available here.
  - DEM is working on creating a small, monthly "Advisory Committee" as well as a large, quarterly public meeting to provide updates on fish passage over the lower four dams.
- Water quality
  - The Blackstone River Coalition has a new website, including where you can explore water quality report cards, historic and current. Check it out at [blackstonerivercoalition.org](http://blackstonerivercoalition.org)!

## Partner Updates

- **Grafton, MA:** CMRPC helped create site designs to redevelop a public place that is walkable for those in the neighborhood and accessible to all, including options for different budget scenarios and phasing plans. Find more about the Whitney Park Project [here](#).
- **Mendon, MA:** Created its first ever comprehensive plan with CMRPC! Check it out here: [full Master Plan Document](#).
- **Central MA Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC):**
  - [Arts and mapping Survey](#): CMRPC has released a short survey and map for citizens to identify as many Arts and Culture resources as they can (due 10/31/23). This project will create an accessible list and map of cultural assets in our region, serving as a jumping-off point for increased discussion of arts-related planning and investment.



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- [The Southern Worcester County Economic Development Strategy 2023-2028](#) comment period is now open. What will the regional economy look like in 2028? What are the necessary actions to support an equitable and prosperous economy? This Economic Development Strategy includes existing conditions, goals for the future, and a roadmap to get there. This plan will help guide state and federal funding priorities for the region. Comment by October 16th.
- [The Massachusetts Environmental Health Association \(MEHA\) Ambassador Program](#) aims to promote careers in public and environmental health among high school and college students. Projects have been funded through the FY 2022/2023 Community Development Block Grant program from the MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, including in our watershed in Millbury. The FY 22/23 grants, which combine funds from two federal fiscal years into a single round, total \$65 million across Massachusetts.
- [Extreme Heat Survey](#): CMRPC wants to hear your feedback about your unique experiences with extreme heat and is releasing a survey that asks community members about awareness of high heat events, how you cope with high heat at home and at work, and how easy it is to access water, fans, A/C and other resources during periods of extreme heat.
  - [Community Advisory Board \(CAB\) for this heat plan](#) is still looking for members of the community to join. CAB member responsibilities will be to ensure that community needs are reflected in resilience strategies and goals, as well as to help with promotion of the study to friends, family, colleagues, etc. Meetings will be held virtually.
- [Regional Waste Action Plan Community Survey](#): CMRPC is looking for survey responses about waste disposal in your community. Responses will directly inform a regional action plan that aims to reduce the amount of waste from each community and to better manage the disposal of this waste.
- **A team from USGS, MassWildlife, and the UMass** are building a network of people and organizations interested in advancing our knowledge of current and future coldwater stream habitat in the northeastern United States.
  - The first stage in building this network will be a 3-hour-long online forum
  - Establishing this network is a central component to a new multi-year project supported by the [USGS Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center](#).
  - Please complete [this Coldwater Stream Habitat Community Forum form](#) in order to join this network and indicate your availability to participate in the upcoming online forum.
- [RIEEA's 4th Annual Youth Leadership Retreat](#) on November 4, 2023. Applications are now being accepted from Rhode Island youth, ages 14 to 24, through October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This free event held at the Providence Public Library, aims to inspire and build the capacity of a diverse and representative group of young people to become leaders and advocates for environmental justice in their communities through environmental education.
- **Mass Audubon's** new report, [Growing Solar](#) is now available! Check out the [full report](#), [webinar](#), and executive summary, and learn more about how to be a climate champion.
- **Mass Rivers:**
  - Recently Mass Rivers, Save the Alewife Brook, Charles River Watershed Association, and Mystic River Watershed Association held a briefing about combined sewer overflows (CSOs). View the recorded briefing [here](#).
  - Dam Busters is a series of 1-hour webinars on dam removal starting in November. Register for the webinars [here](#).
- The **MVP Program** has created the [MVP Expression of Interest form](#) for the MVP FY25 Action Grant. Use this form to submit project ideas and receive feedback ahead of Spring 2024.
- **MassDEP:**



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- The Watershed Planning Program is sponsoring Fostering Sustainable Behavior Community Based Social Marketing Workshops on Dec 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>. These half day workshops will be led by Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr and provide a comprehensive introduction to the 5 steps of community development. For more information contact Judy Rondeau at MassDEP [Judith.rondeau@mass.gov](mailto:Judith.rondeau@mass.gov).
- For questions regarding 604(b) grant proposals contact [Meghan.selby@mass.gov](mailto:Meghan.selby@mass.gov); for 319, contact [Malcolm.harper@mass.gov](mailto:Malcolm.harper@mass.gov).
- The Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program released the RFGP this week. The deadline to apply is 11/15. You can find more information [here](#).
- **Entrepreneurs Forever** is offering a free workshop on 10/23 for organizations interested in developing an internship program. Learn more about the workshop, [How a Well-Oiled Internship Program Can Help Grow Your Small Business](#).

## Next meetings

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

November 17, 2023: TBD

December 15, 2023: TBD

January 19, 2024: TBD

## Legislative/Policy Updates

- **Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, Save the Alewife Brook, Charles River Watershed Association, and Mystic River Watershed Association** will host a briefing about combined sewer overflows (CSOs) on October 19<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-11:00. This summer, intense, historic rainfall led to record-breaking amounts of sewage being released into our rivers, damaging both public health and ecosystem health. Learn more about sewer overflows and what we can do to end them, once and for all. Register [here](#).
- **The Healey Administration** celebrates Climate Week by becoming the first state in the country to develop biodiversity goals to 2050 and create an executive order to end state agencies' use of single use plastic bottles. Read the full story [here](#).

## Tools You Can Use! Tools & Resources

- Self-Paced Online Courses from the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy:
  - [Conservation Easements: Legal Principles, Valuation, and Applications](#)
  - [Foundations of Local Government Finance in the United States](#)
  - [Successful Property Tax Reform: The Case of Massachusetts](#)
- [Growing Solar, Protecting Nature Report](#): This work is the result of a comprehensive economic and geospatial analysis of whether Massachusetts can meet its solar goals while protecting its most valuable natural and working lands. View the webinar [here](#).
- [Dam Busters](#): A series of 1-hour webinars on dam removal starting in November.

## Events

- **October 17, 2023** – [HEZ Learning Community Event](#). This in-person event is taking place at Rhode Island College in Providence, RI.



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- **October 19, 2023** – [CSO Briefing](#). Join Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, Save the Alewife Brook, Charles River Watershed Association, and Mystic River Watershed Association on October 19<sup>th</sup> from 10:00-11:00 for a briefing about combined sewer overflows (CSOs). This summer, intense, historic rainfall led to record-breaking amounts of sewage being released into our rivers, damaging both public health and ecosystem health. Learn more about sewer overflows and what we can do to end them, once and for all. View the recorded briefing [here](#).
- **October 21, 2023** – [Town Forest Conference in Ashland](#). Join the DCR and the Town of Ashland for a day of informational speakers, refreshments, food, and a family friendly walk through Ashland Town Forest. Register for the event [here](#).
- **October 22, 2023** – [Intertribal Gathering](#). The Blackstone River Watershed Council will be co-hosting an Intertribal Gathering with the Narragansett and Nipmuc Tribes at the Slater Mill Historic Site from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
- **October 23, 2023** – [Mass Floodplain Managers \(massFM\) Annual Conference](#). This technical program includes topics in Riverine/Coastal Floodplain Management, Climate Resiliency and Adaptation, Ecological Restoration, Nature Based Solutions, Innovative Stormwater Management, Permitting, Lessons Learned, and Community Outreach.
- **October 23, 2023** – [How a Well-Oiled Internship Program Can Help Grow Your Small Business](#). Entrepreneurs Forever is offering a free workshop for organizations interested in developing an internship program.
- **October 24, 2023** – [Mattapoissett River Valley Field Trip](#). Learn about coordinated multi-town watershed land conservation efforts as well as a large wetland/stream ecological restoration project. These projects buffer flooding and drought and enhance the resilience of a regionally important drinking water supply, fish/wildlife resources, outdoor recreation opportunities and local agriculture.
- **October 24-25, 2023** – [Living Shorelines Tech Transfer Workshop](#) hosted by Restore America's Estuaries and Galveston Bay Foundation in Galveston, TX. This event is a unique platform to learn, engage, and exchange knowledge with professionals, experts, and stakeholders in the field of coastal and estuarine habitat restoration.
- **October 26, 2023** – [Dam Removal & Ecological Restoration 101 Training](#) at Clark University in Worcester, MA. 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.
- **October 28, 2023** – [MACC Fall Conference](#) in Devens, MA. Join conservation commissioners, conservation agents, environmental officials, consultants, attorneys, students, activists, and others in learning, asking, understanding, and networking.
- **November 4, 2023** – [RIEEA's 4th Annual Youth Leadership Retreat](#). Applications are now being accepted from Rhode Island youth, ages 14 through 24, through October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This free event held at the Providence Public Library, aims to inspire and build the capacity of a diverse and representative group of young people to become leaders and advocates for environmental justice in their communities through environmental education.
- **November 9, 2023** – [CMRPC's Virtual November Quarterly Meeting](#). This meeting is open to the public. The agenda and Zoom link will be available [here](#) two (2) days prior to the meeting, per open meeting law.
- **TDB** – [Citizen Planner Training Collaborative](#) Fall 2023 Workshops are coming soon. Learn more about the training collaborative for planning professionals and Planning Board members by visiting the CPTC website.
- **November 9, 2023** – [Regional Conservation Partnership \(RCP\) Conference](#) at UMass Amherst. This event is designed to bring together people advancing collaborative landscape conservation in the Northeastern U.S. and beyond.



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- **November 12-19, 2023** – [Natural History Week 2023](#) when the RI Natural History Survey will co-host a talk "The Native Plant Supply Chain" and celebrate the 2023 Distinguished Naturalist, Exceptional Service, and Golden Eye award winners.
- **December 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>** – Fostering Sustainable Behavior Community Based Social Marketing Workshops sponsored by MassDEP's Watershed Planning Program. These half day workshops will be led by Dr. Doug McKenzie-Mohr and provide a comprehensive introduction to the 5 steps of community development. For more information contact Judy Rondeau at MassDEP [Judith.rondeau@mass.gov](mailto:Judith.rondeau@mass.gov).
- **March 2, 2024** – [MACC Annual Environmental Conference 2024](#) – Save the date for this fabulous spring conference at The College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA. They are currently seeking wetland and climate related workshop proposals for this event.
- **May 13-16, 2024** – [River Rally](#) in Grand Rapids, MI. This event combats feelings of isolation, overwhelm, and burnout for network members working at the intersection of water and justice by building knowledge and skills, diversifying perspectives and solutions, recognizing achievements within the network, and strengthening connections.
- **May 14-16, 2024** – [National Adaptation Forum](#) in Saint Paul, MN. This event is a bi-annual convening for adaptation professionals to innovate, network, and focus on established and emerging climate adaptation issues of the day.
- **October 6-10, 2024** – [Restore America's Estuaries Conference](#) in Washington, DC. This is the premier event for policy makers, practitioners, and managers in the United States to explore the latest research, policy, and practice in coastal restoration.

## Grants

- **Rolling As Available** – [Community Compact Best Practices Program](#) (first-come first-served): Applications for Best Practices can be submitted by municipalities that did not apply for a Best Practices grant in FY23. This year's program includes more than 100 options in the following categories: Age and Dementia Friendly; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Economic Development; Education; Energy and Environment; Financial Management; Housing and Livable Communities; Human Resources; Information Technology; and Mental Health. No match is required. View the complete set of [community compact best practices](#). Contact Dominique DuTremble at [ddutremble@cmrpc.org](mailto:ddutremble@cmrpc.org) for more information.
- **10/31/23** – [MassDOT Shared Streets and Grant Program](#) – The Program provides funding to municipalities and public transit authorities to improve plazas, sidewalks, curbs, streets, bus stops, parking areas, and other public spaces in support of public health, safe mobility, and strengthened commerce. Municipalities and public transit authorities are eligible to apply. The grant limit is \$250,000. Contact Yahaira Graxirena at [ygraxirena@cmrpc.org](mailto:ygraxirena@cmrpc.org) for more information.
- **11/8/23** – [Restoring Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grant](#) – Aims to provide federal financial and technical assistance to fish passage through the removal of dams and other in-stream barriers for native migratory or sea-run fish.
- **11/8/23** – [Restoring Tribal Priority Fish Passage through Barrier Removal Grant](#) – Aims to provide federal financial and technical assistance to Indian tribes and organizations that represent Indian tribes through formal legal agreements to remove barriers to fish passage.
- **11/15/23** – [Water Quality Monitoring Grant Program](#) – This program supports new or existing water quality monitoring efforts.



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- **11/30/23** – [USDA Landscape Scale Restoration Grants](#) – funds collaborative, science-based restoration of priority rural forest landscapes, leverages public and private resources, and supports State Forest Action Plans. State agencies, federally recognized tribes, nonprofits, universities, and local governments may apply.
- **2/1/2024** – [MassTrails](#) provides grants to support recreational trail and shared use pathway projects across the Commonwealth. The award amount ranges from \$60,000 for “local” projects and up to \$500,000 for projects demonstrating critical network connections of regional or statewide significance. Eligible activities include project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared-use pathways, and the amenities that support trails. Contact Sam Carter at [scarter@cmrpc.org](mailto:scarter@cmrpc.org) for more information.
- **2/21/2024** – [The Microprojects Program](#) is the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) funding program for first and last-mile solutions, workforce transportation, and other small, non-traditional transportation projects, like bicycle racks, bicycle storage, and bike sharing capital expenses (not operations), and wayfinding for bicyclists and pedestrians. The CMMPO allocated \$400,000 per year to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Microprojects Program and it is funded with federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. For more information contact Yahaira Graxirena, Transportation Project Manager: [ygraxirena@cmrpc.org](mailto:ygraxirena@cmrpc.org)
- **Rolling through 4/4/24** – [MassCEC’s EmPower Massachusetts](#) offers multiple stages of investment in communities and community-based organizations so that they can explore, develop, and implement program models or projects that provide access to the benefits of clean energy for previously underserved populations. This MassCEC program crowd-sources new and innovative ideas, then helps put them into action.
- **Rolling As Available** – [AMC Waters and Rivers Protection Fund](#) – Receive up to \$10,000 to fund a project that supports the protection and understanding of our region’s water resources, including but not limited to the development of recreational opportunities, research on, and protection of riparian environments, and advocacy to protect clean water and recreational access. Contact [markrallio@gmail.com](mailto:markrallio@gmail.com) for more information.
- **Rolling As Available** – [MA Department of Fish and Game’s In-Lieu Fee Program](#) – This program funds land conservation or aquatic resource restoration projects (all of Blackstone in MA is eligible). Municipalities, nongovernmental 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-231046-COM-COM4-77929.
- **11/13/23** – [US EPA Brownfields Grants](#) – Communities interested in investigating and/or cleaning up underutilized properties that are known or are suspected to be contaminated should apply. Communities and other eligible entities may seek community-wide or site-specific assessment funds as well as site-specific cleanup funds. Andrew Loew at [aloew@cmrpc.org](mailto:aloew@cmrpc.org) for more information.

## Job opportunities

- CMRPC – [MVP 2.0 Community Liaison for Uxbridge, Sutton, Northbridge, Douglas](#)
- Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council – [Resilience Hub Manager](#)
- Department of Fish and Game –
  - [Communications Director](#)
  - [Stream Continuity Program Manager](#)
- Kim Ludgren Associates Inc – [Director of Climate Solutions](#)
- OARS – [Executive Director](#)
- Sustainable Solutions Lab at UMass Boston [Executive Director](#)



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- SRPEDD – [Principal Environmental Planner](#)
- CivicWell – [Climate Change and Energy Program Director](#)
- MVP – [Regional Coordinator position in the Berkshires and Hilltowns region,](#)
- UMass Extension – [Climate Program Assistant](#)
- Center for Ecotechnology – [Energy Consultant - Commercial Focus Field Based](#)
- Massachusetts EEA –
  - DEP: [Wastewater Section Chief](#)
- The Nature Conservancy – [Northern Appalachians Freshwater Conservation Manager](#)
- City of Worcester – [Upper Blackstone Clean Water Wastewater Operator](#)
- City of Woonsocket – [City Planner](#)
- State of RI – [Chief Resilience Officer](#)
- Conservation Law Foundation – [Fall/Winter/Spring Intern - MA](#)
- Mass Audubon – [Field Teacher at Broad Meadow Brook](#)