MASSACHUSETTS
Rivers Alliance
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Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Mass Rivers' mission is to protect and restore rivers across the Commonwealth.

Board Officers
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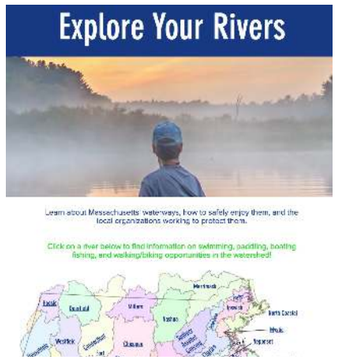
Staff
Julia Blatt, Executive Director
Danielle Dolan, Deputy Director
Katharine Lange, Policy Specialist
Sarah Bower, Technical Specialist
Gretchen McClain, Operations and Membership Manager

Get outside with Mass Rivers!

EXPLORE YOUR RIVERS If you haven't already, check out the "Explore Your Rivers" section of our website for a guide to enjoying rivers all over the state. Not a paddler? No worries! You can find information about hiking trails, bike paths, and even public transportation near your favorite river – or a river you've never explored. Massachusetts is rich in rivers, and (in our humble opinion) they are the reason our state is so beautiful. So if you're worn out, tired, a little down from, you know, all of it…go outside and explore a river!



END-OF-SUMMER CELEBRATION September 11. It's not too early to get this event on your calendar! We had such a good time last year, we're doing it again – food truck, music, beer and wine, boating, raffles and awards at Hale Reservation in Westwood. Bring your family and friends, celebrate our shared achievements, and support the rivers! We look forward to seeing you there!

MASSACHUSETTS
Rivers Alliance

The RIVER Advocate

HEALTHY RIVERS FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

SPRING 2022

Helping our member organizations keep streams flowing

As a small organization, we can do the most good for the greatest number of rivers when we work at the state level, on policies, budgets, laws, and regulations that affect many rivers across the Commonwealth. But those laws and policies are carried out watershed by watershed, river by river, and sometimes small stream by small stream. Our member organizations, spread out across the state, are often on the front lines when it comes to making sure their rivers get the protection they deserve.

This is especially true for the Water Management Act, which governs municipal water allocations. As climate change increases the frequency and severity of droughts in Massachusetts, protecting the sustainability of both rivers and water supplies will become critically important. The Water Management authorizes MassDEP to grant users 20-year permits (and 10-year registrations) to withdraw water for use as municipal water supply or other commercial, agricultural or industrial uses. The law's regulations also provide opportunities for MassDEP to require that these water users decrease their harm to the environment in various ways, such as requiring water users to look for less-damaging water supply sources, creating stormwater recharge to replace water lost to aquifers and streams, or increasing water use restrictions during periods of low streamflows.

Because it can be difficult for our member organizations to navigate this law's complicated regulations, Mass Rivers started a technical assistance program in 2021 to help them. Since the middle of last year, Mass Rivers' Technical Specialist Sarah Bowers has been working in partnership with several groups across the state to protect streamflow through this program, including the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord, the Charles, the Parker, and the Taunton Rivers.

Water use permits are renewed every 20 years, and they're being renewed right now! This is a once in a two-decade opportunity for local groups to get involved and advocate for stronger, more protective permit conditions for our watersheds. Our recent assessment of the 60 permits that have been renewed thus far suggests that permits need significant improvement to uphold the goals of the updated regulations, promulgated in 2014, to maintain healthy watersheds and improve degraded ones.

For more information on our Technical Assistance Program, please contact Technical Specialist Sarah Bower (sarahbower@massriversalliance.org).

SPRING 2022

Mass Rivers staff in Hingham

From the Director

If you take even a quick glance at the Annual Report we send you each year, you'll notice that Mass Rivers' biggest expense, by far, is its people. We are now thrilled to be a five-person staff, guided by a 15-person board, connected to eighty member organizations, and supported by over a thousand donors. Together, we are a community of people who care about rivers and water, and the important role they play in our lives and the wildlife around us.

As we grow and redefine how we do our work, the context and working conditions have changed, presenting us with new challenges. First, we are facing, as we are all facing, the reality of climate change acceleration. This makes our work, and the work of our many partners and members, all the more urgent. Second is of course, Covid. Three of our staff were hired during the pandemic. Two joined our organization as we were all learning to work remotely. With the exception of occasional staff hikes, we worked together for many months without in-person contact.

Yet our staff adapted – brilliantly. They quickly figured out Zoom, and enabled us to offer virtual programming, almost from the start of the pandemic. They learned our issues, created strong working relationships with our partners, and figured out how to do their jobs, creatively, and well. They gently and tactfully suggested ways we could do things better. I believe that one of the silver linings to disruption is often a flowering of creativity, and our staff and board rose to that challenge in ways large and small. During the past two years we've connected hundreds of people through our "Mass Rivers Connects," program for organizational members; supported members protecting stream flow in local rivers through our new technical assistance program, launched the popular bi-weekly "River News and Notes," and presented "Art in the Flow," a six-part series featuring artists inspired by nature. And of course, we continued to work remotely with the state legislature and administration on bills, budgets, and policies so as not to lose ground while the pandemic felt like it was here to stay. We are currently hard at work on a new stormwater technical assistance program, which we expect to launch by the start of the summer.

Mass Rivers' strength is in its people. We have always been fortunate in our staff and our board, our partners, and our loyal, generous supporters. The pandemic has tested us and – so far – we've been able to keep going, stronger than ever. I don't know what the future holds, but I wanted to take a moment here to thank and appreciate our small but mighty staff – Danielle Dolan, Katharine Lange, Sarah Bower, and Gretchen McClain – for rising to the unusual challenge of the past two years, while staying focused on our work of protecting and restoring our state's rivers, and strengthening and connecting our growing community of member organizations.

This newsletter highlights some of this work. Thank you for supporting our initiatives to protect the state's water quality, stream flow, wildlife habitat, and to strengthen climate resiliency. We couldn't do it without you.

Julia

Massachusetts Rivers Alliance Organizational Members

Key Leadership Members (>$1,000)

Charles River Watershed Association
Greater Boston Chapter Trout Unlimited
Ipswich River Watershed Association
Mass Audubon
Mass Organization of State Engineers and Scientists
Mystic River Watershed Association
Neponset River Watershed Association
Nor'East Chapter of Trout Unlimited
The Nature Conservancy

Leadership Members ($250-$999)

Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Berkshire Natural Resources Council
Connecticut River Conservancy
Conservation Law Foundation
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Greenbelt
Groundwork Lawrence
MA RI Council of Trout Unlimited
Nashua River Watershed Association
North and South Rivers Watershed Association
OARS
Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter
Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council
The Charles River Conservancy
The Trustees
The Trust for Public Land

Members (<$250)

Belmont Citizens Forum
Berkshire Environmental Action Team
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate
Blackstone River Coalition
Blackstone River Watershed Association
Buzzards Bay Coalition
Center for Coastal Studies
Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council
Clean Water Fund
Deerfield River Watershed Association
Deerfield River Watershed Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Environment Massachusetts
Fort River Watershed Alliance
Farmington River Watershed Association
Friends of Belle Isle Marsh
Friends of Jerry's Pond
Friends of the Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge
Friends of the Bass River
Friends of the Blue Hills
Friends of the Malden River
Friends of the Middlesex Fells
Friends of the Palmer River
Friends of the Ten Mile and Bucklin Brook
Green Newton
Hoosic River Revival
Hoosic River Watershed Association
Hop Brook Protection Association
Housatonic Valley Association
Jones River Watershed Association
League of Women Voters of Massachusetts
Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust
Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions
Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition
Massachusetts Watershed Coalition
Merrimack River Watershed Council
Millers River Watershed Council
Muddy Water Initiative
Nantucket Land Council
Ocean River Institute
Parker River Clean Water Association
Pioneer Valley Chapter #276 Trout Unlimited
River Merrimack
Runnins River Watershed Alliance
Save the Bay - Narragansett Bay Riverkeeper
Shawsheen River Watershed Association
Stockholm Environment Institute
Sudbury Valley Trustees
Taunton River Watershed Alliance
Taunton River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council
Ten Mile River Watershed Council
Wareham Land Trust
Wastewater Advisory Committee to the MWRA
Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee
Weir River Watershed Association
Westfield River Watershed Association
Westfield River Wild and Scenic River Advisory Committee
Westport River Watershed Alliance

Caroline Reeves of the Muddy River Initiative with Policy Specialist Katharine Lange

POLICY CORNER

Bills on the move, gubernatorial briefing, and more.

In February our two priority bills advanced out of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. We reached this milestone because many of you spoke up for rivers and contacted your legislators in support of stronger policies for rivers - thank you! The drought bill would give the state the authority to require water conservation during droughts, and is now in the Senate Ways and Means Committee. The invasive species bill would strengthen the state's invasive species management program, with additional support and funding for communities struggling to control both aquatic and terrestrial invasive species; this bill is now in the House Ways and Means Committee. Look for advocacy opportunities from Katharine via email and on social media – we need your help to keep these bills moving!

Katharine and Danielle are working with a coalition of environmental advocates to brief gubernatorial candidates on our state's most pressing environmental issues before the November election. Our role is to ensure that water – its importance, and all the ways the next governor can help promote water sustainability, stream health, and climate resilience – is well represented in the briefing.

On the federal front, we are tracking the significant funding investments approved by Congress - through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) - and engaging where we can to secure some of these resources for protecting and improving our rivers and streams. In February, roughly 50 individuals from our member organizations attended our webinar on the subject, with speakers from MassDEP, EPA, and the Mystic River Watershed Association.

Mass Rivers gets a Deputy Director!

Mass Rivers was delighted to welcome Danielle Dolan, our new Deputy Director, at the end of January.

Danielle's portfolio includes managing our policy and technical programs, developing new programs, expanding our partnerships, and growing foundation support for our work. She brings broad experience in environmental justice and climate resilience work, and her most recent position was with the Local Government Commission, in California, where she managed a team focused on statewide water management and policy.

Danielle earned her Bachelor's in Environmental Studies from Hawai'i Pacific University and her Master's in Community Development, with an emphasis in Water Policy and Water Management, from University of California, Davis. She is also a certified science teacher and Master Naturalist. Her diverse experience brings a cross-cultural awareness to all her work, and lays the foundation for a deep professional and personal commitment to the interconnected issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, and environmental justice.

Danielle is originally from Massachusetts, and she is excited for the opportunity to work on river protection and restoration in her home state.

Mass Rivers members enjoy the End-of-Summer Celebration at Hale Reservation last September

Connecting the Community – again!

Mass Rivers' dual mission includes both protecting and restoring rivers *and* connecting and strengthening our community of river advocates. To us, these two goals are inextricably linked, because, "we are stronger together," and…stronger, more connected member groups are more effective at accomplishing their goals.

To this end, we initiated a program in the spring of 2020 called "Mass Rivers Connects," to bring our organizations together regularly, to share ideas, and support each other during a difficult time. We began this as a virtual program at the start of the pandemic, thinking the need and interest would wane as time went on and we returned to what we fondly thought of as "normal." After a year of convening five groups virtually each month, we cut back on the program in 2021. We heard from many groups, however, that they missed having these meetings. So, in 2022 we re-booted, with groups led by four different staff, with separate meetings for Executive Directors, Scientists, Outreach and Communications Specialists, Very Small (but Powerful) Organizations, and Fundraisers. These lively discussion groups are open to our organizational members' staff, board members, and volunteers.

Mass Rivers is also pleased to offer occasional workshops, panel discussions, and other information sessions for both organizational and individual members. We recently hosted a panel of experts on federal infrastructure funding, and will be presenting three new short films on river challenges and solutions, along with an interview with the filmmakers, in mid-April.

Mark Lindhult, Swift River, New Salem