MASSACHUSETTS
Rivers Alliance
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**Massachusetts Rivers Alliance**

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

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## We've moved!

Our new home is just a mile away from the old one, but we've gained some elevation, a nicer kitchen, and some friendly office mates (the Stockholm Environment Institute). We're still in the Mystic River watershed, and a short walk from Davis Square, although we've moved from Cambridge to Somerville. We're enjoying our new neighborhood, which includes a refillable store (shampoos, soaps and laundry detergents without the plastic packaging), an Egyptian restaurant, and a great café. Come visit!

MASSACHUSETTS
Rivers Alliance

# The RIVER Advocate

HEALTHY RIVERS FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

**SPRING 2023**

## Lobby for the Rivers Day - a success!

With a rallying cry of "Let's rock it for the rivers!", drought bill lead House sponsor Representative Joan Meschino kicked off our fourth biennial Lobby for the Rivers Day on March 15. Though we planned to meet in person at the State House, we pivoted to a virtual format due to a winter storm that week. One hundred and twenty-five people participated in 65 legislator meetings throughout the day, sharing their top environmental and climate concerns with state legislators, and asking them to support stronger drought management by co-sponsoring H.861/S.475. Six legislators co-sponsored that day, and more have done so since then. This is Mass Rivers' top legislative priority this session, and this event is a great way to educate legislators about the importance of updating our state's water management to meet current climate challenges.

This event continues to be the largest environmental advocacy day in the state, and it's all thanks to our passionate river community. Thank you to Environment Committee Co-Chairs Sen. Rausch and Rep. Cahill, and drought legislation sponsors Sen. Eldridge and Rep. Meschino for your opening comments, and thank you to all who joined us and helped make ***Lobby for the Rivers Day 2023*** one for the books!

Attendees getting ready to Rock it for the Rivers!

## A win for our rivers - increased water conservation during droughts

On Jan 20, 2023, final amendments to the state's Water Management Regulations became effective, imposing long overdue conservation requirements on "registered" water users during droughts. Mass Rivers and our member organizations have been urging the state to take this important step for several years, most recently with a formal petition, together with the Ipswich River Watershed Association, to MassDEP in 2017.

The Water Management Regulations and the 1986 Water Management Act give the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) the authority to regulate water withdrawals in excess of 100,000 gallons per day on average through registrations and permits. When the regulations were first promulgated, climate change was not the pre-eminent environmental issue that it has since become, and the choice was made to grandfather in existing large water withdrawals through registrations without conservation requirements. This meant that nearly 60% of large water withdrawals in Massachusetts by municipalities, golf courses, and regional water suppliers, had little to no restrictions – ever. Only new

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Spring on the Mystic River by Bonnie Kittle

SPRING 2022

# From the Executive Director

## Rivers and climate change

**Climate change is primarily a water crisis. We feel its impacts through worsening floods, rising sea levels, shrinking ice fields, wildfires and droughts.**
**However, water can fight climate change. Sustainable water management is central to building the resilience of societies and ecosystems and to reducing carbon emissions. Everyone has a role to play – actions at the individual and household levels are vital.**

– From the United Nations website, under "Water and Climate Change"

We don't have many ice fields here in Massachusetts, but we do have floods, rising seas, wildfires and droughts. Extended hot, dry periods and intense storms both cause secondary impacts to public health and the environment – water shortages and crop failures from drought, stormwater and wastewater pollution, and water infrastructure failure from storms, to name a few. We have experienced all of these here in Massachusetts in the past few years. As in other places around the globe, improving the way we manage our water is key to improving the livability of our state for both people and wildlife as climate change progresses. This issue of RIver Advocate highlights Mass Rivers' work to build climate resilience - and sustain the health of our rivers - in the face of both droughts and storms.

While improving water management can seem complicated, the goal behind it is actually simple: restoring a more natural water cycle. This means allowing water to return to the ground instead of flowing into streams and out to sea via storm drains; removing dams and upgrading culverts to restore natural stream flows; and reducing pollution. Putting nature back together again in these ways improves water quality and restores groundwater, and boosts the sustainability of our water supplies, wildlife habitat, and our ability to manage both droughts and floods. Some of these actions come with a significant initial price tag, but save communities money over the long term by avoiding the costs that come with floods, water shortages, and catastrophic infrastructure failure.

When we invest in our water, we invest in our own shared future.

As individuals, we can reduce our own water use, avoid the use of toxic chemicals in and outside our homes, cut down or eliminate our use of fertilizer, re-landscape with native plants, maintain our septic systems, and support our local watershed associations and land trusts, and other groups working to improve climate sustainability.

But supporting policy change is equally important. This means letting your elected representatives at the municipal, state, and federal level know that you care about protecting rivers and water supplies, and more specifically, letting them know you support legislation and funding for municipal climate resiliency, river restoration, land and wetlands protection, and green infrastructure.

If you'd like to join our movement to fight climate change through sustainable water management, let us know, and we'll make sure you receive our action alerts. Thank you for supporting this important work.

Julia





# Massachusetts Rivers Alliance organizational members

### Principal Members ($1,000+)

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

### Leadership Members ($250-$999)

Association to Preserve Cape Cod
Berkshire Natural Resources Council
The Charles River Conservancy
Connecticut River Conservancy
Conservation Law Foundation
Environmental League of Massachusetts
Groundwork Lawrence
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
Trout Unlimited, Cape Cod Chapter
Trout Unlimited, MA RI Council
The Trustees

### Members (<$250)

Belmont Citizens Forum
Berkshire Environmental Action Team
Biodiversity for a Livable Climate
Blackstone River Coalition
Blackstone River Watershed Association
Buzzards Bay Coalition
Cape Cod Chapter Trout Unlimited
Center for Coastal Studies
Charlesgate Alliance
Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council
Clean Water Fund
Deerfield River Watershed Association
Environment Massachusetts
The Esplanade Association
Farmington River Watershed Association
Fort River Watershed Alliance
Friends of Belle Isle Marsh
Friends of Jerry's Pond
Friends of the Assabet River, Oxbow, & Great Meadows NWF
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
Greenbelt
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
River Merrimack
Runnins River Watershed Alliance
Save the Bay – Narragansett Bay Riverkeepers
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
Trout Unlimited, Deerfield River Chapter
Trout Unlimited, Pioneer Valley Chapter #276
Wareham Land Trust
Wastewater Advisory Committee to the MWRA
Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee
Westfield River Watershed Association
Westfield River Wild & Scenic River Advisory Committee
Westport River Watershed Alliance

The North River by Lindsey Zjeer

A win for our rivers...continued from page 1.

or increased water withdrawals since 1986 are subject to such restrictions through permits.

In the ensuing decades it has become clear that it is vital for the state to use all regulatory tools to safeguard water for public health, safety, and the environment – especially during droughts. Excessive water withdrawals have threatened stream health in our state for years, and this widespread problem is exacerbated by climate change. The new regulations now restrict nonessential outdoor water use by registrants during times of declared drought. Nonessential outdoor water use includes lawn watering; filling swimming pools; and washing cars, buildings, and driveways. These restrictions will now impact 20% of all regulated public water supply withdrawals.

The new regulations will officially come into effect this spring when registrations are renewed. While they are a step in the right direction, the state granted exemptions to several of the largest water users – like the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA). Under the new rules, surface water suppliers with two years or more of "drought storage" volume in their reservoirs can submit their own drought management plan to MassDEP instead of following the state's drought guidance. This will affect MWRA and likely two other large public water systems.

We are continuing to push the agencies to better adapt our state's water management policies to our new climate reality - stay tuned.

Julia, Katharine, and Sarah on Lobby Day

## Please consider a legacy gift to Mass Rivers!

With a planned gift to Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, you will become a member of a special community of donors who are choosing to champion climate change resilience, river protection and restoration for future generations. Your legacy gift provides a dependable source of funding to help fulfill Mass Rivers' mission of ensuring healthy rivers and clean water across our state. Your future investment will help make sure rivers have the water they need, ensure that fisheries and aquatic habitat are protected, and support investment in climate-resilient water infrastructure for many years to come.

Membership in our Legacy Circle is extended to those who have notified us that they have made a provision in their will or estate plans for the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance.

### BENEFITS OF JOINING THE LEGACY CIRCLE INCLUDE:

- Knowledge that your support makes a profound difference to the future of rivers in Massachusetts, and the communities through which they flow.
- Invitations to Mass Rivers social and educational events.
- Special updates from Mass Rivers' Executive Director.

If you have already included the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance in your estate plans, we thank you and would appreciate it if you could please let us know by contacting us at juliablatt@massriversalliance.org.

## Raise a glass to clean water this Earth Day with Wachusett Brewing Company!

Live music and our very own Mass Rivers beer; Earth Day 2023 is going to be like no other! Come out to Wachusett Brewing Company in Westminster to celebrate with us from 3-7pm, including a raffle of great items donated by local businesses. Wachusett is donating a portion of sales of the brand new Mass Rivers beer, a blonde honey ale, towards our work protecting rivers and streams statewide. This brew will only be available on a limited run, available at the Westminster brewery until it runs out. Get yours while supplies last!

Cheers to clean water!

## A new educational curriculum to foster community resilience

Did you know that stormwater pollution is the single greatest threat to water quality in Massachusetts? When communities are developed, the natural environment is transformed into built infrastructure - lots of impervious surfaces - that don't allow water to penetrate soils to recharge groundwater. Instead, rain and snow quickly travel over these paved surfaces, carrying any pollutants in their way into the nearest waterway. This problem is only expected to get worse as climate change brings more frequent and severe storms to Massachusetts. As an initial step towards improving stormwater management in our state, with the goal of improving groundwater recharge and decreasing stormwater pollution, we've teamed up with Mass Audubon and SNEP Network partners to develop an educational curriculum that will help growing communities learn how to integrate climate-smart development practices.

This comprehensive curriculum program, ***Building Climate Resilience Through Local Regulations***, offers eight modules on topics ranging from the value of implementing green infrastructure to updating local regulations that support low impact development and other nature-based climate solutions. Each module includes a participant guide and PowerPoint presentation that guides you through the different components of improving community resilience through local regulations.

This curriculum provides a framework for communities (planners, municipal staff, and interested members of the public) to evaluate their local land use regulation to ensure that their bylaws build resilience to climate change and other environmental stressors.

Check out our Climate Resilience Planning page on our website for the full curriculum.

Katharine presents on *How to Be an Environmental Advocate* at Patagonia in Cambridge in early March. Photo by Nick Neidhardt.

## Two interns join our team this spring!

We're delighted to be joined this spring by...

Outreach and Communications Intern Emilie Wong (Bentley University, '24) has been assisting our Senior Policy Specialist Katharine Lange with promoting Lobby for the Rivers Day event, the Wachusett event, and more by creating digital content and doing supporting research.

Stormwater Intern Caleigh McLaren (Clark University, '23) is working with Mass Rivers Senior Technical Specialist Sarah Bower this spring. She is supporting the implementation of our Stormwater Technical Assistance Program by assisting with the development and delivery of training workshops and webinars on financing stormwater management.