

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT



Charles River

WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

The Charles River twists and turns through 23 communities, draining 308 miles before it finally empties into Boston Harbor. One of the busiest recreational rivers in the world, the lower Charles is lined with boat houses, and on nice days powerboats, sailboats, rowing shells and windsurfers crowd the river. The Riverfront attracts 20,000 users daily and up to a half-million for special events, including the spectacular July 4th fireworks display at Boston's famous Esplanade.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The Targeted Watersheds Grant focuses on a number of environmental problems:

- Public health concerns stem from excessive levels of bacteria from sewer overflows and improper discharges from sanitary sewers. Boating, fishing, and other recreational activities are highly dependent on the daily water quality in the river.
- The availability of water is a major concern in the upper basin, with many communities facing watering bans from March through October.
- Native species and fisheries are adversely impacted by a series of 20 dams and elevated temperatures along the river.
- Rapid development and urbanization also alters the river's natural flow. Stormwater runoff from these growing urban areas accelerates the transport of nutrients and other pollutants that are ultimately discharged into Boston Harbor.

RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

Using EPA Targeted Watersheds Grant funds, the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) will show innovative approaches to reduce polluted discharges, increase recharge of rainwater, and restore fisheries. Specifically, they will:

- Study a new instream flow trading concept at less cost to build environmental gains. This new approach offers economic incentives to reduce impervious surfaces and promote groundwater recharge and water flow.
- Use a DNA database to identify and target sources of bacterial contamination in collective river samples.
- Install new *SmartStorm*® rainwater retention systems for businesses and homeowners.
- Strengthen stormwater runoff prevention and control strategies by working with local officials and communities.
- Institute measures to identify, restore, and attract native fish populations.
- Promote the CRWA's flagging system to alert boaters and swimmers when it is unsafe to use the river when health standards have been exceeded.

"I took up kayaking after I retired, and got sick and tired of smelling sewage every single day that I was out on the river. Now I know who owns all those pipes, so when I smell the sewage, I know whom to call."

– Roger Frymire
citizen activist
and kayaker



Flag flying over the Charles to indicate safe boating water quality.

Charles River

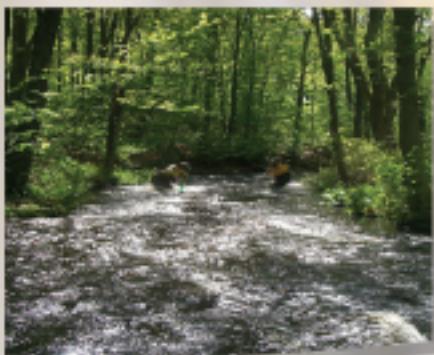
A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Formed in 1965, the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) is one of the country's first watershed organizations. Its partners include:

- State and municipal water commissions and planning councils
- Local businesses such as Polaroid, Pfizer and Stop & Shop
- Universities and hospitals, such as Harvard, Boston University, Brandeis, and Massachusetts General Hospital
- Citizen's organizations, such as The Boston Harbor Association, Conservation Law, and Friends of the Muddy River

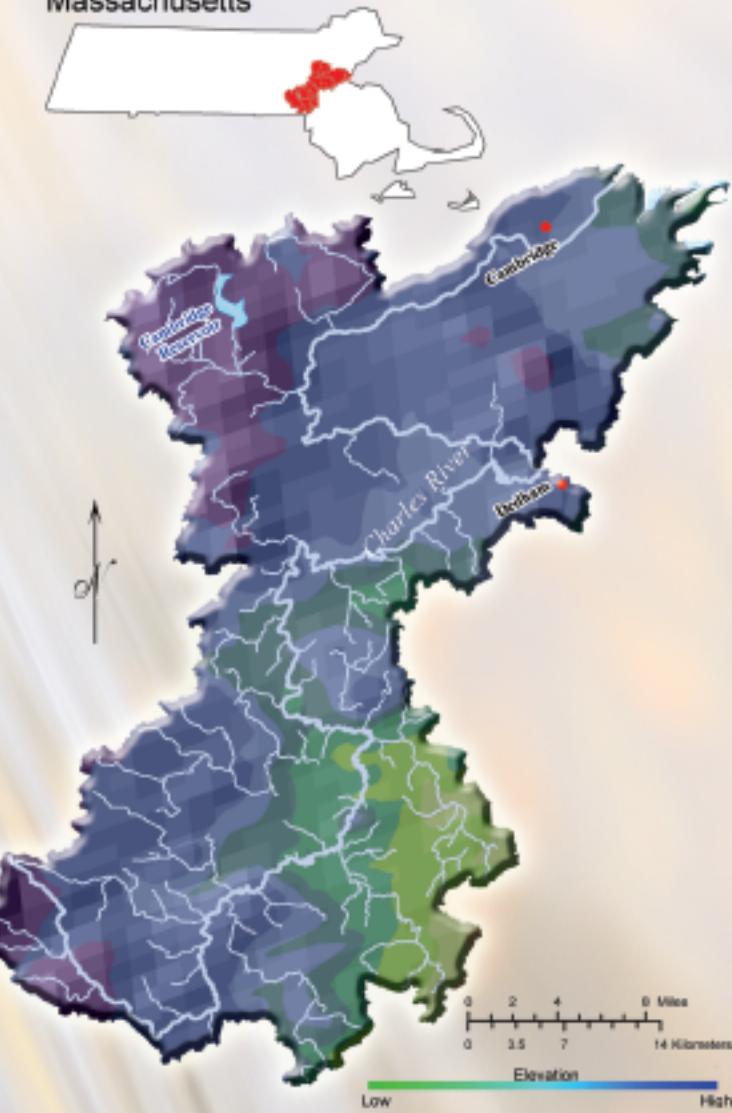


Cleanup efforts will enhance recreational opportunities.



The CRWA is testing a revolutionary flow trading concept. This approach offers economic incentives to reduce impervious surfaces and promote groundwater recharge and water flow.

Massachusetts



EPA'S TARGETED WATERSHEDS GRANT PROGRAM

EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grant Program is a new, competitive grant program designed to encourage collaborative, community-driven approaches to meet clean water goals.

For more information about the selected watersheds, please visit:
<http://www.epa.gov/owow/watershed/initiative/>



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