

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Connecticut River, MA, NH and VT



Overlooking the Connecticut River and adjacent agricultural lands.

Photo by Christopher Curtis



Combined sewer overflow (CSO) discharges directly into the Connecticut River.

Photo by Christopher Curtis



Connecticut River in Sunderland, Massachusetts.

Photo by Christopher Curtis

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

The Watershed

New England's longest river, the Connecticut River, traverses 410 miles from the Canadian border through New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts and Connecticut before it empties into Long Island Sound. The watershed encompasses 11,260 square miles and is home to more than 2 million people. The watershed includes some of New England's most productive farmlands, as well as serving as a waterfowl migration route and habitat for anadromous shad, Atlantic salmon and the endangered shortnose sturgeon. The river's designation as an American Heritage River in 1997 provided increased national visibility and helped leveraged additional partners and support for restoration efforts.

Issues

The river suffers from bacterial pollution from combined sewer overflows (CSO) and urban stormwater, extensive streambank erosion, and nutrient loading from agricultural runoff. The main stem of the river in Massachusetts does not support the designated use for fish consumption due to high PCB concentrations. Further south, primary contact use (i.e., swimming) is not supported due to excess pathogens and suspended solids.

Project Activities

- **Real-time Alerts to Recreational Users:** The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and their regional partners plan to increase water quality sampling in targeted locations along the river to provide alerts about water quality conditions. To reach a broad audience, water quality alerts will be provided to the local media.



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- **Bacterial Source Tracking:** Source water tracking will help to pinpoint sources of water contamination. Microbial gene markers and chemical tracers of human waste water will be used to determine if the sources of bacteria are human or animal.

- **Shoreline and Streambank Stabilization:** 1,600 feet of eroding shoreline will be stabilized and restored to reduce sediment in the river.

- **Downspout Disconnection Incentive**

Program: A pilot incentive program is being developed to encourage residents to disconnect roof leaders and sump pumps from the system and re-route them to rain gardens, rain barrels, green roofs or porous pavement areas in order to reduce stormwater contributions to the CSO systems.

- **Livestock Fencing and Riparian Plantings:** To reduce nutrients and bacteria coming from agriculture, livestock fencing will be installed to keep cattle out of the river. Native riparian plantings will be installed on the University of Massachusetts Hadley farm and another dairy farm in the watershed. These farms will serve as outdoor classrooms.

Project Partners:

- Connecticut River Joint Commissions
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- United States Geological Survey
- Massachusetts Water Watch Partnership

Leveraged Resources:

EPA Grant: \$953,330

Match in non-federal funds and in kind services:
\$392,675

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EPA's Targeted Watersheds Grant program is a 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/twg>