A background network diagram with nodes and connecting lines in various colors (yellow, green, blue, purple) scattered across the slide.

Watershed-Scale Climate Collaboratives: Toolkit & Stories from Massachusetts

RCP Network Gathering
Nov. 9, 2023



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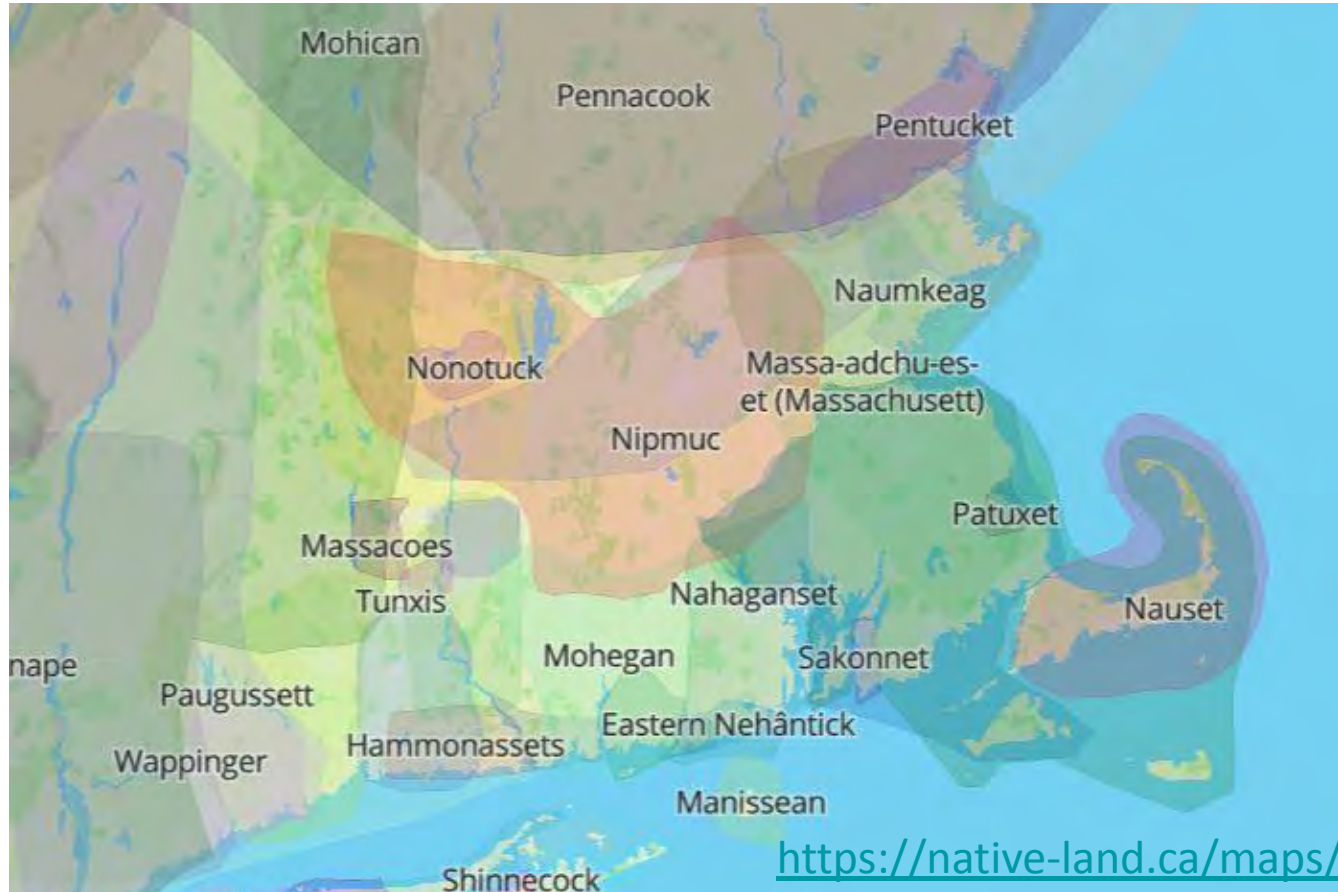


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We recognize we are on indigenous land



An aerial photograph of a watershed. A dark, winding stream flows through a landscape of green grass and shrubs. The stream starts from the top right and moves towards the bottom left, with several smaller tributaries joining it. The terrain is uneven, with some reddish-brown soil visible in patches. The overall scene is lush and green, indicating a healthy ecosystem.

Why watershed scale?

Three reasons...

August 2021



1. Climate impacts are water-focused

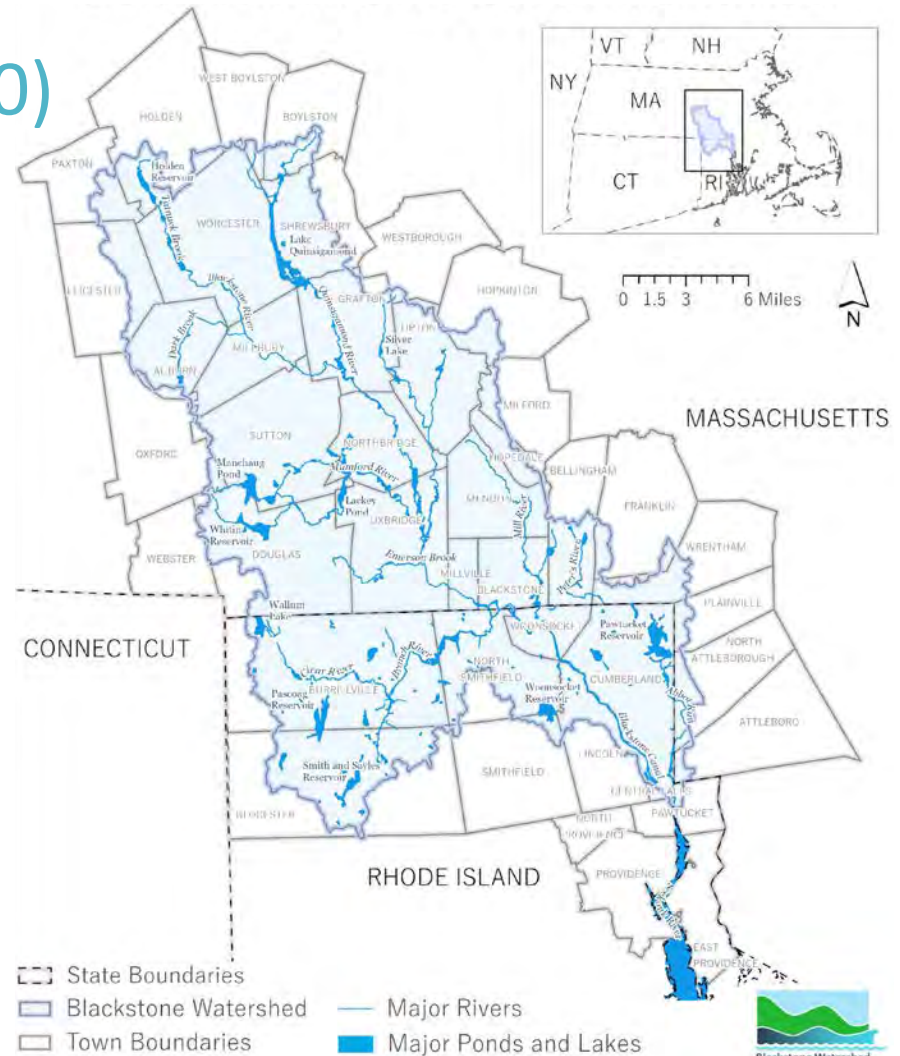
2022



2023

2. Watersheds (HUC 8-10) provide meaningful boundaries

- 48 miles long
- Drops 438'
- 39 communities
- Many tribes
- 2 states



3. It's the goldilocks scale to make meaningful local & regional impacts



Why collaboration?

1. Climate change is...

Complicated: We need diverse actors

Urgent: No time to reinvent the wheel or duplicate efforts

Emerging: Exploring the best practices together



Why collaboration?



2. Collaboratives...

- ✓ Build community and camaraderie
- ✓ Foster peer to peer learning
- ✓ Offer diverse perspectives

A Shared Watershed & Shared Goals

Enhance WQ monitoring



Enhance aquatic connectivity



Manage water chestnut



Expand the bikeway



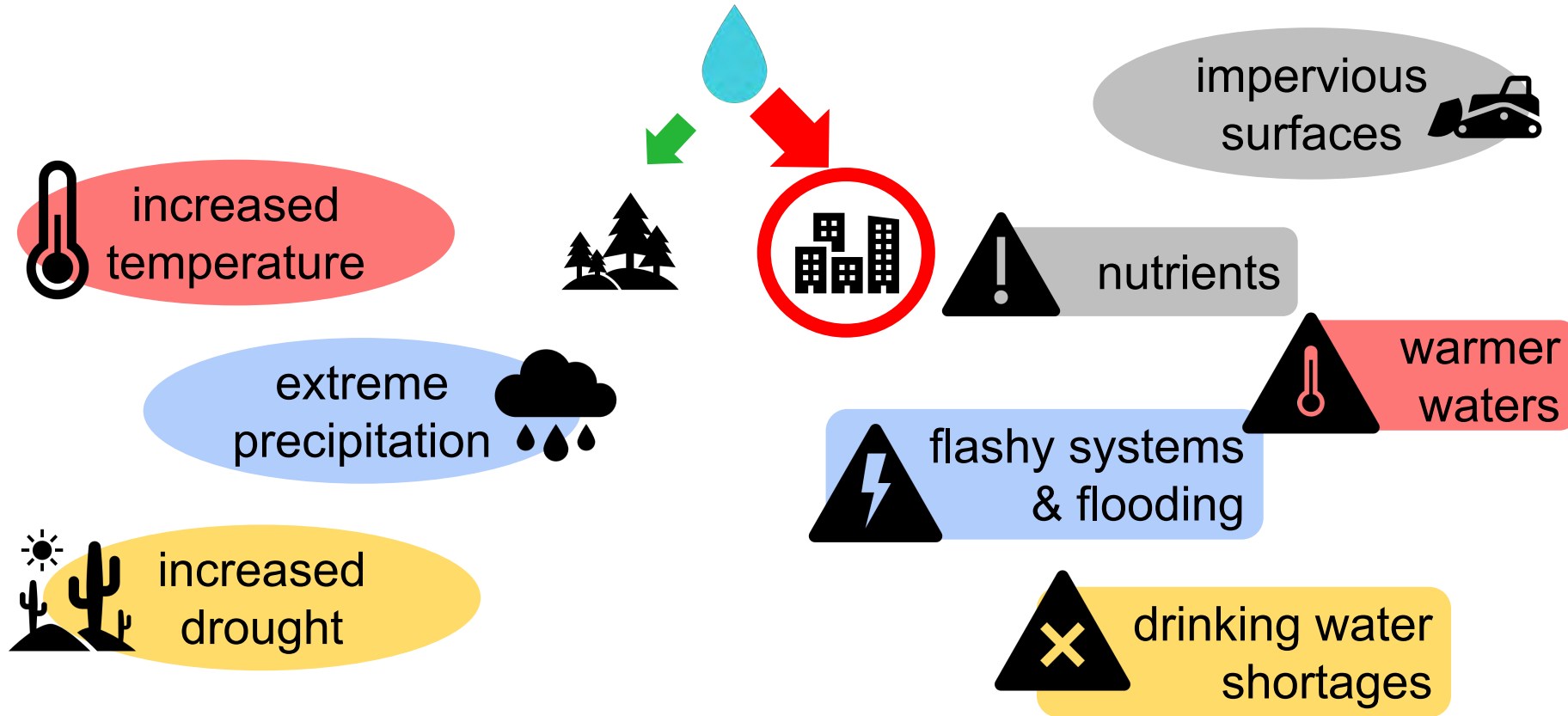
Equitable access to waterways



Create fish passage over dams



Climate change exacerbates impacts & is central to our mission



Impacts are compounded & not felt equitably

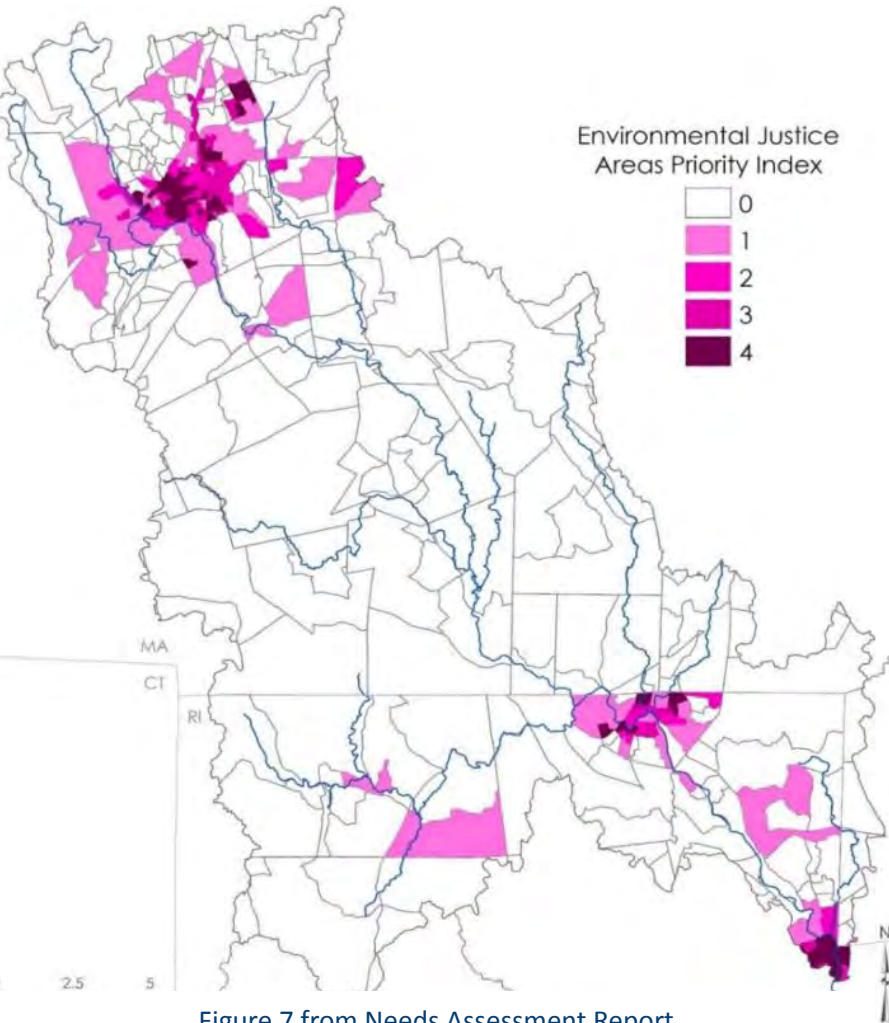
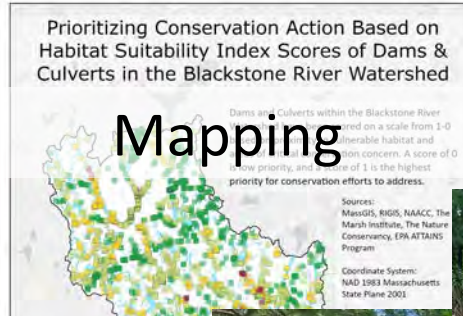


Figure 7 from Needs Assessment Report

- Heat islands
- Tree cover
- Asthma rates
- Flooding impacts
- Water quality

EJ Mapping tool:
<https://tinyurl.com/4mb7mfkz>

Enhancing Capacity & Filling in the Gaps Working Together For the Most Impact



Modified, Ignored, Abused... Restored? *(working on it!)*



Central location for support, news, advocacy



PUBLIC HEALTH & RECREATION

Paddling Through the Different Eras of the Blackstone River

Traveling down the river from Worcester, Mass., to Narragansett Bay tells a story that is harder to see from land

By Colleen Cronin / ecoRI News staff

August 15, 2022

Share



The Providence Journal

ENVIRONMENT

Sewage discharged from treatment plant into Blackstone River — again. Why it happened.



Alex Kuffner

The Providence Journal

Published 5:10 a.m. ET March 3, 2023 | Updated 10:29 a.m. ET March 6, 2023



Key Points

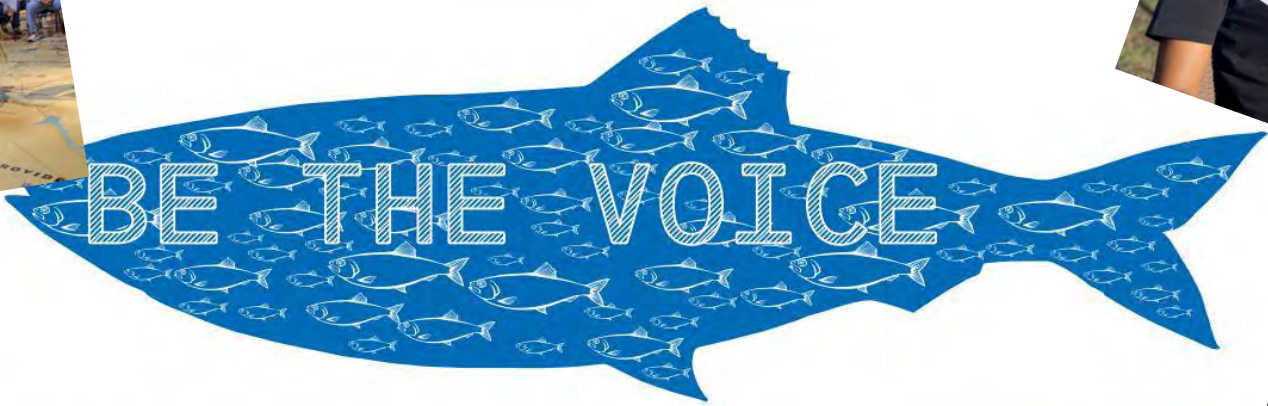
- This is not the first time sewage has leaked into the Blackstone river
- RI DEM issued a no-contact advisory for the river
- DEM was preparing to issue the plant a notice of violation before the incident

WOONSOCKET — Johnathan Berard was out for his morning run Wednesday when he turned onto the [Blackstone River Bikeway](#) and was overcome by a strong odor. |

“Something didn’t smell right,” he said. “It was definitely raw sewage.”

The smell was coming from the opposite bank of the river, where an outfall from the [problem-plagued Woonsocket wastewater treatment plant](#) is located.

Inter-tribal gatherings & fish parades



FISH PASSAGE



is located in the traditional, ancestral, unceded
 toket, and Wampanoag
 me for the Blackstone River
 communities have had a deep
 historically depended on the

Blackstone River had abundant
 ad, herring and salmon that lived
 er habitats. The construction of
 one River prevented migrating fish
 and led to a significant decline in
 remain on the mainstem of the
 ose and are in varying states of

around the lower four dams in
 hectivity and restore the balance
 dams are the Valley Falls in
 entral Falls, Slater Mill & Main Street



- ① Main St Dam
- ② Elizabeth Webbing Dam
- ③ Slater Mill Dam
- ④ Valley Falls Dam

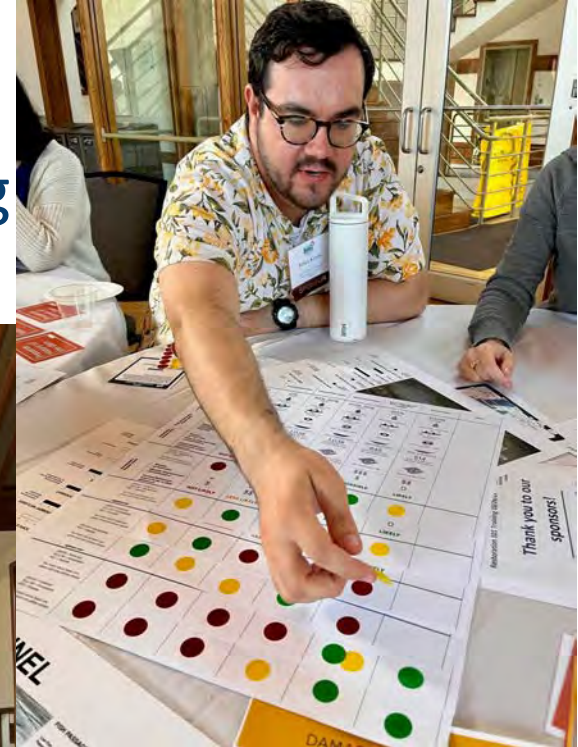
KITTACUCK SPEAKS

by Bruce Curilas
"I am Kittacuck also known to you as the Blackstone River. For thousands of years, I have flown through the valley over the Mother providing life for all creation, from the tiniest forms to the largest. I have provided energy to power machinery, given passage along my current to transport creation from place to place. I have lost my voice and been silenced at times of our shared story, and not being a partner in our shared spiritual responsibility of creation, yet I have still been here, still am.

Today, there are those who are listening and working to bring the River back to its former glory - to connect residents of this land, to provide recreational opportunities, to create a place of thoughtfulness and healing mind and to make a spiritual connection with the River world."



Dam Removal & Eco Restoration 101 Training



Helping locally, representing everywhere

Technical assistance

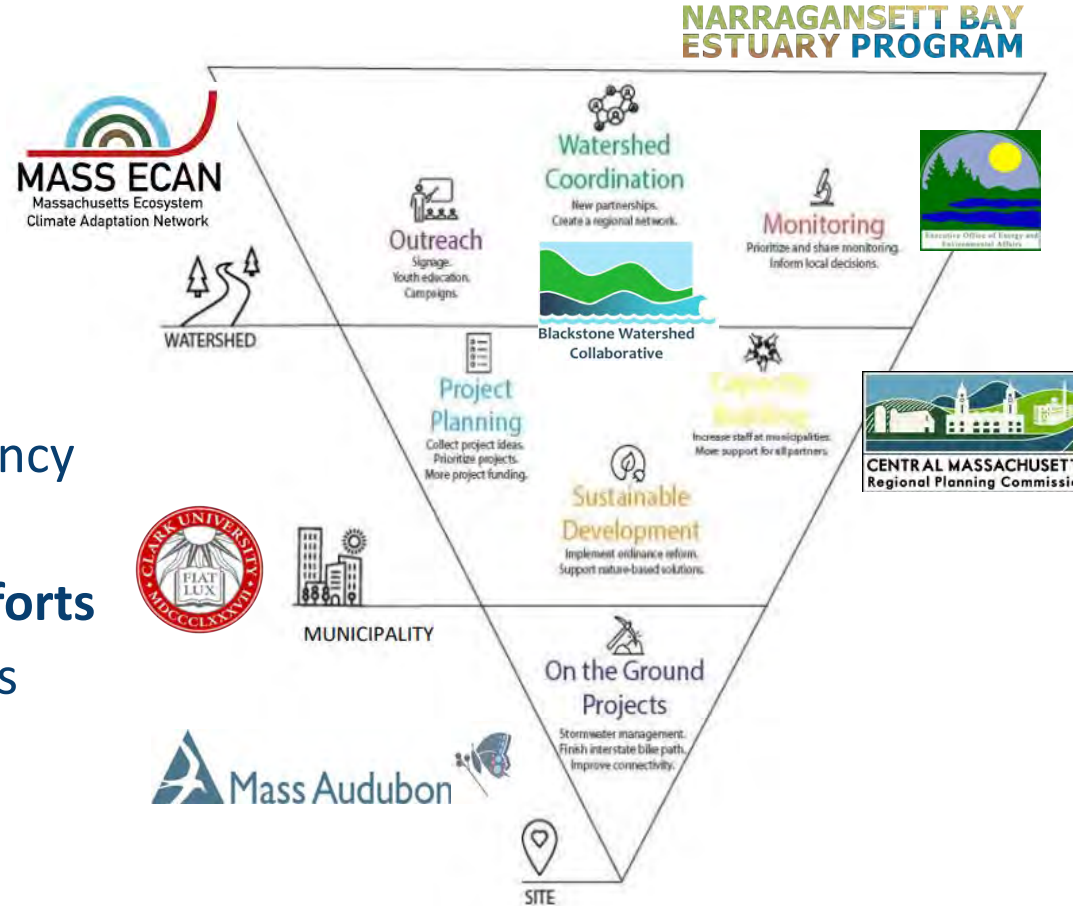
- > floodplain management
- > conservation planning
- > bylaw review

Regional coordination

- > municipal climate resiliency plans & grants

Representation in statewide efforts

- > HazardMit & Climate Plans
- > Narragansett Bay Estuary Program



We're getting attention for filling the need as a watershed-scale climate collaborative!



Central MA Regional
Planning Agency
(CMRPC)

Award for Resiliency
Planning &
Collaboration

June 2023



Mass Rivers Alliance

Award for building a
broad and inclusive
network of
stewardship

October 2023

MASSACHUSETTS
Rivers Alliance



Advice from Fellow Collaborative Leaders

Climate change doesn't follow political boundaries! Collaboration is essential... individual towns can't face this monumental challenge alone.

Robert Kearns, Charles River Compact



Just jump in! Do what makes sense for your region and create a space to support one another.

Stefanie Covino, Blackstone Watershed Collaborative



Seek out those who are already doing the work and find a way to work together.

Danica Belknap, RTWN

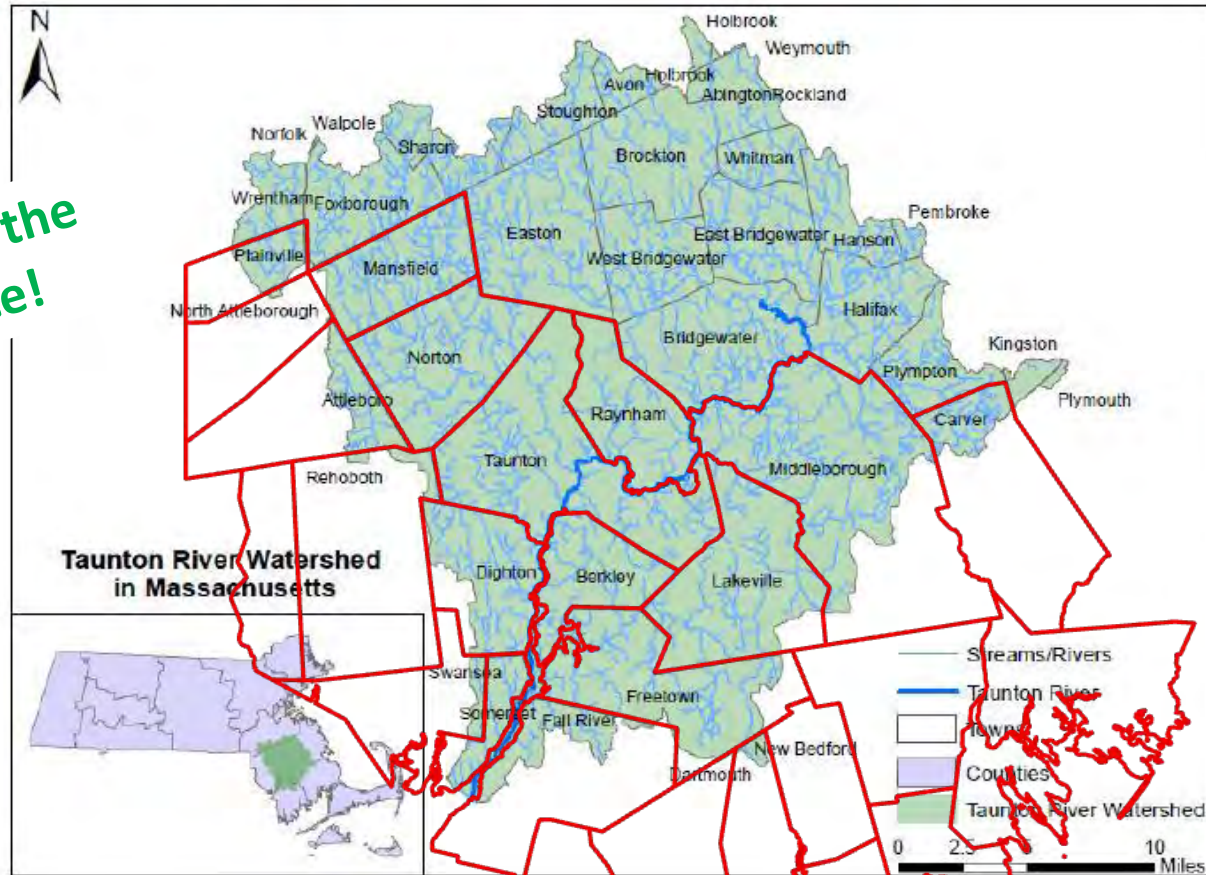




Danica Belnap – RTWN Coordinator
Principal Environmental Planner, SRPEDD

Figure 1-1. Taunton River Watershed in Southeastern Massachusetts

Welcome to the
RTWN Office!



Why do we work in the Taunton River Watershed?

The Taunton River Watershed is developing rapidly.

- It's in the **Sprawl Frontier**

The watershed is home to critical natural resources.

- **Taunton Wild and Scenic River** is the **longest undammed coastal river** in New England
- One of two **largest contributors of fresh water** to the Narragansett Bay

There is huge opportunity for resilience planning.

- **62%** of the watershed is **undeveloped natural land**
- Only **17%** of the land is protected





In order to address these challenges, our partners needed to find **new ways to work together**. Our former offices, pictured here, were not conducive to collaboration!

Trish Garrigan, EPA

The Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN)...

- Started with the **Taunton Watershed Stakeholder Group**
- Convened by the **EPA**, **TNC**, and **SRPEDD** for discussion about an EPA Healthy Watersheds Pilot Project, in 2014
- **While many of these stakeholders had worked together on past projects, there were still a lot of “missed opportunities to collaborate”**
- RTWN was formed as a forum to stay in touch and coordinate overlapping efforts across the watershed
- **We have been meeting regularly**, either in-person, or remotely, **ever since!**



Our first meeting at Bridgewater State in 2014



- **Bridgewater State University**
- **Horsley Witten Group**
- **Manomet, Inc.**
- **MA Department of Environmental Protection**
- **MA Division of Ecological Restoration**
- **MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs**
- **Mass Audubon**
- **Metropolitan Area Planning Council**
- **Narragansett Bay Estuary Program**
- **Nature Conservancy**
- **Old Colony Planning Council**
- **Save the Bay**
- **Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)**
- **Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Network**
- **Taunton River Watershed Alliance**
- **Tighe & Bond**
- **US Environmental Protection Agency**
- **National Park Service**
- **Wildlands Trust**
- **...and several municipal representatives**

RTWN Mission

Our goal is to enhance resilience, for both natural and human systems, through an **integrated & collaborative approach** that protects and restores **natural green infrastructure**.

Nature based solutions (NBS) protect and restore natural systems while meeting the broader needs of communities throughout the watershed.

- Proactive land use planning
- Strategic habitat protection & restoration
- Low impact development
- Prioritization of projects offering multiple co-benefits



Partners from SRPEDD and Save The Bay conduct a salt marsh assessment in Assonet Bay in Freetown

MVP Planning Facilitation



Marion, 2018

Westport, 2018

Easton, 2018

Norton, 2018

Mansfield, 2019

Lakeville, 2019

Rochester, 2019

Freetown, 2019

Middleborough, 2020

Plainville, 2020

Berkley, 2022

Raynham, 2022

Regional MVP Planning

Norton (2018)

Easton (2018)

Mansfield (2019)



Regional Addendum
(June 2019)

*Work to retain/enhance
the recharge capacity of
the Canoe River Aquifer*



Canoe River Aquifer Resilience Through Regional Application of Nature Based Solutions

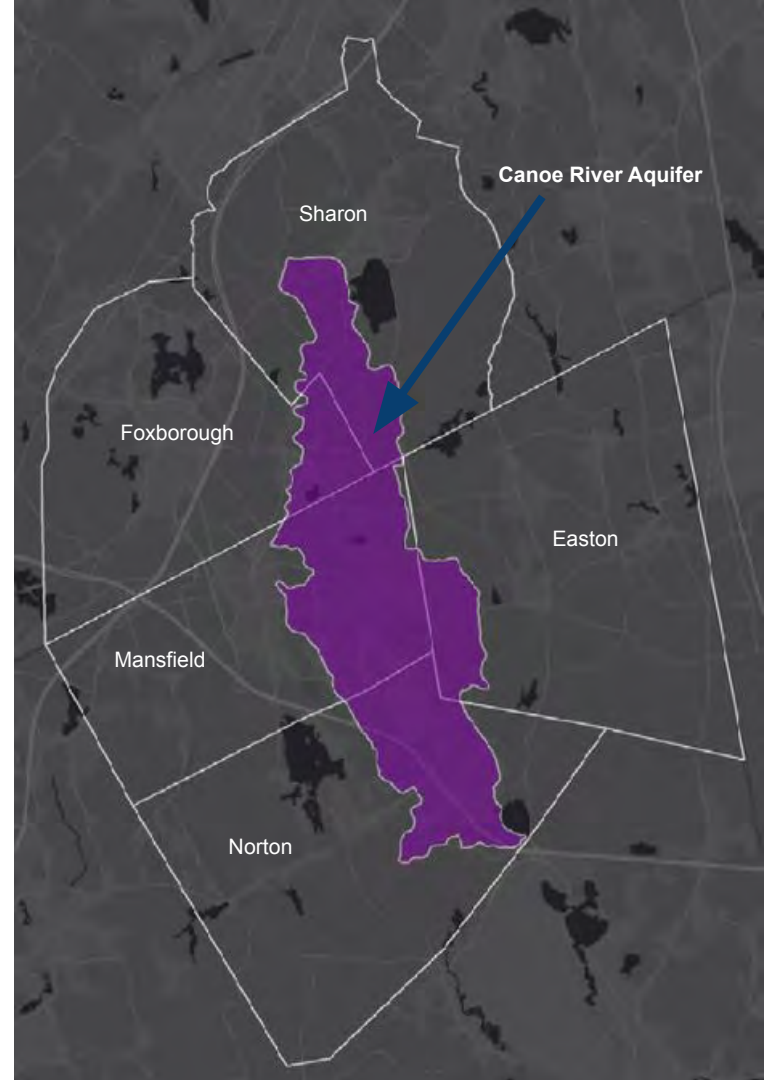
- Identify priorities from aggregate of 300 projects
- Vet projects with public through inclusive engagement process
- Evaluate the intersection between built infrastructure and Nature Based Solutions (NBS)
- Support municipalities in project development
- Connect projects with implementation funding



KIMBERLY GROFF CONSULTING



Revitalize Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN)

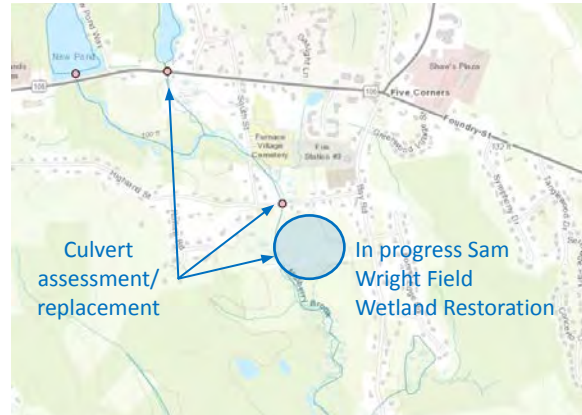


Project Takeaways: Early Wins

Sharon Great Cedar Swamp project connected with implementation funding from MA Division of Ecological Restoration

Easton Mulberry Meadow Brook wetland restoration advanced with more holistic watershed approach

Mansfield Rumford River restoration cluster matched to MVP Action grant application



Project Takeaways: Lessons Learned

Municipalities

- Municipal staff have significant capacity limitations & competing priorities
- Reacting to immediate demands often supersedes planning efforts
- Navigating the grant world is a significant challenge

Public

- Invest significant time & resources for community engagement
- Foster local connections & relationships
- People don't understand how their involvement influences implementation
- Traditional public meetings are a significant demand on most people's time



Meet people
where they are at.

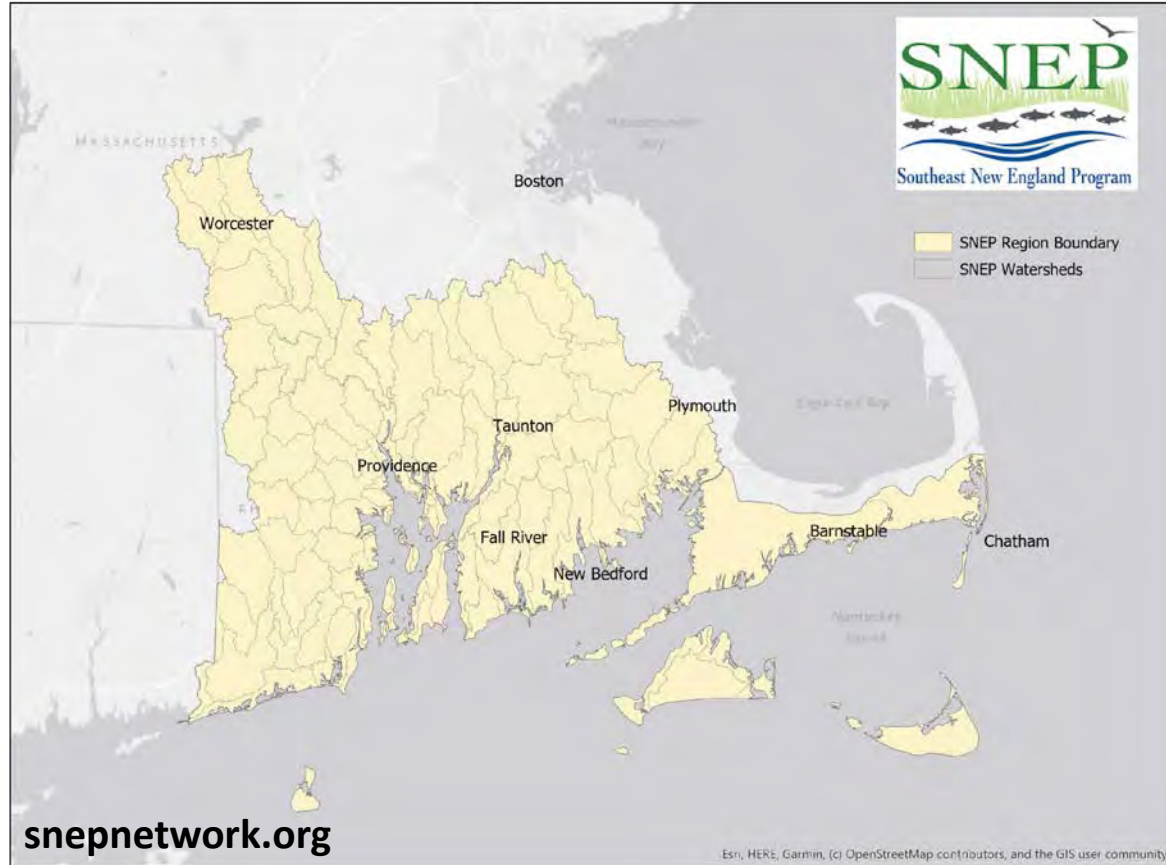
Relate projects to
local needs &
priorities.

SOUTHEAST NEW ENGLAND NETWORK

Training and Technical Assistance for Stormwater/Watershed Management

Vision: To build resilient ecosystems and connect communities through action, collaboration and innovation

Mission: Empowering communities to achieve healthy watersheds, sustainable financing and long-term climate resilience through management of stormwater and



Thank you!

Learn more about RTWN and get involved at srpedd.org/RTWN

Danica Belknap
dbelknap@srpedd.org





Join us!

masecan.org



[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [CONFERENCE](#) [RESOURCES](#)

[GET INVOLVED](#)

MASS ECAN

Massachusetts Ecosystem Climate Adaptation Network

[LEARN MORE](#)

Watershed-Scale Climate Collaboration Group



SPRING CONFERENCE



WATERSHED SCALE CLIMATE COLLABORATION CONFERENCE

Connect with fellow practitioners from across the state

Learn from climate adaptation efforts of watershed collaborators

Grow your capacity to accomplish this work

WED. MAY 3, 2023
9:30AM - 3:30PM
CLARK UNIVERSITY, WORCESTER

MASS ECAN
Massachusetts Ecological
Climate Adaptation Network

www.massecan.org/2023-events

See all the conference materials at massecan.org/2023-conference

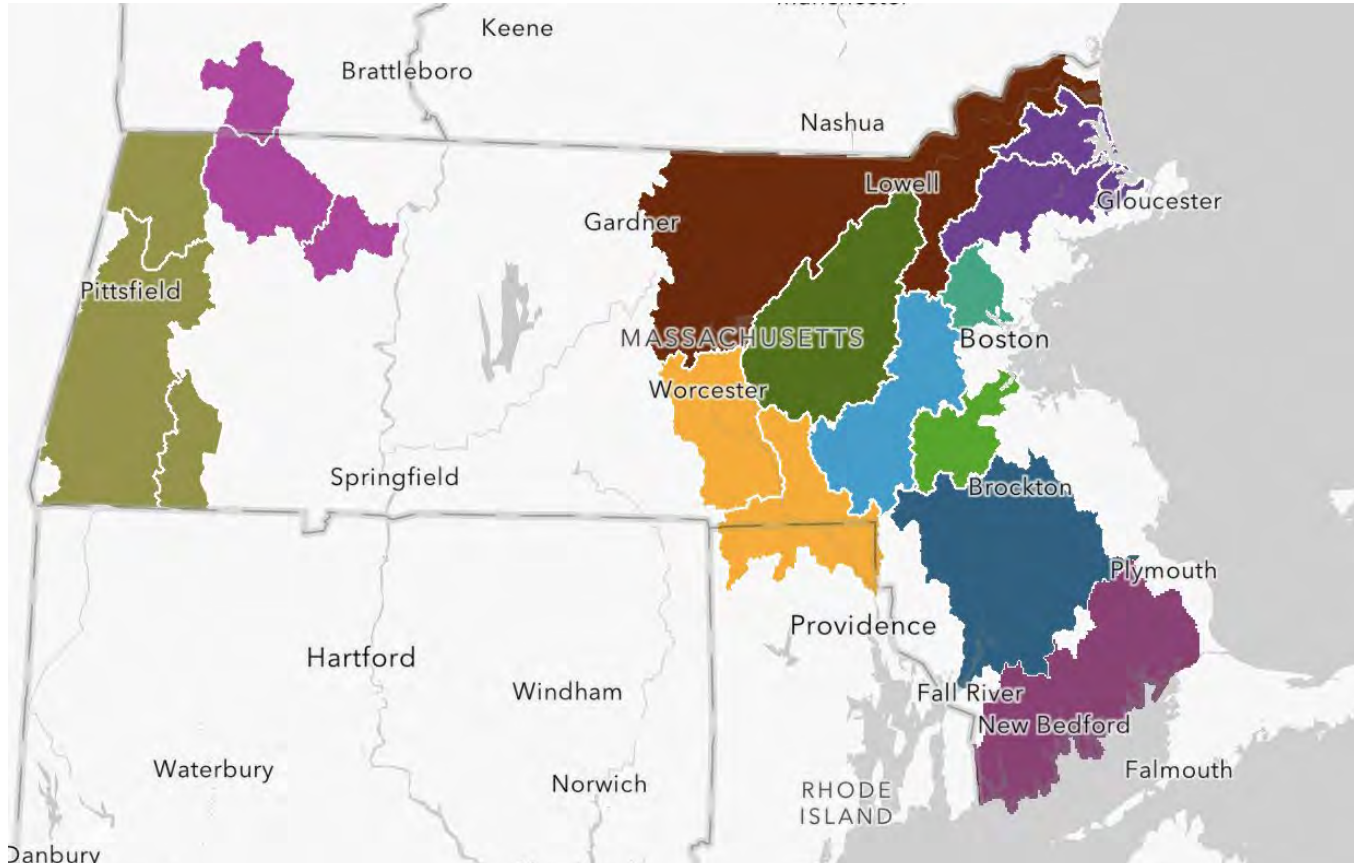
Watershed-Scale Climate Collaboration Toolkit

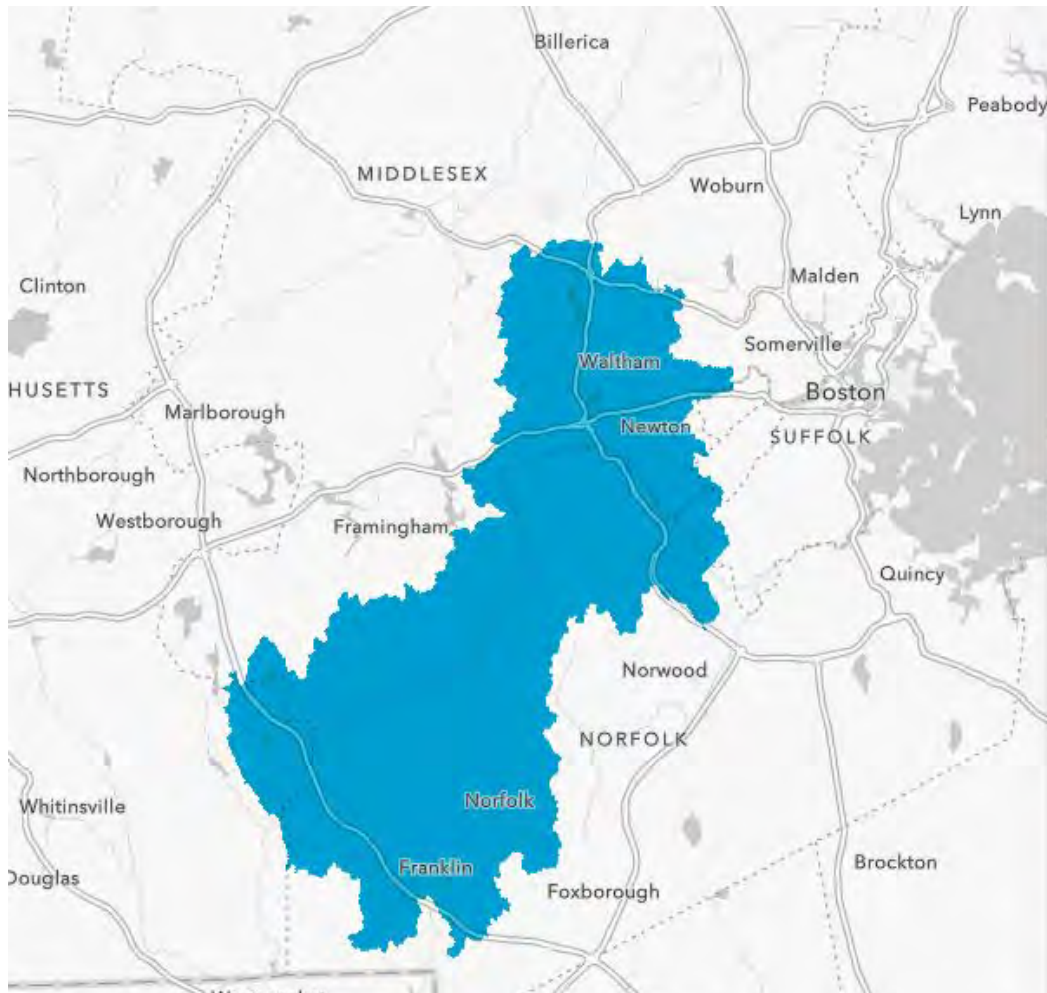
- **Inspire and build capacity** of collaboratives
- **Showcase stories** from existing watershed collaboratives in MA
- **Increase support** from those we'd like more engaged, such as funders and decision makers



www.massecan.org/wsc-Toolkit

Storymap





Charles River Climate Compact

Charles River Climate Compact (CRCC)

MISSION: To work collaboratively to increase climate resilience for people, and the natural ecosystems in the Charles River watershed by taking a

[Introduction](#)

[What's in this StoryMap?](#)

[Meet the Collaboratives](#)

[Successful Project Examples](#)

[Get Involved](#)



Berkshires Clean, Cold & Connected Partnership

MISSION: The Berkshire Cold, Clean, Connected Partnership is a collaboration of environmental organizations with the goal of catalyzing ecological restoration projects in Berkshire rivers and streams that protect cold-water



PART ONE

Centering Racial Equity in Authentic Community Engagement



Chris McInnes



Inspire goodwill.

“If we are wildly successful, what do you hope happens for your community, and what do you hope happens for other communities?”

Let partners do what they’re best at.

Limit partners’ scopes to what they can do and will help the project to avoid burnout.

PART TWO

Partnering on Community Engagement with Community Based Organizations



Jeff Colegrove

Videos



Mystic



Ipswich



Mattapoisett



Mattapoisett

Peer Learning

Shift mindset from experts and non-experts → Egalitarian

Everyone has something to teach and to learn, to offer and to receive

Includes knowledge exchange, mutual support/aid, and learning together



Photos: Christine Boynton & Marilyn Humphries



Resources

[Watershed Scale Climate Collaboration Toolkit](#) - Mass ECAN & partners

[Peer Learning in Networks](#) - Collective Mind

[Peer to Peer Learning for Climate Adaptation](#) - ASAP Network of Networks

[Network Building Resources](#) - USDN (Sustainability Directors Network)

[Connecting to Change the World Book](#) - Plastrik, Taylor, and Cleveland

[Regional Adaptation Collaborative Toolkit](#) - ARCCA (California)



Questions?

Discussion

1. Please share: **How are you already working on climate adaptation? At the watershed-scale?**
2. Brainstorm together: **How can your work be more watershed-based?**

Quick Feedback!



Virtual Evaluation Form



Scan the QR to fill out an
evaluation form. We
welcome your feedback.



(scan with
your phone)

