

Collaborative Capacity: *How Regional Partnerships Improve Community & Climate Resilience*



RCP Gathering
November 14, 2024
UMass Amherst

Speakers

Panelists:

- Stefanie Covino, Executive Director, Blackstone Watershed Collaborative
- Heidi Ricci, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Mass Audubon
- Kelsey Johnson, Outreach Coordinator, Saco Watershed Collaborative
- Robyn Saunders, Program Manager, Saco Watershed Collaborative

Facilitator:

- Martha Sheils, Director of the New England Environmental Finance Center



Agenda

- Intro: What's so special about Collaboratives, Collaborative Capacity, the need to work together
- Watershed Examples:
 - Blackstone Watershed Collaborative
 - Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN), Great Marsh, Connecticut River
 - Saco Watershed Collaborative
- Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Network - Scaling up Partnerships
- Panel Discussion
- Q&A

What makes Regional Collaboratives so Special?

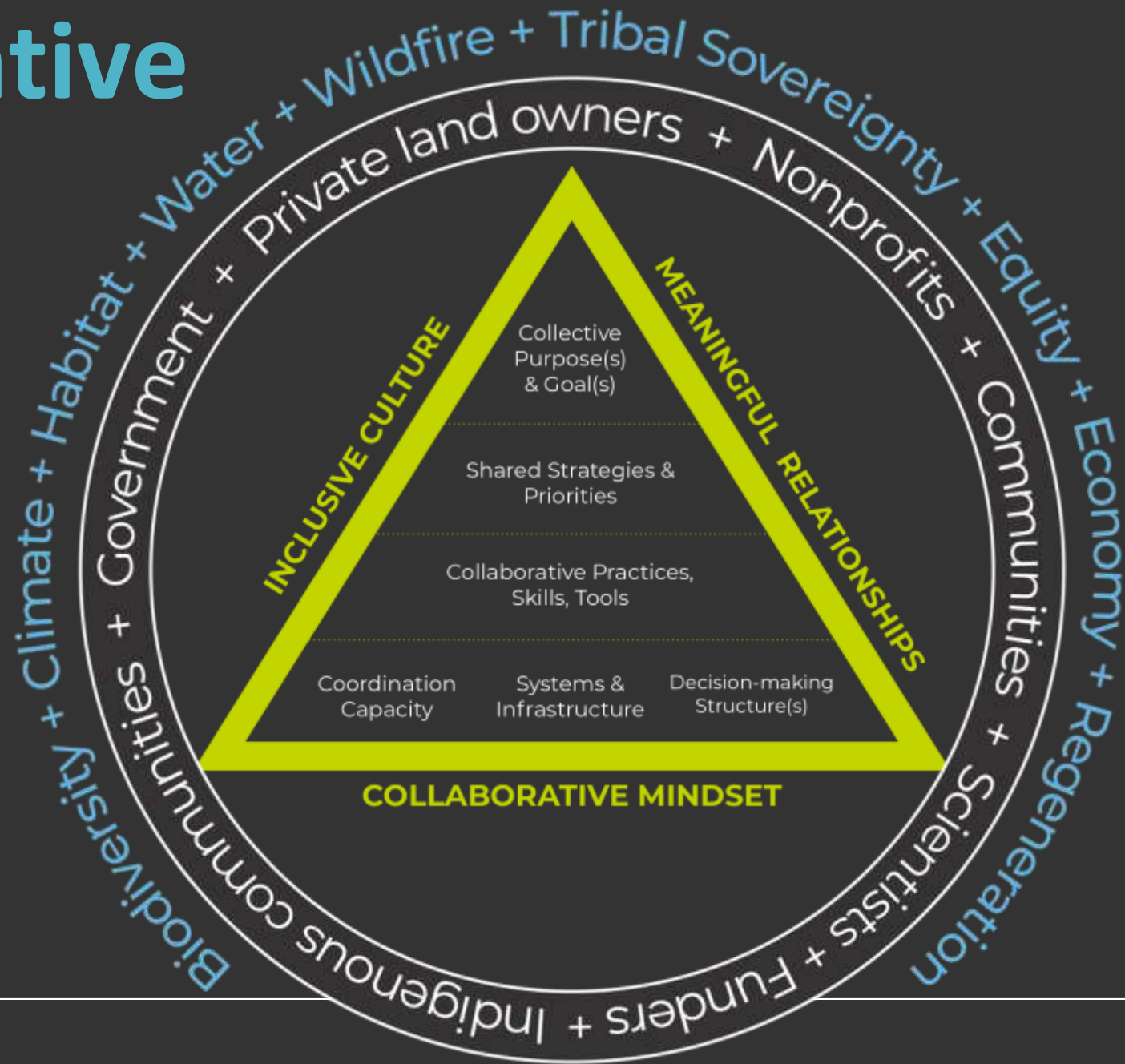
- Shared goal and strategy
- Many partners working together, leveraging strengths and connections
- Power of Partnerships: more than the sum of its parts

We are all on **Indigenous** Land



Indigenous communities and **traditional ecological knowledge** are central to historic, current, and future stewardship

Collaborative Capacity



Adapted from deSilva, S., Farrell, S., Knoblock, G. (2022). Increasing collaborative capacity and infrastructure for landscape stewardship [White paper]. California Landscape Stewardship Network.

Climate change makes collaboration even more important

Climate change is...

- ❑ **Complicated:** We need diverse actors
- ❑ **Urgent:** No time to duplicate efforts
- ❑ **Emerging:** Explore the best practices together

Collaboratives...

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



Collaboratives are often **impact networks**



– a small staff making an outsized impact by **working together**

What does that **mean**...?



We help **facilitate connections** and communications across diverse systems and scales



By working with diverse actors across silos on a common purpose, we help **build relationships** that lead to innovative solutions.

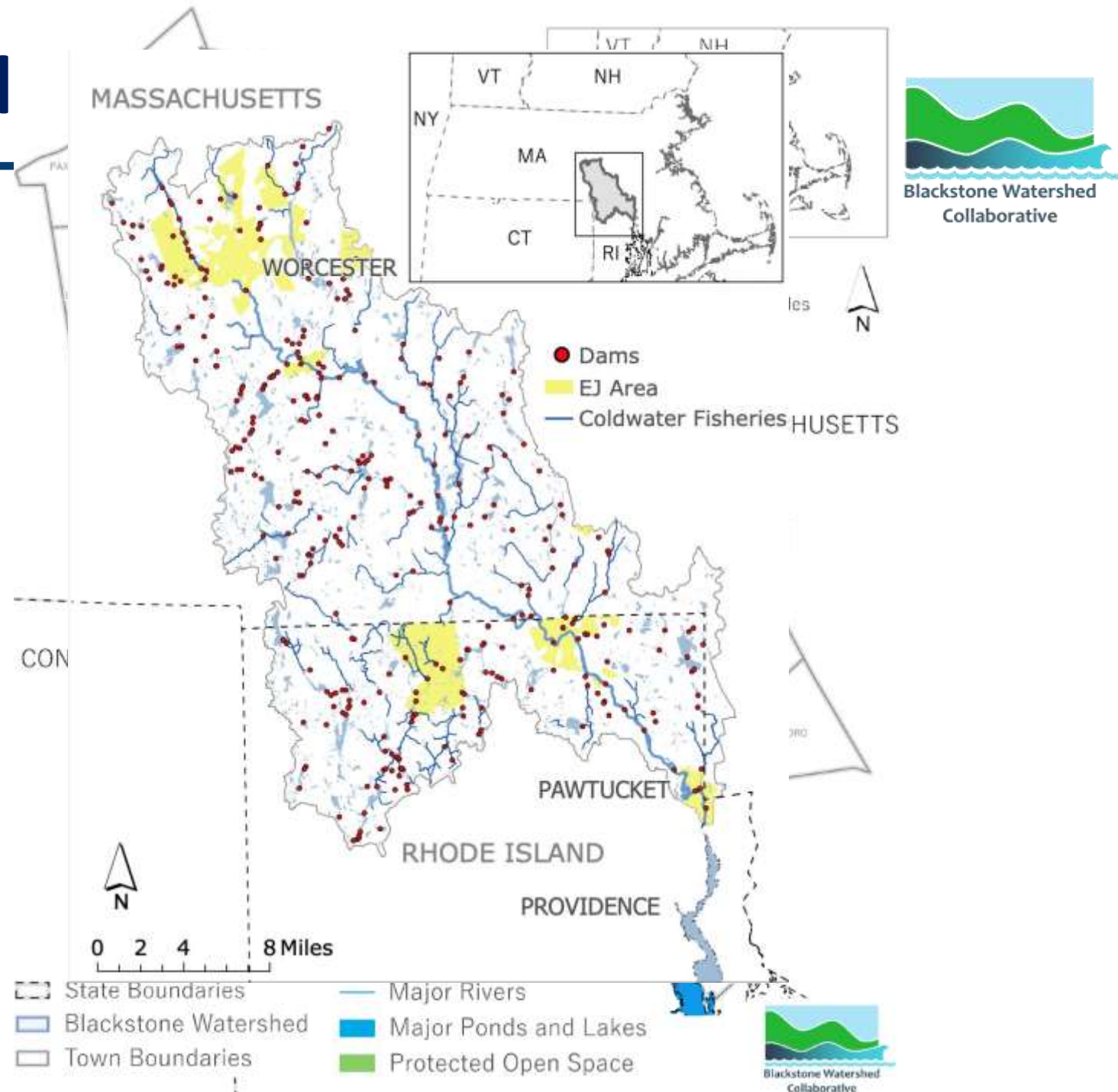


By staying small and working outward versus upward, our decentralized structure allows us to **efficiently respond** to urgent needs and opportunities.



Blackstone Watershed

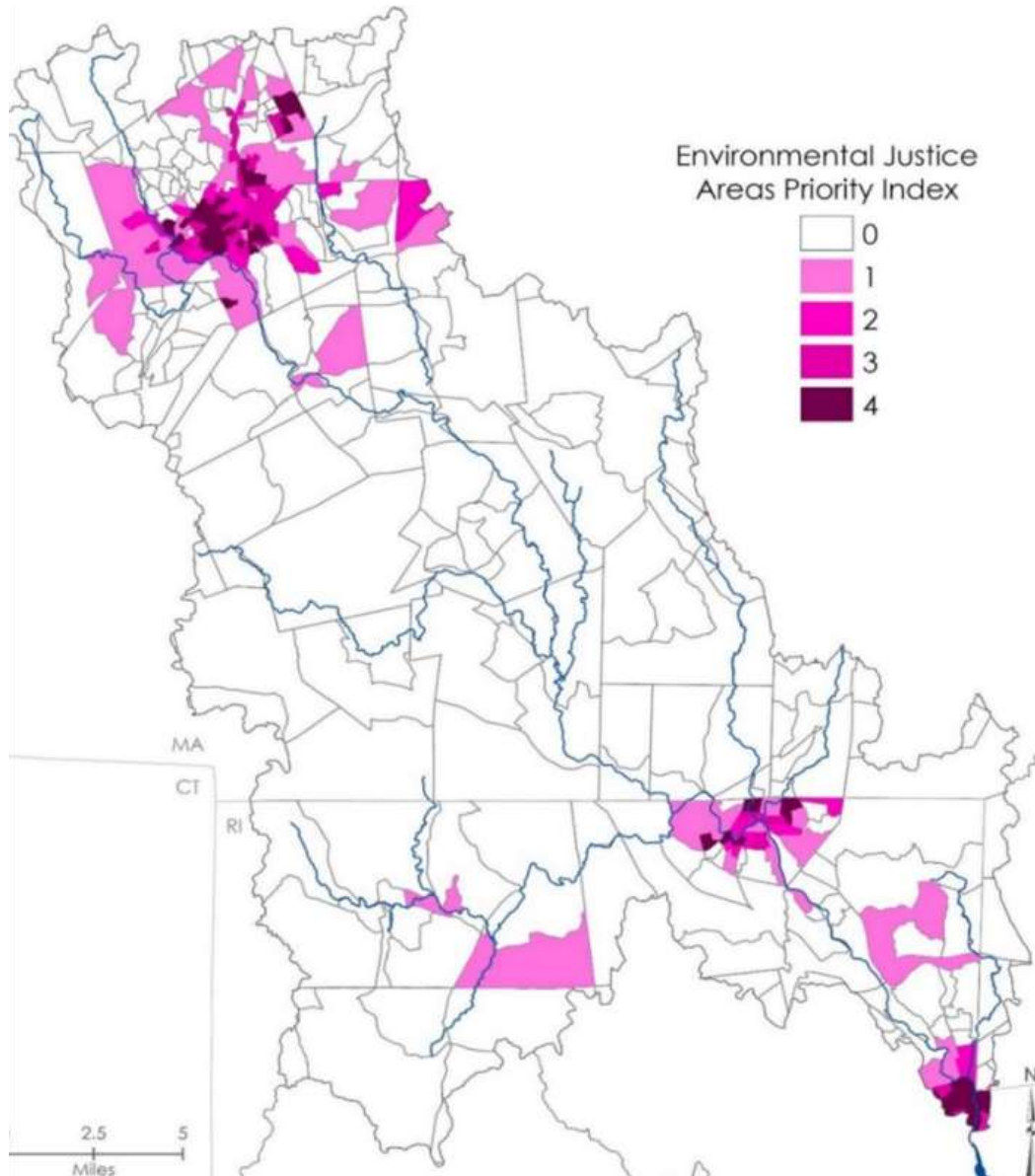
- 48 miles
- 438' elevation drop
- 475 square miles
- 2nd largest source of freshwater to Narr. Bay
- *Over 300 dams*





America's "Hardest Working" River... Restored?



Water quality is improving, but climate challenges are expanding, *inequitably*



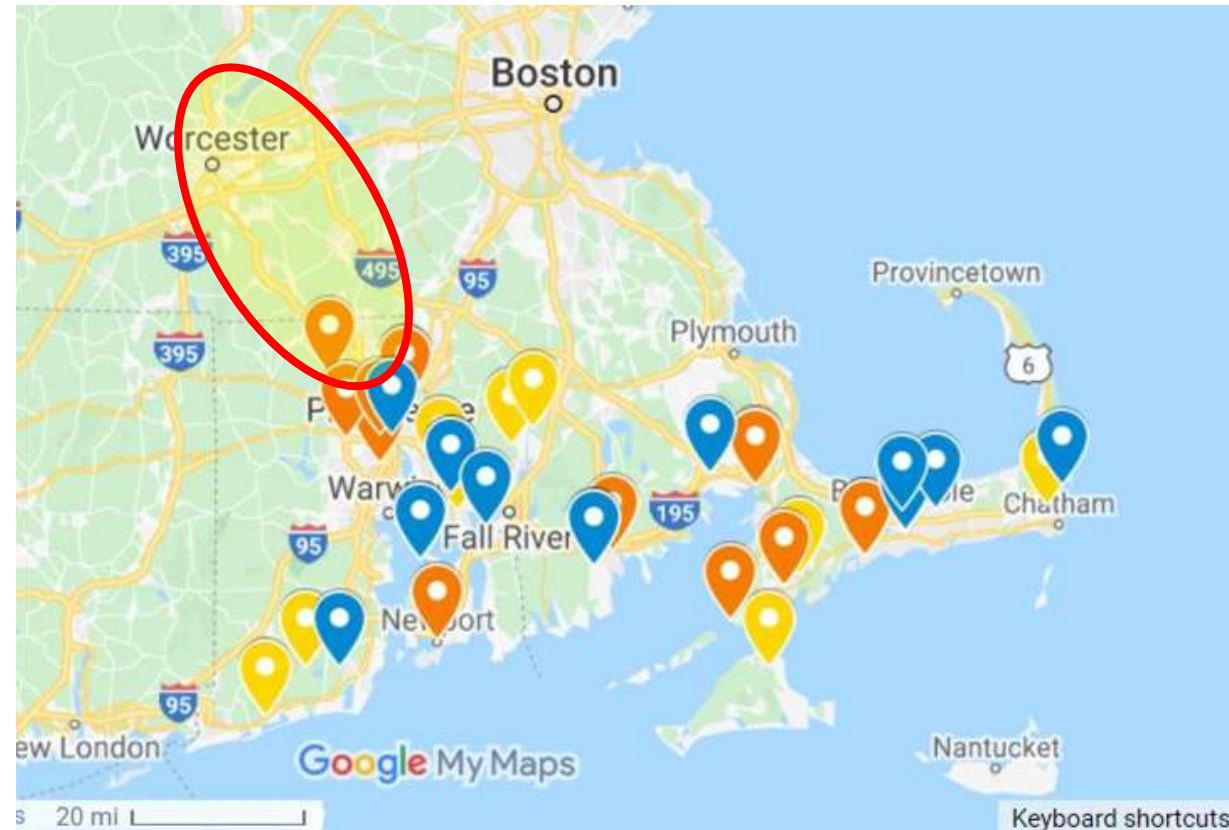
 increased temperature

extreme precipitation 

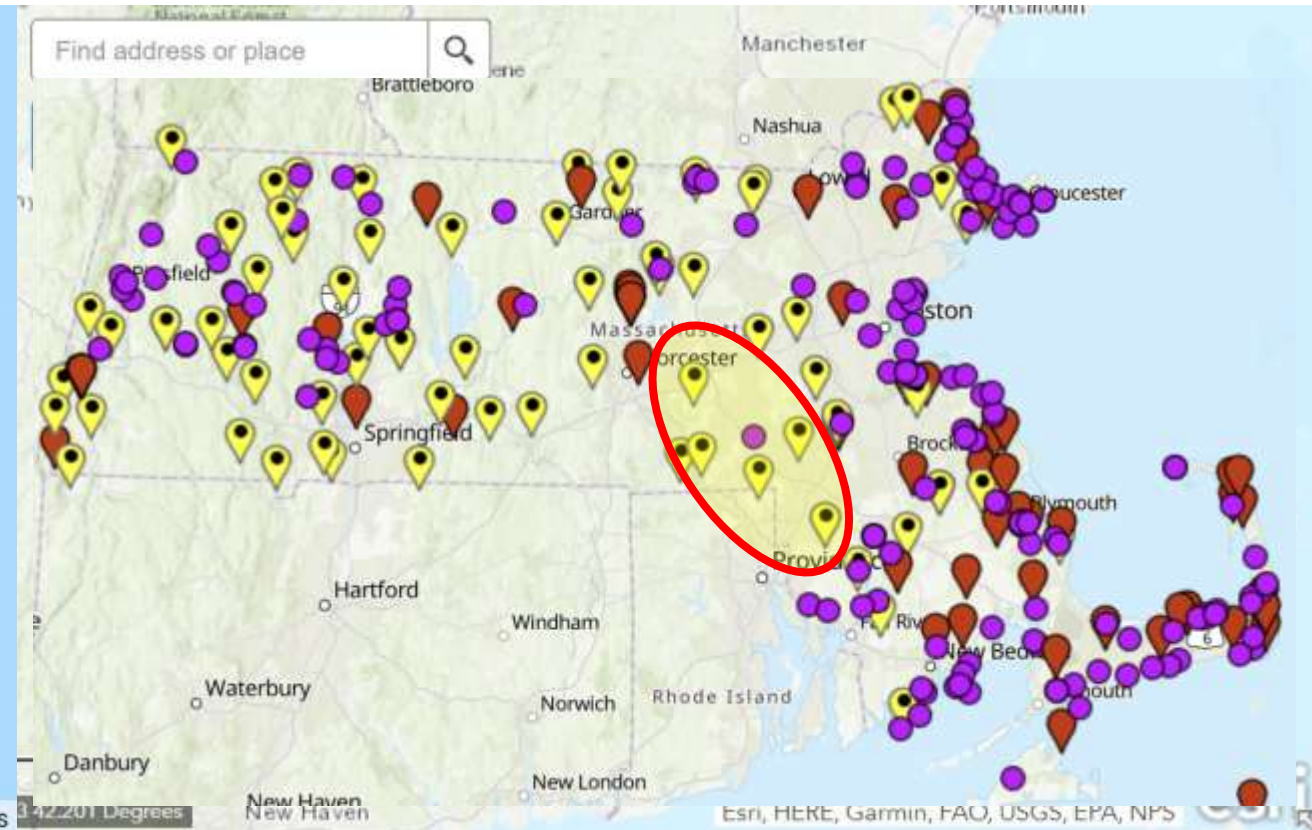
 increased drought

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

Communities lack the resources to apply to and manage restoration projects



<https://estuaries.org/snepgrantprogram/map/>



<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/the-division-of-ecological-restoration-project-map>

Collaborative began in response to regional need



- Est. 2021 (501c3 in 2024)
- 2 FT staff
- Meet monthly
- Over 120 partners
- 100% grant-funded
- Build capacity & provide technical assistance
- Improving social & ecological resilience



We're supported by flexible funding to respond to emerging needs



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.

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)

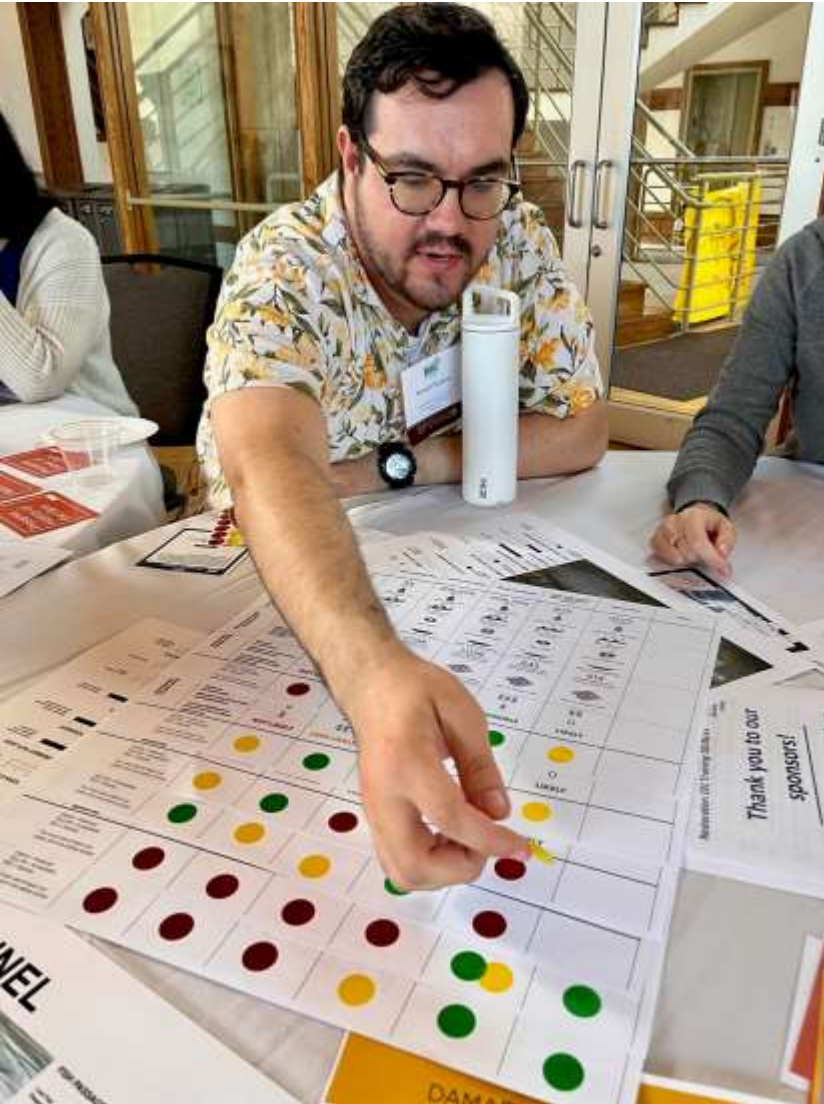


What is a Combined Sewer Overflow?

The diagram illustrates the flow of water during a storm. It shows a house with a storm drain leading to a combined sewer pipe. This pipe carries both rainwater and household sewage. When the pipe is full, the excess water overflows from an outlet pipe into a nearby waterbody. Labels include "Wet Weather", "Storm drain", "Combined sewage and wastewater", "Pipe full", "Outlet pipe to waterbody", and "Combined sewer to wastewater treatment plant".



Dam Removal & Ecological Restoration Training



Improving river access for all



Community Parade to Restore Migratory Fish



Collaboratives are being recognized



*small
investment
in structure*



*large reward
in impact*



Stefanie Covino
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Thank you!

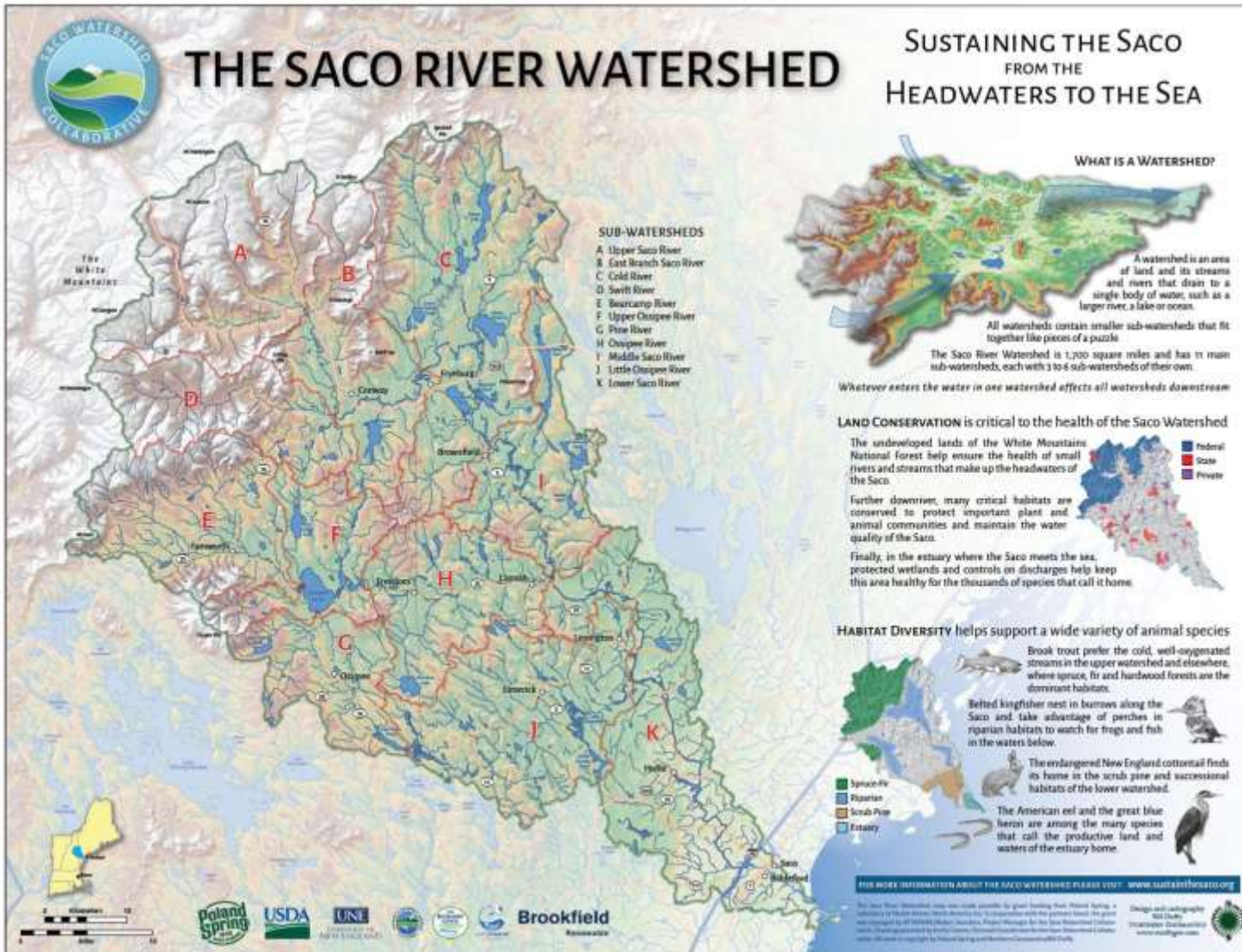


The Saco Watershed Collaborative

A Brief Overview



What Is Our Mission?

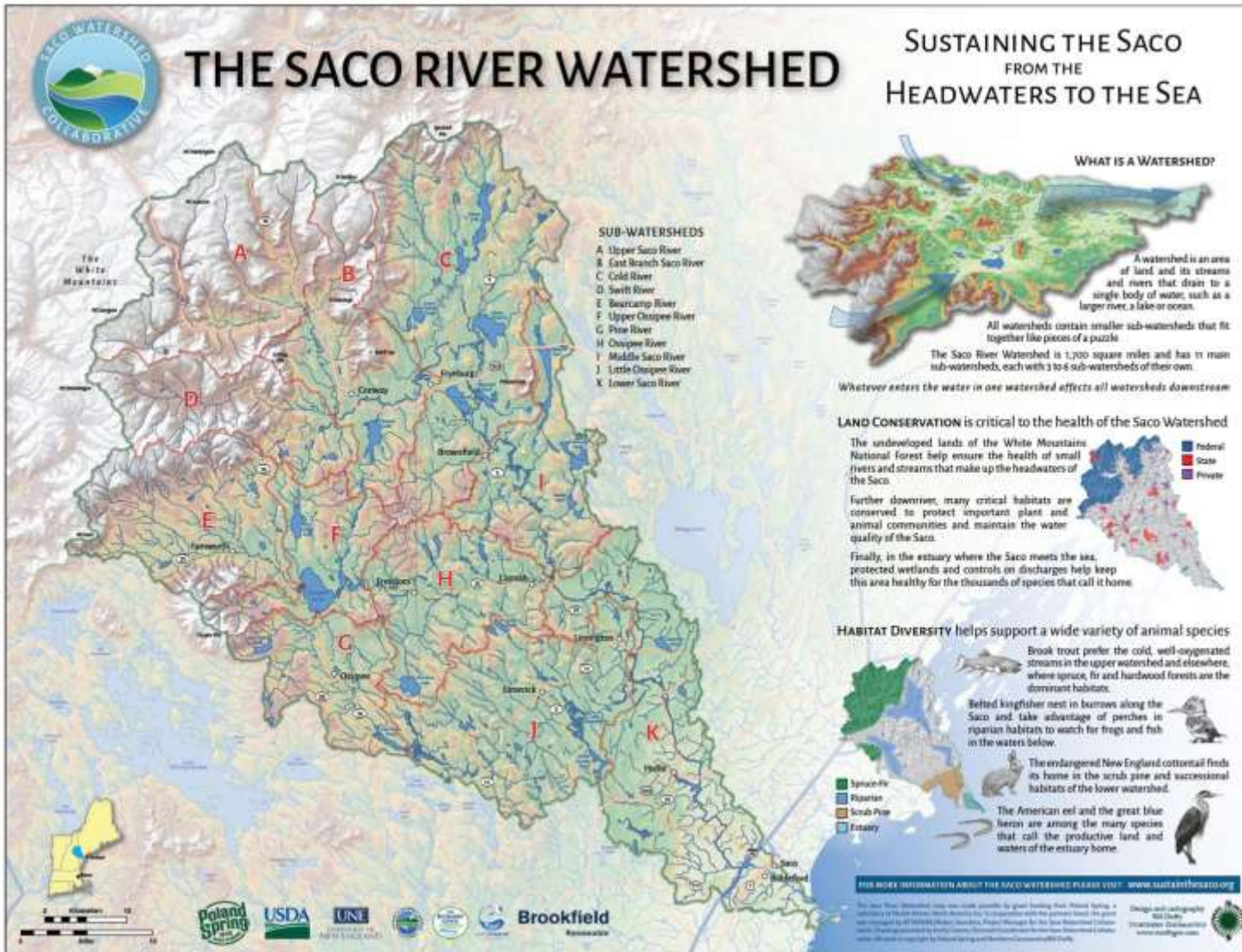


The Collaborative is a dedicated group of professionals, community members, and scientists working to protect the irreplaceable water resources and benefits that come from the Saco Watershed.

Using a Collective Impact Approach, which “brings together a variety of stakeholders to tackle complex issues that no single policy, government department, organization, or program can independently solve”

Source water protection is a priority as the Saco provides drinking water for approximately 250,000 residents in NH and ME

About The Watershed



The Saco Watershed

- Stretches 136 miles
- Starting in the White Mountain National Forest in NH finishing in Saco Bay, ME
- 66 municipalities in NH and ME
- Hosts 300 public water systems, the largest being Maine Water Company

What Is The Need?



The Saco Watershed is Healthy! This is proactive conservation to maintain the health of the resource for diverse use and future generations.

The collaborative aimed to create a collective voice for the watershed as a whole

Concerns We Monitor and Address:

- Nonpoint source pollution from agriculture and development
- Development of forested land and biodiversity loss
- Erosion and stream crossing issues
- Dams and fish passage (8 major and about 250 minor dams)
- Coastal storms and flooding
- Coastal development and reduction of shoreline habitat



Who Are We?



About 120 partners representing over 50 organizations and groups invested in the health of the watershed

66 municipalities in NH and ME

- Maine Water Company
- Poland Spring
- University of New England
- The Wells Reserve
- EPA
- White Mountain National Forest
- ME DEP
- NH DES
- Maine CDC
- New England Environmental Finance Center
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Brookfield Renewables
- The Ecology School
- York and Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation
- And many other businesses, municipalities, schools, conservation programs and community members



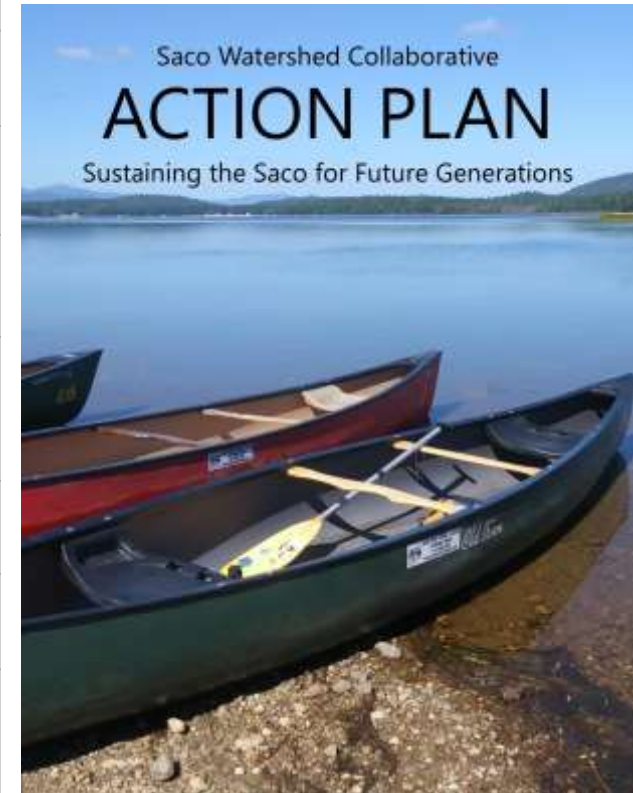
Wells National Estuarine
Research Reserve



How Did We Form?



Date	Description
2009-2014	Saco Estuary Project UNE & Partners
2015	Final report for Saco Estuary Project issued “Sustaining the Saco”
2016	Workshop hosted by UNE “Testing the Waters for Collaborative Partnerships to Sustain the Saco”
2017	Saco Watershed Collaborative is formed, work begins on action plan
2018	Completed “Action Plan: Sustaining the Saco for Future Generations”
2019	Co-founders step down, hand leadership to Robyn Saunders + Emily Greene to begin implementing the Action Plan
2020	COVID-19 restrictions require the Collaborative to pivot to virtual meetings
2021	10-year work plan of projects begins to formulate
2022-2023	USEPA sponsors environmental financing work with Northbridge to identify funding sources for 10-year plan of projects
2024	Kicking off first funded projects: Source Water Protection Plan with MRWA (funded by USDA) and Resiliency Project Update (funded by MaineCDC Capacity Development to MWC)



What Are We Currently Working On?



The 4 Action Strategies That Guide Our Work:

- Engage and inspire governments, organizations, and community members to take action to sustain the Saco River watershed;
- Protect water quality through pollution prevent and restoration of degraded sub watersheds
- Support land conservation and stewardship to protect water quality; and
- Promote and enforce LID strategies, stormwater and wastewater BMPs, and land use development that protect water.



What Are We Currently Working On?



Recent and Ongoing Work:

- Watershed water quality data set integration and public access
- Partner Meetings
- Educational Events
 - Coordinated 2 webinars on inland and coastal watershed concerns
 - Tour of Skelton Dam
 - Tour of UNE living shoreline demonstration project
 - Participation in coastal conference and teacher institute
 - Coordination for upcoming annual meeting and winter events
- Integrating watershed and collaborative into curriculum for Introduction to Environmental Issues UNE Course



What Are We Currently Working On?



Recent and Ongoing Work:

- Participating in development of a Saco River tour with Saco Main St.
- Completed a Source Water Protection Plan with Maine Rural Waters, Maine Water Company and ME CDC
- Starting resiliency project with consultant - development of interactive digital map of watershed to communicate characteristics and variables to diverse audiences (ME CDC SRF Funding)
- Continued partner relationship & communication work: Website and social media development



Where Are We Headed?



- Continue to build on our relationships with ME CDC and opportunity for SRF Funding for action tasks
- Investigating plans and funding for a municipal outreach plan and business outreach plan
- Working on building relationships with land trusts and other partners for land conservation within the watershed
- Maintain flexibility for the opportunistic nature of the work



Partnerships Come in Many Shapes and Sizes



Resilient
Taunton
Watershed
Network (RTWN)



Connecticut River
Watershed Partnership





Resilient Taunton Watershed Network (RTWN)

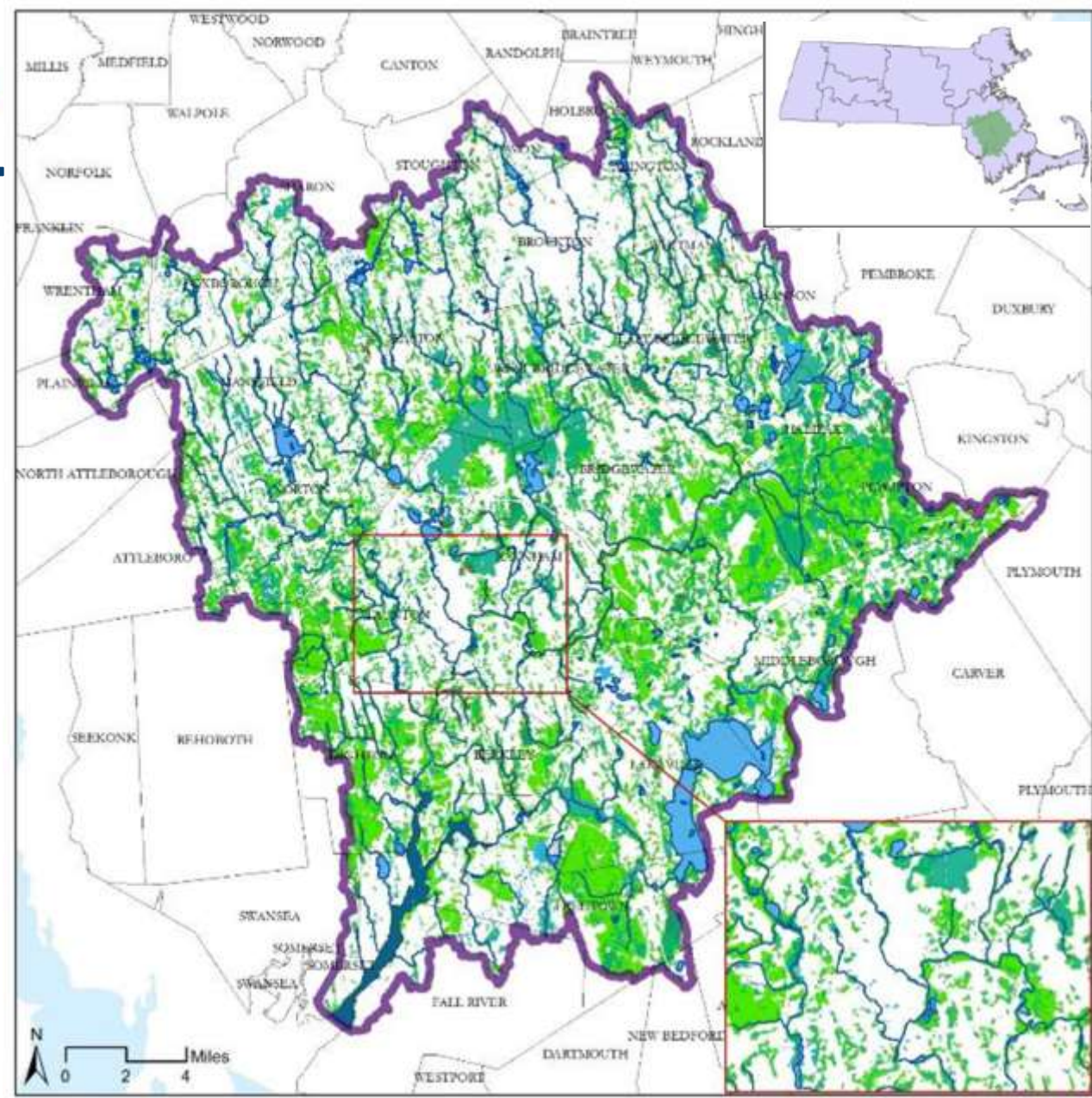


The Taunton River watershed contains critical natural resources.

And it is developing rapidly.

Opportunity and Challenge:

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



Mission and Goals



RTWN was founded in 2014 to promote the resiliency of the Taunton Watershed in the face of climate change and development, considering ecological outcomes as well as economic, social, and environmental justice issues.

- Proactive land use planning
- Strategic habitat protection & restoration
- Low Impact Development and Nature-based Solutions
- Prioritization of projects offering multiple co-benefits

Assists municipal officials and residents in meeting their local goals while considering a broader watershed perspective.

[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](#)

[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](#)

[The Nature Conservancy](#)

[Tighe & Bond](#)

[US Environmental Protection Agency](#)

[National Park Service](#)

[Wildlands Trust](#)

[...and several municipal representatives](#)

Projects

APC and Nemasket Watershed Management
and Climate Action Plan
August 1, 2022



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



Ultimately, it is all about people working together to build a better future.

Promoting Resilient Communities: A Transferable Process

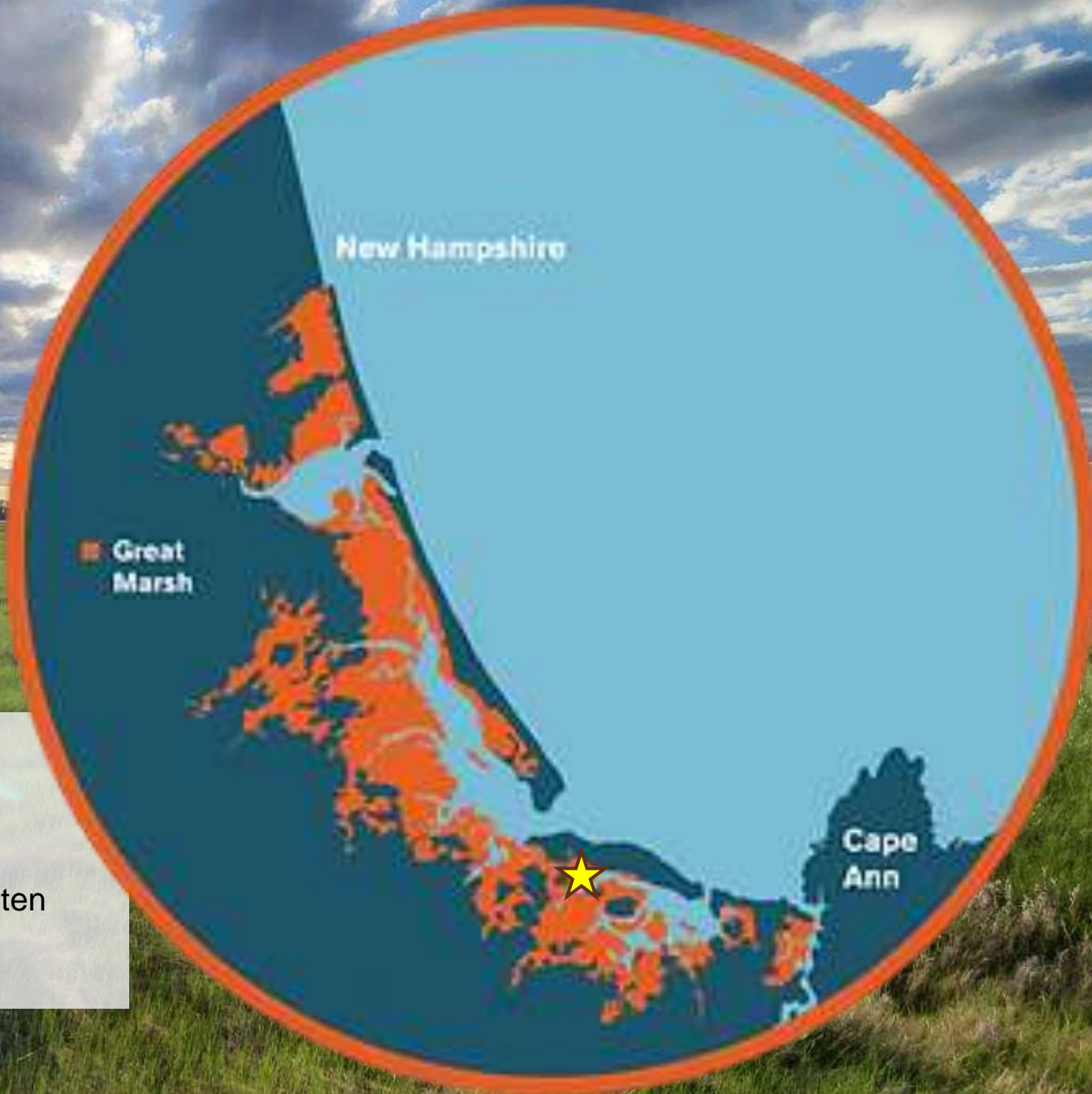


- Community Resilience Building (CRB) guide and workshops
- Local engagement in vulnerabilities and nature-based solutions
- Case studies
- Green Infrastructure Network map



MVP
Municipal Vulnerability
Preparedness





- 25,000 acre ecosystem
- 16,000 acres of salt marsh
- Largest marsh in New England
- Thousands of old ditches and embankments threaten the marsh's survival



The mission of the **Great Marsh Partnership** is to **preserve, protect, restore, and enhance the Great Marsh.**

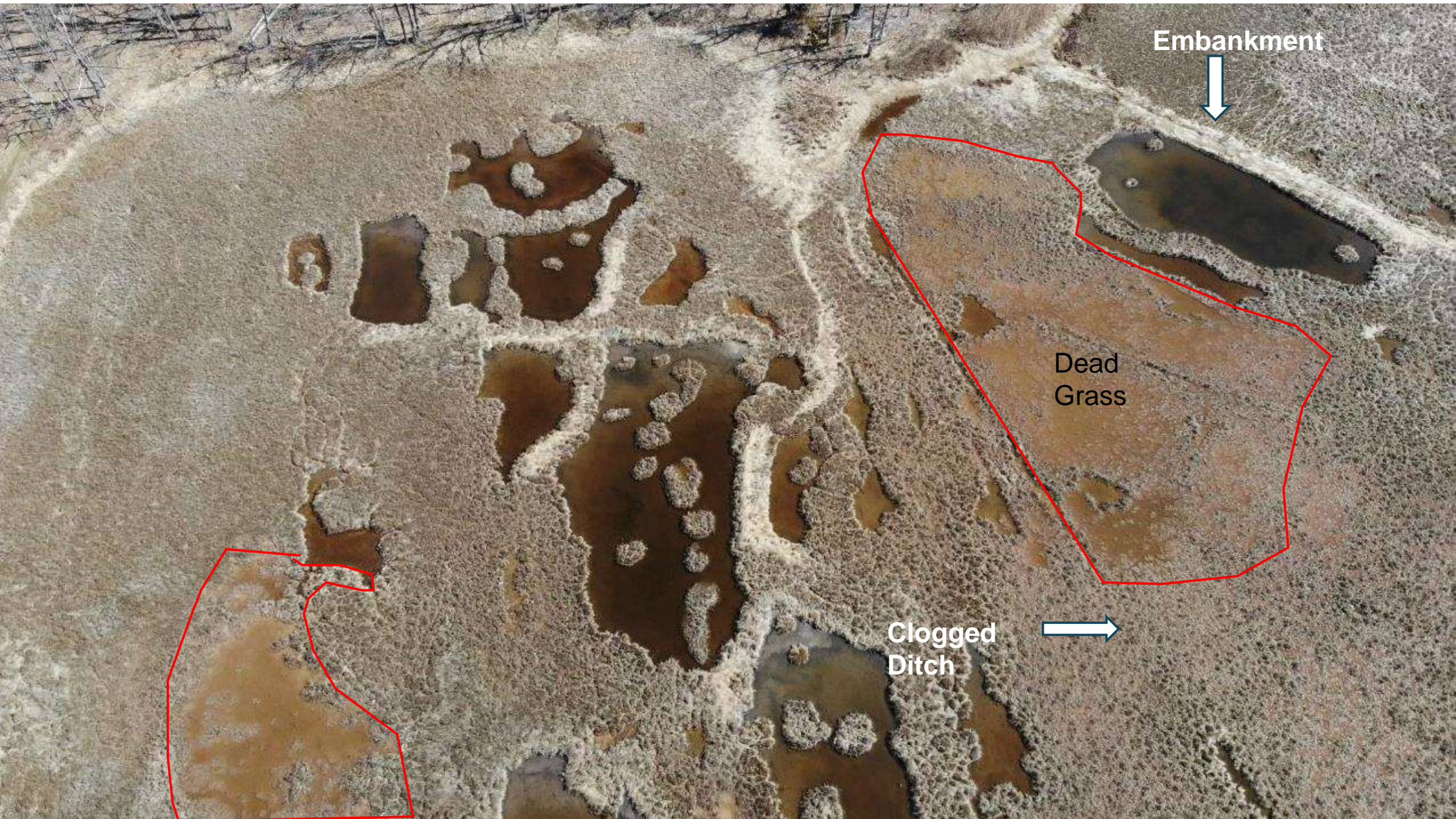


Communities of the Great Marsh

SIMMONS STEWARDSHIP AND CONSERVATION ECOLOGY







Embankment



Dead
Grass

Clogged
Ditch



Structured Decision Making

PARTNERS WORKSHOP FEBRUARY 2020

Eureka! We have a shared vision!



Great Marsh

Restoration Projects

➤ 8,000 acres restoration currently advancing

Partnership is key

Little River Tidal Restriction

Newbury

Plum Island

Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical...

Rowley

Great Marsh Area of Critical...

Ipswich

Choate Island

DEP sign at Essex

Ipswich Bay

Coffins Beach

Wingaersheek Beach

4 mi



Google Earth

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO
Image U.S. Geological Survey

(Re-) Introduction to the Partnership (formerly Friends of Conte)

Connecticut River
Watershed Partnership



Exemplary Achievements

Advocate

Connecticut River Watershed Partnership Act:

Introduction of federal legislation for conservation and restoration activities in the Watershed

National Blueway Designation:

Connecticut River is the nation's first and only!

Land and Water Conservation Fund appropriations:

Helped secure \$41M for Conte Refuge and partner land conservation projects in the Watershed

Support & Implement Projects

Bear Hill Project (Mascoma River Division, NH):

14,817 acre land conservation project led by WildLandscapes International and the Conte Refuge

Connecticut River Paddlers Trail (All states):

Over 50 primitive campsites and access points along the entire length of the River led by AMC and partners

Fannie Stebbins Project (Fannie Stebbins Unit, MA):

A floodplain conservation and restoration partnership project along the mainstem of the Connecticut River

Power of Partnerships - Funding



Regional Conservation Partnership Program (NRCS)

Grant Awards announced 10/24

Mass Audubon and partners:

Building Resilience in the Connecticut River Watershed of Massachusetts (\$25M)

Partners:

Kestrel Land Trust

East Quabbin Land Trust

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust

Hilltown Land Trust

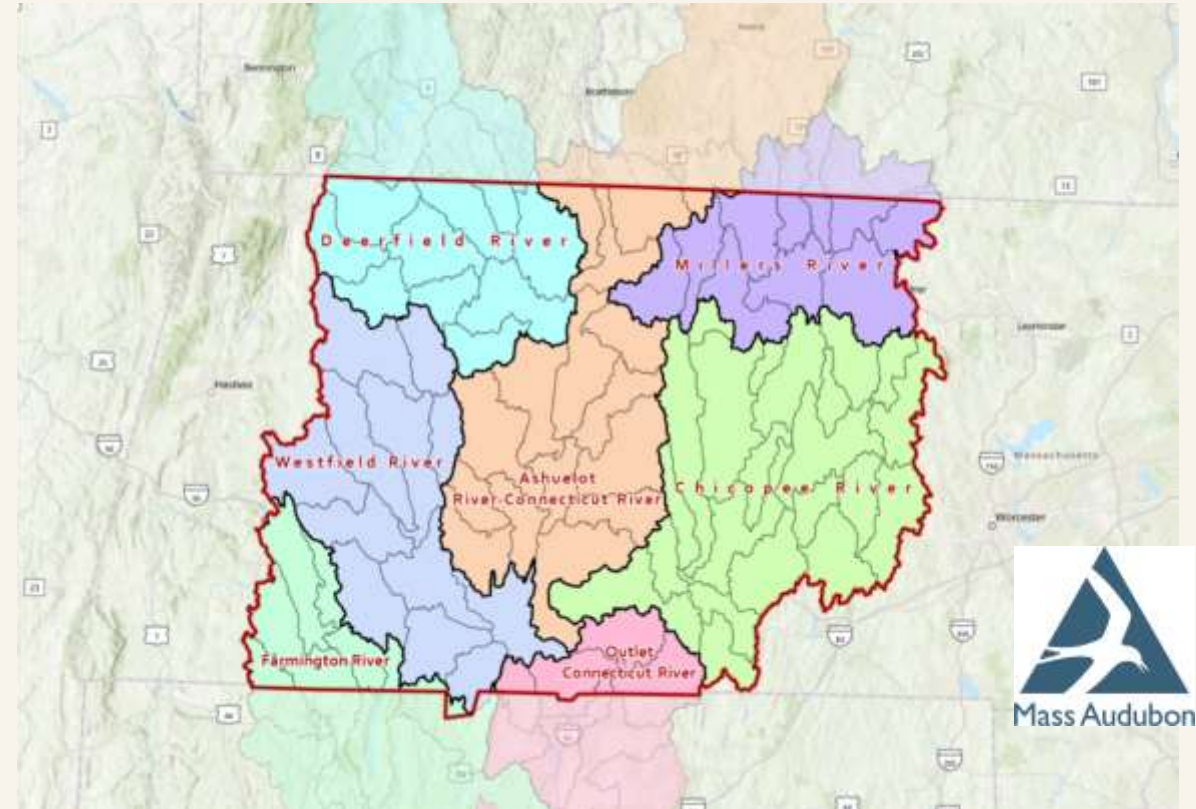
Connecticut River Conservancy

Trout Unlimited

Lincoln Institute of Land Policy

Activities:

- Protection of 10,000 acres of forest, riparian and wetland habitats via conservation easements with willing landowners
- Restoration of at least 100 acres of riparian and wetland habitats through land management activities
- Deploy new measurement and monitoring technologies that will benefit partners around the region



Southeast New England Program Network

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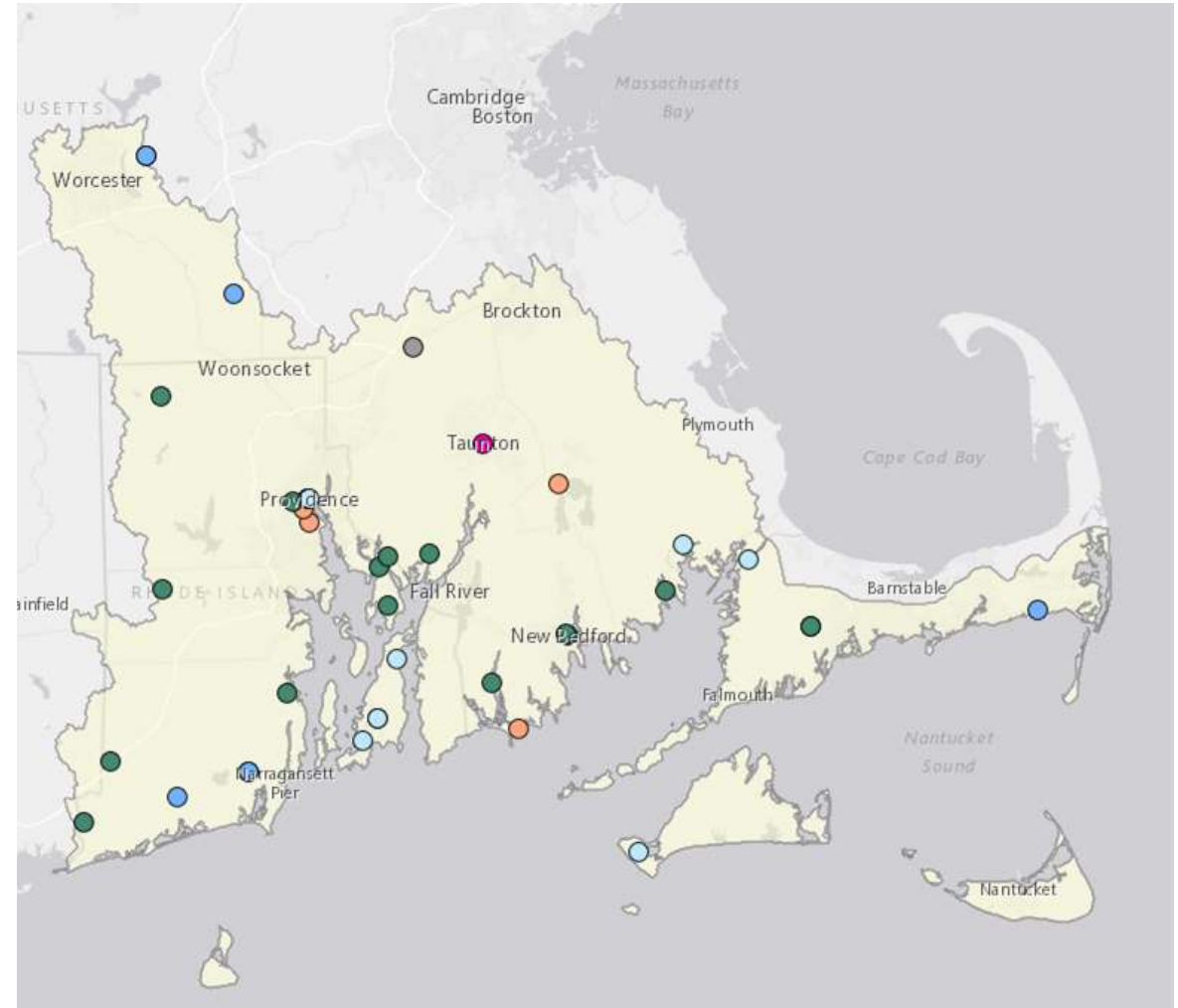
Southeast New England Program Network



Who We are

A geographic program of
US EPA

The Network is
**collaborative of 16+ local
and regional experts** that
provides FREE Training and
Technical Assistance to
build local capacity of
SNEP communities and
Tribes



We are a collaborative network



We build capacity by providing....



- **FREE** technical assistance
- In-depth trainings and webinars
- Community Assistance Projects (based on need)
- Facilitate collaborations among TA providers

Our Unique approach to assistance

- Continued support throughout the advancement of the project
- Meet communities where they are at
- Advance projects to funding and financing
- Utilize a pre-approved consultant pool
- **We make and facilitate connections**



We also provide training and webinars....

- Partners work collaboratively to deliver webinars based on needs of communities
- Trainings and webinars available on SNEP Network website
- Facilitated trainings:
 - Stormwater Planning Series
 - Bylaw Tool Curriculum



...and develop REGIONAL tools and resources.

- Network Tools build on one another
- Designed to raise regional applicability
- Tools transferred beyond the region
- Advancing regional consistency



Our impact in the region



35+
**Community
Assistance
Projects**



**Helped secure
2M+ in
funding to
advance
projects**



**Engaged 15
Federal/State
Entities**



**14 consultants
to support 77+
municipalities,
Tribes, and
community
organizations**



**Responded to
150+ TA
requests**

What does the SNEP Network approach look like in the real world?

Stormwater Planning Series



A **facilitated planning series** that **pairs communities** with a SNEP Network Partner to learn how to **develop a conceptual design** for a nature-based **stormwater retrofit** option

- Participants learn how to :
 - identify low-cost solutions to address stormwater problems
 - Generate conceptual designs, order of magnitude cost estimates, and pollutant reduction stormwater credits



Filling in the capacity gaps in Westerly



Gain support of local government
(Boards, Commissions & Town Council)



Partner with local, regional & state organizations
& local business/property owners



Engage with the public



Pursue grant funding



RIIB MRP - \$500,000

NBEP - \$75,000

RIDOT - \$25,000
(potential \$297,000)

ARPA - \$250,000

SNEP - Technical Assistance

Westerly EDC - \$2,500

- Developed "conceptual design" for the first "demonstration project" to begin Westerly's Resilient Riverfront Renewal Project
- Completed Low Impact Development (LID) Municipal Self-Assessment

Continued Support to Providence, RI



- **Year 1:** Providence Stormwater Innovation Center
- **Year 2:** PVD Tree Equity Plan + Stormwater Planning Series
- **Year 3:** PVD Tree Equity Plan (*continued*)
- **Year 4:** Stormwater Financing Support
- **Year 5:** Stormwater Financing Support (*continued*)

Thank you!

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to fill out the
SESSION
EVALUATION FORM

We Welcome Your Feedback



Open The
Camera App.



Point your camera at a
QR Code to scan it.