

MASSACHUSETTS  
Rivers Alliance  
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# The RIVER Advocate

HEALTHY RIVERS FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

FALL 2021



## Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

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

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### Staff

Julia Blatt, *Executive Director*  
Sarah Bower, *Technical Specialist*  
Katharine Lange, *Policy Specialist*  
Gretchen McClain, *Development & Ops*

## Annual Celebration

An afternoon in the sun! 150 people celebrated, boated, and connected with us on September 12 for our first outdoor celebration at Hale Reservation in Westwood. Attendees enjoyed a food truck, live music, beer, and a raffle underneath a tree canopy. We honored State Representative Linda Dean Campbell, State Senator Patricia Jehlen, and former State Representative Denise Provost for their leadership in getting the sewage notification law passed in the last legislative session.



Left to right: Viki Zoltay, Anne Carroll, Julia Blatt, Linda Dean Campbell, and Denise Provost

We also honored two staff at the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Office of Water Resources, Director Anne Carroll and Hydrologist Viki Zoltay for their steadfast commitment to science and leadership on the Commonwealth's drought management policy.

Thanks to our sponsors NEC Solar, Paddle Boston, Patagonia, and Wachusett Brewing Company. We can't wait to see you again next year!

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North River in Marshfield.

## New Mass Rivers program helps member groups protect river flows

You probably know that our state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) is entrusted with keeping the water you purchase from your local or regional water supplier safe to drink. What you may not have realized is that MassDEP is also tasked with ensuring the sustainability of water resources for both people and the environment. This is the main purpose of the Water Management Act, a 1986 state law that regulates water allocations for many municipalities.

Mass Rivers' newest Technical Support Program helps our member groups navigate this complicated water permitting program and advocate for improved water conservation to better protect their local streamflows. MassDEP issues permits on a 20-year rotating cycle to many municipalities around the state, allocating water for towns and cities to sell to residents, businesses, and sometimes, other municipalities. Regulatory changes to the program in 2014 created new opportunities to use the law to improve streamflows

and offset the impacts of withdrawals on rivers, while also making the program far more complex.

Technical Specialist Sarah Bower has been working with an expert advisory committee and a growing group of watershed groups and other advocates since January, focusing in areas where permit renewals are imminent or already in process. She is helping communities improve the environmental sustainability of their water use, and ensure that additional water withdrawals do not further deplete our state's rivers. She is currently working closely with environmental advocates in the Charles, Concord (Sudbury, Assabet and Concord River watersheds), and Taunton River basins.

Good water stewardship is growing ever more urgent in an era of climate change. We are delighted to be able to offer our member groups this new service, and we wish to thank the First Parish of Lincoln for their support in getting this program off the ground!

FALL 2021



Julia Blatt at Hale Reservation in Westwood.

## From the Director

### WE'RE GROWING!

I hope this finds you well and enjoying a little sunshine following an extraordinarily long and rainy summer.

As we gear up for year-end, I thought I'd lead with the big news. I am delighted to share with you the news that Mass Rivers has been given the biggest gift in its history – a multi-year, \$550,000 “transformational grant” from a generous donor. The gift will help us grow our capacity as the state's leading advocate for rivers in the face of a changing climate.

While we are proud of our many accomplishments to date, we believe the scale of the challenges currently facing our rivers – droughts, floods, stormwater pollution, dams, culverts, aging infrastructure – require us to scale up, as well. To that end, we expect to hire two

staff in the next several months, to increase both our program and administrative capacity. So far this year we got a bill passed, co-led a successful effort to increase the state's environmental agency budgets, debuted a new website feature with information about river recreation across the state, introduced a new program to help our member organizations protect streamflow, and threw a big, outdoor party for you, our members and friends. And that was all with four staff. Imagine what we could accomplish together if we doubled in size.

Our vision is of clean, healthy, free-flowing rivers and streams in every corner of our state, home to thriving populations of wildlife, and enjoyed every day by residents who swim, fish, paddle, bike, walk, or just cherish their scenic beauty.

Thank you for being part of the Mass Rivers community, and for helping bring this vision to life. Have a safe and healthy fall,

Julia

## Massachusetts Rivers Alliance Organizational Members

### Key Leadership Members (>\$1,000)

Charles River Watershed Association  
 Ipswich River Watershed Association  
 Mass Audubon  
 Mystic River Watershed Association  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 Neponset River Watershed Association  
 Trout Unlimited, Nor'East Chapter

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

Association to Preserve Cape Cod  
 Berkshire Natural Resources Council  
 The Charles River Conservancy  
 Conservation Law Foundation  
 Environmental League of Massachusetts  
 Mass Org of State Engineers and Scientists (MOSES)  
 Merrimack River Watershed Council  
 Nashua River Watershed Association  
 North and South Rivers Watershed Association  
 OARS, for the Assabet, Sudbury, & Concord Rivers  
 Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter  
 Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council  
 Trout Unlimited, Greater Boston Chapter

### Members (<\$250)

Belmont Citizens Forum  
 Berkshire Environmental Action Team  
 Biodiversity for a Livable Climate  
 Blackstone River Coalition  
 Blackstone River Watershed Association  
 Buzzards Bay Coalition  
 Members (<\$250) cont.  
 Center for Coastal Studies  
 Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council  
 Clean Water Action & Clean Water Fund  
 Connecticut River Conservancy  
 Deerfield River Watershed Alliance  
 Environment Massachusetts  
 Farmington River Watershed Association  
 Fort River Watershed Alliance  
 Friends of Belle Isle Marsh  
 Friends of the Assabet River NWR  
 Friends of the Bass River  
 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  
 Groundwork Lawrence  
 Hoosic River Revival  
 Hoosic River Watershed Association  
 Hop Brook Protection Association  
 Housatonic Valley Association  
 Association  
 Jones River Watershed Association  
 League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust  
 Massachusetts Assoc. of Conservation Commissions  
 Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition  
 Massachusetts Watershed Coalition  
 Millers River Watershed Council  
 The Muddy Water Initiative  
 Nantucket Land Council  
 Ocean River Institute  
 Parker River Clean Water Association  
 River Merrimack  
 Runnins River Alliance  
 Save the Bay – Narragansett Bay Riverkeeper  
 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  
 The Trust for Public Land  
 The Trustees  
 Trout Unlimited, Deerfield River Watershed Chapter  
 Trout Unlimited – MA RI Council  
 Trout Unlimited, Pioneer Valley Chapter  
 Wareham Land Trust  
 Wastewater Advisory Committee (WAC) to the MWRA  
 Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee  
 Weir River Watershed Association  
 Westfield River Watershed Association  
 Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee  
 Westport River Watershed Alliance



Staff, Sarah Bower and Katharine Lange, and Samantha Woods from North and South Rivers Watershed Association on the North River.

## FY22 state budget

Success! On July 16, Governor Baker signed the \$47.6 billion state budget for fiscal year 2022. Among the agencies that received increases were Mass Rivers' three priorities: The Division of Ecological Restoration increased from \$2.6 million to \$3 million, and the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species program's budget was doubled from \$500,000 to \$1 million. The work these agencies do is critical to protecting and restoring rivers and increasing climate resilience. This funding will enable more dam removals, culvert restoration, endangered species habitat protection, streamflow and water quality improvements, and much more.

Mass Rivers worked in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, Environmental League of Massachusetts, Mass Audubon, The Trustees of Reservations, Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers and Scientists to advocate for these increases, including budget requests in our Lobby Day meetings. We are grateful to the Ways and Means Committee, conference committee members, and leadership for prioritizing the environment in their appropriations! We are also grateful to our partners and members who helped advocate for these important programs. We could not have done this without your support.



Mass Rivers members on the Sudbury River.

## Huge federal funding opportunity

On September 9, Mass Rivers testified before the state's Joint Committee on Ways and Means to urge the legislature to prioritize water and sewer infrastructure, climate resilience, outdoor recreation and green workforce development in its American Rescue Plan Act spending.



North River in Marshfield.

The federal American Rescue Plan Act has allocated \$5 billion to Massachusetts for post-pandemic recovery, presenting a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fund much-needed infrastructure upgrades that are climate resilient. Governor Baker proposed a spending plan early in 2021, but the state legislature is preferring to take a "slow and deliberate" approach. The Joint Committee on Ways and Means is holding a series of hearings to gather public input on how the money should be allocated. Mass Rivers is continuing to work closely with many partners to support shared environmental priorities.

Please reach out to your legislators while this process is ongoing and request that they allocate some of the funding for these priorities, and ask that they make non-profit organizations eligible for grant program funding. Contact Katharine with any questions or how to get involved! [katharinelange@massriversalliance.org](mailto:katharinelange@massriversalliance.org)

## Priority bills awaiting hearings

Mass Rivers' two priority bills on drought management (H.898/S.530) and invasive species (H.999/S.563) coordination still await hearings before the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. We'll let you know when there are advocacy opportunities on those issues - we need local voices to demonstrate the need for these policies.

## Amended regulations to improve streamflow during droughts

With climate change expected to increase the severity and frequency of droughts in our region, it is time to manage our water more sustainably. Excessive outdoor watering during dry periods exacerbates drought impacts on rivers and water supplies. This summer, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) proposed revisions to the state's Water Management Act regulations which includes a new condition on registrations that would restrict nonessential outdoor water use by registered users during times of drought. If implemented, the revisions will subject the last 20% of regulated water withdrawals - nearly 184 million gallons per day - to the same water conservation requirements that permitted users are already required to implement under the Act. Approximately 63 water suppliers and 86 golf courses will be affected by the new regulations.

Mass Rivers and many river allies submitted comments on the proposed revisions, and we are now awaiting approval of the final regulations by the state. While this is a key first step in protecting streamflows across the Commonwealth, much more still needs to be done to protect our water resources and prevent impacts from drought in the face of climate change.



Sudbury River in Concord.



Biking along the Charles River.

## Explore Your Rivers

Mass Rivers is excited to release a new online feature to help you find the perfect place to get outside: *Explore Your Rivers*. We've crowd-sourced all the best spots across the state for swimming, hiking, paddling, biking, and boating, and transportation options to help you get there. Many thanks to our fabulous team of interns who worked on collecting data and adding maps over the course of two summers: Shea Brams, Rachel Percy, Caley Earls, John Doolin, Zoe Zachary and Astrid Wilder. This project is still growing: send us your favorite places to recreate and photos so we can expand and include more watersheds.

Check it out on our website to find your next river adventure - happy exploring!



Attendees at our Annual Celebration at Hale Reservation in Westwood.