

TOWN OF WELLESLEY

**Public Engagement as a Key to
Stormwater Utility Success**



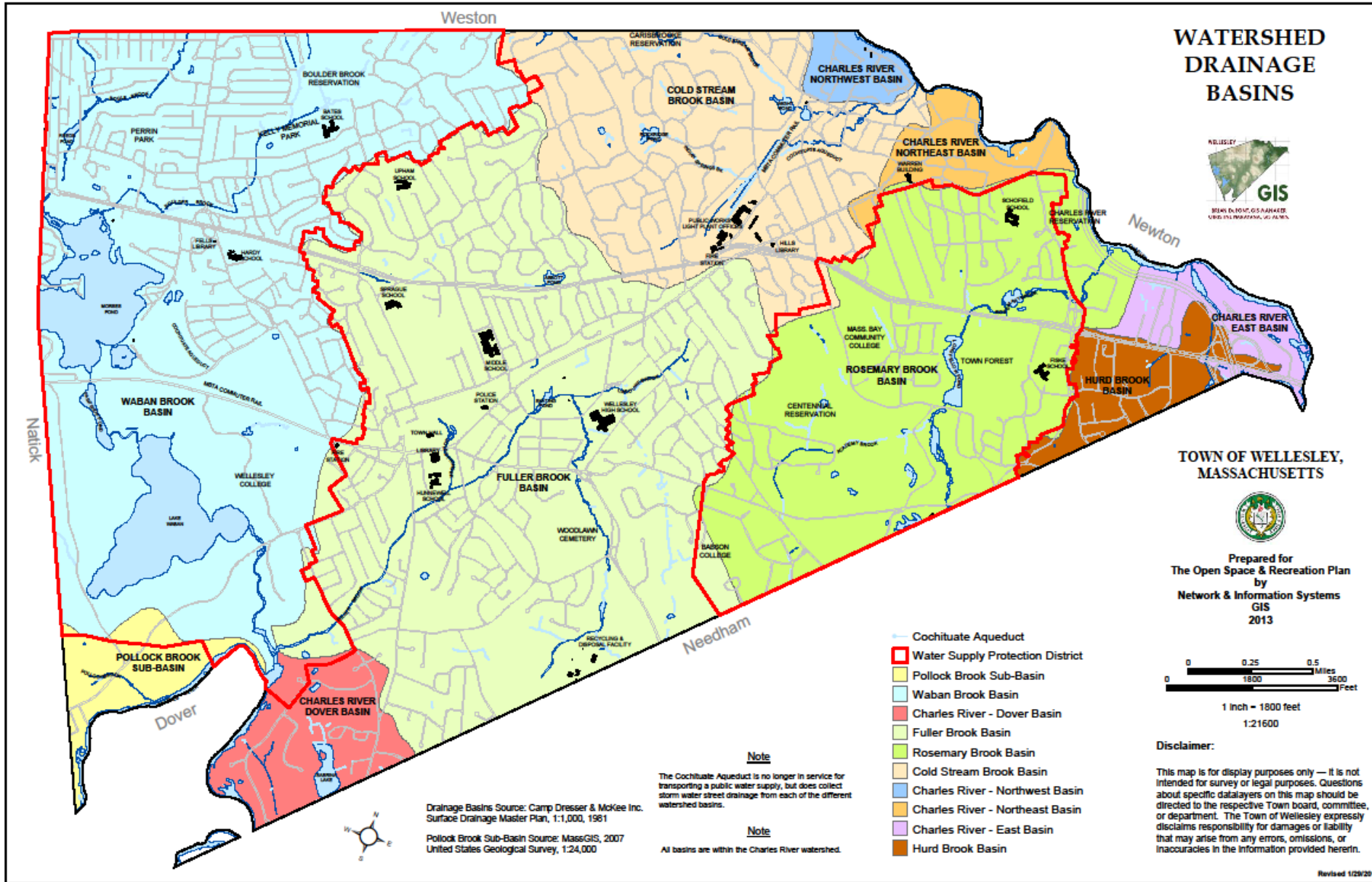
Mass Rivers Alliance Stormwater Financing Workshop Series (Workshop #3)

David Hickey, Town Engineer

Presentation Overview

- ▶ Intro to Wellesley's Stormwater Program
- ▶ Project Timeline & Drivers
- ▶ Public Outreach
 - ▶ Presentations & Outreach
 - ▶ More education & transparency
 - ▶ Annual Town Meeting
- ▶ Lessons Learned and Next Steps

Wellesley's Stormwater Management Program



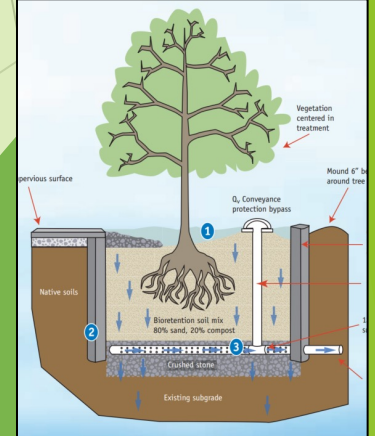
Outfalls & Pipes



Catch Basins & Manholes



Stormwater BMPs



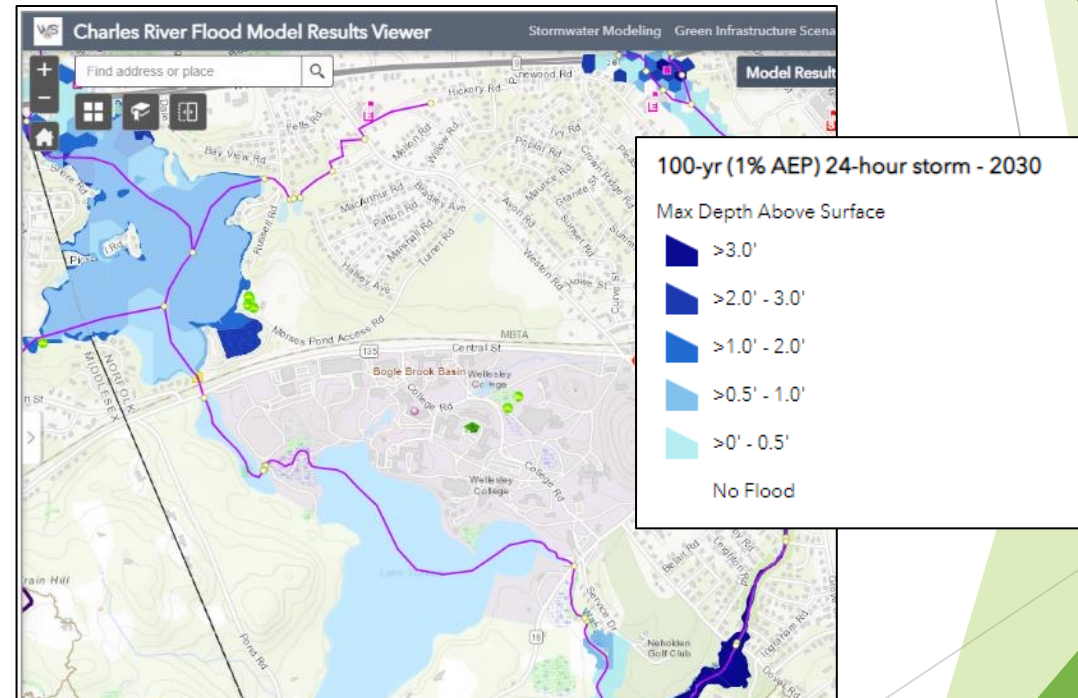
Stormwater in the Charles River Watershed: Challenges & Opportunities

Water Quality



Source: WBUR. [EPA Moves To Reduce Runoff That Feeds Toxic Algae In Charles River](#). August 14, 2020. Green-blue algae blooms dot the surface of the Charles River along the Esplanade. (Jesse Costa/WBUR)

Climate Change & Flooding



Source: Building Resilience Across the Watershed. Flood Viewer Map. URL: <https://www.crwa.org/watershed-model.html>

Timeline

- ▶ The idea of a Stormwater Utility was a priority for the Department of Public Works for about a decade
- ▶ Technical work beginning in Fall 2021. Convened two groups:
 - ▶ Stormwater Technical Group (DPW & Engineering)
 - ▶ Stormwater Working Group (added Department heads & Committee representatives)
- ▶ Process included:
 - ▶ Develop current and future stormwater program budget estimates
 - ▶ Evaluate impervious area by parcel & develop rate structure alternatives; work through various policy decisions to select a proposed rate structure and fee per ERU
 - ▶ Develop a plan and schedule for outreach
 - ▶ Prepare for implementation/billing (ongoing)
 - ▶ Adopt Final Rate Structure & Credit Policy (ongoing)
- ▶ Intended to present at Annual Town Meeting in 2022; delayed twice. Passed at Annual Town Meeting 2023



Wellesley's Case for a Stormwater Utility

Everyone agrees that we need to fund the current and future Stormwater Management Program, and impervious area, fee based program is a fairer way to share the costs.

Presentations and Outreach

Town Boards and Committees

- ▶ 11/09/2021 - Board of Public Works Presentation
- ▶ 12/08/2021 - Advisory Committee Presentation
- ▶ 12/09/2021 - Planning Board Presentation
- ▶ 12/20/2021 - Select Board Presentation
- ▶ 01/14/2022 - Climate Action Committee Presentation
- ▶ 03/03/2022 - Natural Resources Commission Presentation
- ▶ 09/27/2022 - Select Board Update
- ▶ 12/20/2022 - Select Board Update
- ▶ 01/18/2023 - Advisory Committee Meeting

Educational Institutions

- ▶ 8/23/2022 - Educational Institutions Virtual Meeting
 - Dana Hall School, Wellesley College, Babson College, Mass Bay Community College
 - Educational Institutions make up a combined:
 - 62 Billable Parcels, 1,943.2 ERUs
 - \$437,220 Fees (before potential credits)

Large Landowners

- ▶ 9/20/2022 Landowners Virtual Meeting
 - Invited 294 property owners by mail; all non-SFR
 - 392 parcels, 3,312 ERUs
 - \$745,200 Fees (before potential credits)

Internal Stakeholder Meetings

- ▶ Working Group Meetings x 3
- ▶ 11/02/2022 - Town Department Heads

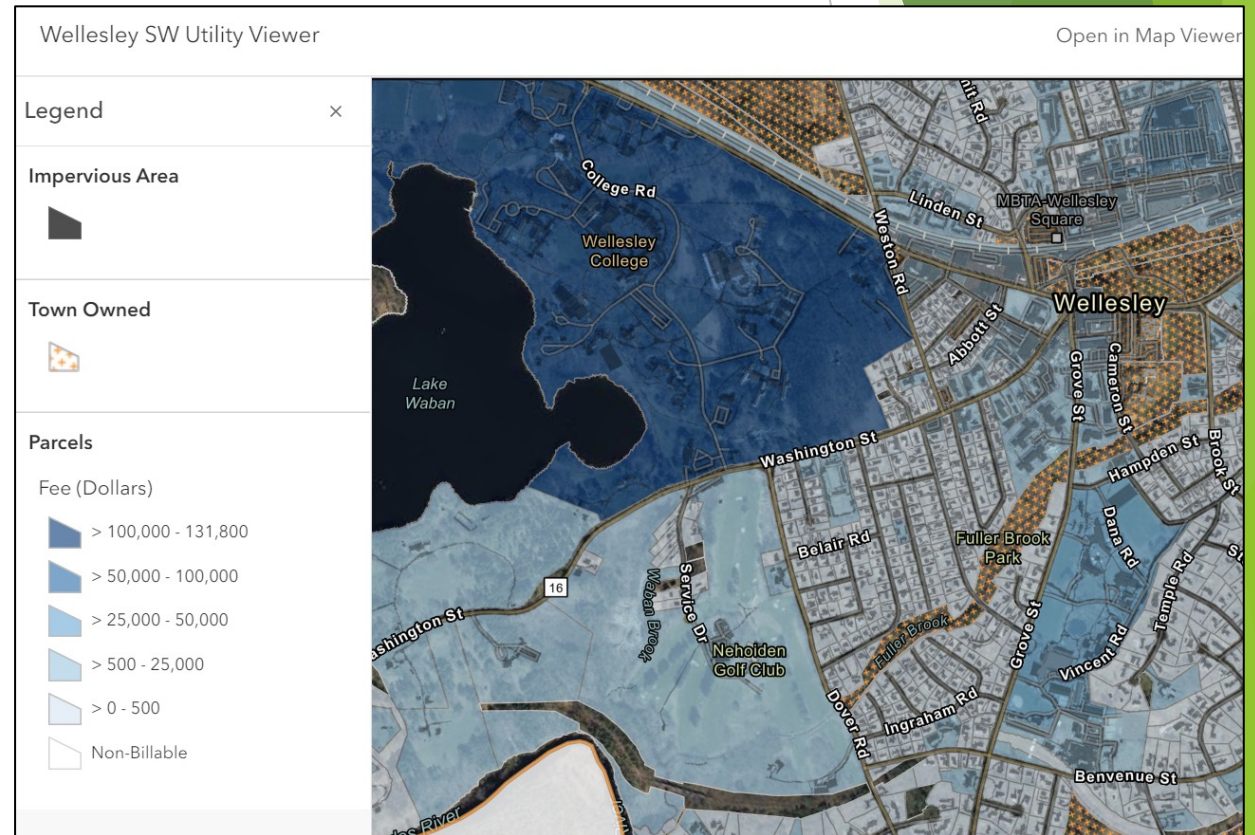
Influence	High	KEEP SATISFIED Intergroup Dialogue Design Charrette Focus Groups Conversation Café (combined with Appreciative Inquiry) Website Social Media outreach Public meetings — Key pad polling On-site events	MANAGE CLOSELY Periodic One-on-One meetings/calls Focus Groups Conversation Café Design Charrette Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Website Social Media outreach Public Meetings — Key pad polling On-site events
	Low	MONITOR Public Meetings Email updates via self-selected listserv Website Newsletters Public media coverage	KEEP INFORMED Website Social media outreach Newsletters Email updates Public Meetings On-site events
		Low	High
		Interest	

Source: EPA Getting Community Buy-in for Stormwater Funding

More Education & Transparency



- ▶ Website was the repository for all ongoing outreach efforts
- ▶ Online parcel viewer
 - ▶ Mapped Impervious Area
 - ▶ Total ERUs and Fee (before credits)
- ▶ FAQs
- ▶ Technical memo provided to Select Board
- ▶ Videos of nearly all presentations
- ▶ Many other resources (educational videos, brochures, and other stormwater fee information from Massachusetts)



Annual Town Meeting

- ▶ DPW Director with the Town Engineer presented the Article
- ▶ Passed with a slim margin
- ▶ Required answers to detailed questions on the fly - be ready for anything

Date	Motion	Description	Sponsor	Vote
4/11/23	29AMD	Amend Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund. Add section 4.	Michael D'Ortenzio Jr.	NO (76/81/9)
4/11/23	29	Establish Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund and Authorize Funding	BPW	YES (111/52/4)

Lessons Learned & Next Steps

- ▶ Having trusted champions of the stormwater utility in the DPW Director and Town Engineer helped make the case to town leadership and the public
- ▶ Transparency throughout the process is essential
- ▶ Benchmark against other communities
 - ▶ Be ready to demonstrate the need & justify fee with numbers
- ▶ Socialize idea internally early and often
- ▶ Delaying annual town meeting was in the utility's best interest; we needed more time to build support
- ▶ Leverage credit policy as an opportunity for partnership and environmental stewardship

This Fall we will adopt the Fee Schedule, Credit Policy, Regulations and prepare to go live with billing for FY2025.



Questions

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