



Mystic River Watershed Association
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2010 Year in Review

Mystic River Watershed Association

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) is pleased to report that 2010 was a productive and successful year. MyRWA continues to work diligently to protect and restore the Mystic River, its tributaries and watershed lands for the benefit of present and future generations. Looking back over the past year, here are some highlights:

- In 2010, MyRWA celebrated ten years of water quality monitoring through the *Baseline Monitoring Program*. Data collection is performed by a dedicated volunteer corp and is relied upon by the MA DEP, EPA, watershed stakeholders and the general public.
- Kimberly Roth, *Executive Assistant*, joined MyRWA's professional staff in June. MyRWA also increased and re-organized its Arlington office space.
- MyRWA drew attention to the conditions that led to an outbreak of Shigella at Shannon Beach in Winchester in 2009. The MyRWA report resulted in a meeting with DCR and DPH at the popular swimming beach. DCR has committed to upgrading the facility and providing a short term solution for the 2011 summer season.



Volunteers pull invasive water chestnuts at a community hand-pulling event, June 2010. Photo by David Mussina.

- EkOngKar Singh Khalsa, *Executive Director*, with Collaborative team members, presented at the *2010 National River Rally* in Utah on the work accomplished by the Mystic River Collaborative, a group of nine organizations working to improve environmental conditions within the Mystic River Watershed.



MyRWA staff and Board members recognized volunteer water quality monitors who have served for 10 years. Patrick Herron, Water Quality Monitoring Director, presents these dedicated monitors, from left to right: Michael O'Brien, Bill Eykamp, Roger Wrubel, Doug Matson, and Roger Frymire. Not pictured here are Tracy Olson and Bob Paine.

- Through the hard work and dedication of many volunteers as well as the work of a mechanical harvester, approximately 220,000 pounds of water chestnuts were removed from the Mystic River in 2010. This work was undertaken through a Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET) grant that sponsored the collaborative efforts of MyRWA, Groundwork Somerville, Friends of the Mystic River, the Winter Hill, Riverside, and Mystic Wellington Yacht Clubs and the Medford Boat Club. Efforts to tackle this invasive plant will continue over the next several years.
- MyRWA increased revenues from \$364,872 in 2009 to \$615,538 in 2010 - an increase of approximately 68% - in support of our mission to protect and restore the Mystic River and its watershed lands.
- In the spring, MyRWA distributed over 50 rain barrels for watershed residents to aid in lowering outdoor water usage and reduce stormwater runoff.



Chelsea High School students in the AP Environmental Science class participated in a Boat-based Science Exploration of the Mystic River Watershed with MyRWA staff.

- MyRWA received \$325,000 from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET) to implement an integrated water quality monitoring and improvement program in the Mystic River Watershed. The grant will support and expand upon two existing MyRWA programs, *Find-it and Fix-it* and *Baseline Monitoring*. The grant will also extend MyRWA's monitoring work to address harmful algal blooms, nutrient loading and the impacts of large storms.



Look for this logo in Somerville along the Blueback Herring River Route.

- MyRWA and its community partners received \$50,000 from the Miller Foundation in support of the efforts of the Mystic River Collaborative.
- The MyRWA *Baseline Monitoring Program* continues to document the record of water quality throughout the watershed. The *Hot-Spot Monitoring Program* identified multiple outfalls in the watershed releasing significant levels of sewage into surface water bodies. Many communities, including Somerville and Revere, have been responsive to the information and initiated repairs on these problems. In Revere, MyRWA identified one of the worst pipes in the history of the *Hot-Spot Monitoring Program*. Within five days, Revere was correcting the problem and the levels of bacteria at Baseline Site BEI-093 have since improved.

- MyRWA staff performed 4 water quality workshops and 4 boat-based science explorations (*new this year!*) to over 30 youth primarily from Chelsea and East Boston. These hands-on workshops enabled youth to explore the local ecology, test the water around them, and experience the Mystic River Watershed. Additionally, three Citizen Scientist Training Workshops trained volunteers to join MyRWA's *Baseline Monitoring Program*. Funding for this Lower Mystic Initiative is generously provided by The Boston Foundation.
- The recent installation of a fish ladder and eel-way at the Mystic Lakes dam, for which MyRWA advocated, allows for the passage of spawning fish to the Upper Mystic Lake. 2010 was the first time in over 100 years that the Upper Mystic Lake was available habitat to the large number of herring who actively run up the Mystic to spawn.
- The number of MyRWA members and website traffic both doubled in 2010! MyRWA continues to keep it's members up-to-date through frequent website updates, monthly electronic newsletters, posts on social media outlets Facebook and Twitter, and YouTube broadcasts.
- In collaboration with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), MyRWA unveiled and continues to enhance its online interactive *Mystic River Electronic Environmental Atlas*.
- The City of Somerville was awarded a grant from the MET to develop a walking route, the *Blueback Herring River Route*, to link Foss Park and the Blessing of the Bay Boathouse. MyRWA assisted with the development of the path logo and community engagement as part of this effort.



Volunteers at the Earth Day River Cleanup removed dozens of shopping carts and several truck loads of trash from the Mystic River in Somerville.

- The 14th annual Mystic River Herring Run and Paddle drew over 500 people to the banks of the Mystic River in Somerville for a 5K road race and three paddling races. The festivities also included community boat demonstrations, music, childrens activities, and educational booths.
- Early in 2010, the EPA and MyRWA initiated a collaborative Cyanobacteria sampling program. Data was collected from priority locations throughout the watershed. The EPA placed a monitoring buoy at Wedge Pond in Winchester that provided real-time data.
- The Tufts University *Water: Systems, Science and Society (WSSS)* program committed to working within the Mystic River Watershed for the 2011 field practicum. MyRWA assisted in developing a project that will provide a meaningful experience for practicum participants and generate valuable data for the watershed.



On a beautiful Sunday in May, MyRWA hosted it's largest paddling race to date at the annual Mystic River Herring Run and Paddle.



Over 100 people attended the 2010 Annual Meeting where guest speaker Curt Spalding, Regional Administrator for the U.S. EPA, spoke about protecting and restoring our urban waterways.

- Successful 2010 fundraising events were sponsored by partnering businesses including Whole Foods Market of Medford, Not Your Average Joe's in Arlington, Pizzeria Uno in Somerville, REI and the Charles River Canoe and Kayak.
- In October, MyRWA hosted a well attended Annual Meeting at the Tufts University Boathouse along the Malden River. The event included a special address by EPA *Regional Administrator* Curt Spalding. Curt's address was followed by DCR *Senior Planner* Dan Driscoll, who provided a detailed overview of the recently released Mystic River Master Plan.
- The EPA awarded MyRWA \$9,000 for a youth stormwater education program. MyRWA is collaborating with UMASS-Boston, the Chelsea Collaborative, Friends of Alewife Reservation and Tri-CAP to engage youth in Chelsea, Cambridge and Malden in local stormwater issues and watershed science.
- MyRWA initiated a Sanitary Sewer Overflow (SSO) monitoring program that resulted in reports of dozens of SSOs by citizens. The effort has led to a new appreciation of the role that SSOs may play in causing a deterioration of water quality and potential adverse impacts on human health. The MA Water Resources Authority (MWRA) has committed to performing a study that identifies opportunities to optimize how sewage is handled in the North System during major storms.
- MyRWA evaluated the performance of municipalities in the Mystic River Watershed in adhering to the requirements of the 2003 MS4 permit that regulates stormwater discharges. MyRWA actively supports the EPA efforts to release a stronger MS4 Permit in 2011 that will result in improved water quality in the watershed.
- EkOngKar Singh Khalsa, MyRWA's *Executive Director*, was named Co-Chair of the EPA convened *Mystic River Steering Committee*.

A special thanks to all whom made our work possible, including our generous funders, our many volunteers and members, and supporting businesses and organizations.

We couldn't do it without you!

MyRWA looks forward to a productive year ahead, further engaging the public in our work to bring attention to the Mystic River Watershed.

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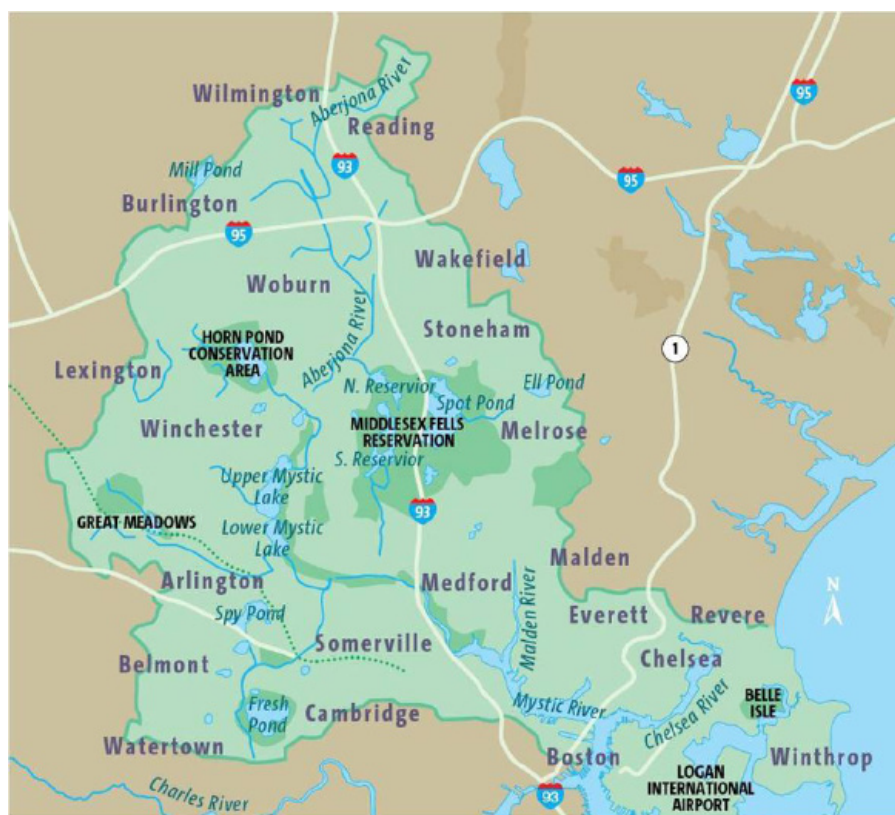
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The **Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA)** is a community-based private nonprofit with a mission to protect and restore the Mystic River, its tributaries and watershed lands for the benefit of present and future generations. MyRWA was established in 1972 and is a 501(c)(3) organization.



The **Mystic River Watershed** spans 76 square miles and connects 22 communities in the greater Boston area.

MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

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