



October 21, 2010

I am writing on behalf of the **Mystic River Watershed Association**, in support of **EPA's Plan EJ 2014**. EPA's Plan EJ 2014 represents positive movement toward integrating environmental justice (EJ) concerns into EPA's programs. As such, it has the potential to improve the health and well being of minority and low-income communities throughout the country and within the Mystic River Watershed.

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) is a grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and restoration of the Mystic River, its tributaries, and related natural resources throughout the watershed's 22 communities. The Mystic River Watershed is home to about 500,000 people or 8% of our state population - - yet covers less than 1% of the land, making the Watershed one of the most densely populated and urban watersheds in the state.

The Watershed is made up of diverse land uses and demographics with a historic legacy of heavy industrialization, including within the EJ communities in the densely developed Lower Watershed. Residents of these communities suffer from exposure to legacy contaminants along with ongoing air pollution and water quality impairment. There is a significant lack of public space and access to one of the most valuable resources of these communities, their river.

Eight out of fifteen Massachusetts communities considered "most intensely overburdened" by cumulative environmental hazards lie within the Mystic River Watershed, according to [Environmental Justice research](#). (Faber, 2005) Environmental hazards within the watershed include [hazardous waste sites](#), transfer stations, landfills, incinerators, polluting industrial facilities, and power plants. The watershed is also significantly impacted by impervious surface (such as parking lots and buildings), limited green space and, as mentioned, limited access to the waterfront.

The Mystic River Watershed Association works with environmental justice communities to provide education about water quality issues that may affect them, as well as to advocate for responsible development in these communities. The Environmental Justice communities in the Mystic River Watershed have organized and advocated for improved conditions, yet their successes have been limited by inadequate resources and lack of influence on environmental regulations, permitting, and enforcement.

By explicitly acknowledging the needs of EJ communities and committing to address those needs, the EPA has taken an important step. We hope that Plan EJ 2014 is adopted promptly by EPA. We also hope that the forthcoming work plans, outreach plans and milestones developed for each Cross-Agency Focus Area will contain provisions that ease implementation for EPA staff, while also holding them accountable.

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