

# Mystic River Watershed Association



**FOUNDED:** 1972

**CURRENT ORGANIZATION BUDGET:** \$559,100

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The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) works to transform the Mystic River Watershed into a vibrant, accessible, and healthy environment by bringing together government, municipalities, businesses, and local communities. MyRWA uses innovative scientific monitoring programs, effective advocacy on state and municipal levels, and volunteer engagement to restore water quality for a healthy habitat, improve residents' lives and safety, increase economic opportunities, bring communities together, and minimize economic burdens associated with climate change, such as floods and storms.

The Mystic River Watershed, the most densely populated and urbanized watershed in New England, is home to 22 communities and over half a million residents. The environmental hazards in this region include landfills, hazardous waste sites, sewer overflows, and legacy contamination from industrial activities dating back to the 19th century. In addition, the Mystic River Watershed has more impermeable surface and less green space than any other watershed in Massachusetts.

Through its work in water quality monitoring, outreach, education, policy, and advocacy, MyRWA has built its reputation as a trusted partner of river users, federal and state regulators, and local communities.

## Investment Opportunity

The Mystic River Watershed Association seeks an investment of \$1.5 million over the next two years to expand its impact on the environmental protection efforts of the Mystic River Watershed. In order to continue its intensive water quality monitoring, strengthen advocacy and policy work, and increase outreach efforts, MyRWA intends to diversify its funding, increase staff capacity, and expand the board of directors.

## Two-Year Goals

- Complete a Recreational Flagging Prediction Model for safe boating and swimming
- Increase the number of people actively involved in MyRWA programs by 50%
- Strengthen MyRWA influence on the state and municipal decision-making process
- Increase resilience in watershed communities to protect people, property, and the environment

## Ways to Invest

### FINANCIAL

- \$55,000 funds project manager's salary for one year
- \$15,000 funds office space and utility expense for one year
- \$6,500 funds MyRWA's website redesign

### IN-KIND

- Development planning support
- Office space
- Water quality lab analysis
- Legal services
- Graphic design support
- Marketing support



## Leadership & Governance

EK Khalsa joined MyRWA in 2008 as the organization's executive director. Throughout his career, Mr. Khalsa has navigated a variety of environmental, design, planning, and engineering challenges in pursuit of an intelligent approach to sustainable land use and environmental restoration.

Patrick Herron, PhD, Deputy Director, joined MyRWA after completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the Rowland Institute at Harvard University in 2009.

MyRWA is supported by a 12-member board of directors, led by John Reinhardt, Branch Chief for Industrial Wastewater Policy and Regulations for the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

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**MyRWA's work keeps consistent focus on the Mystic River watershed and brings attention and resources to restoration of this important natural resource. For forty years, MyRWA has made an important difference.**

TIM PURINTON

Director, Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration



## THE MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION MODEL



MyRWA is the only non-governmental organization to consistently address issues of water quality and environmental preservation in the Mystic River Watershed. MyRWA works effectively across all municipal and political boundaries. As an unwavering advocate for this valuable natural resource, MyRWA implements a variety of programs aimed at increasing stewardship, improving environmental conditions, and providing environmental education.

### WATER QUALITY MONITORING

MyRWA has been testing water quality for more than 15 years and currently maintains a number of certified water quality initiatives. Under the **Baseline and Hot-Spot Monitoring Programs**, MyRWA's staff and trained volunteers collect hundreds of water samples each year from river, lakes, ponds, streams, and suspected sources of pollution (e.g., stormwater outfalls). The water quality data that is generated in these programs is critically important for identifying the type, source, and magnitude of pollutant inputs to the river's natural environment and water quality.

Since 2007, the **Cyanobacteria Monitoring Program** has monitored cyanobacteria levels throughout the watershed and alerted authorities to the potentially harmful blooms of these bacteria. As a result, MyRWA has been able to decrease the level of cyanobacteria in the watershed, which is known to starve river life of oxygen and sicken humans and animals. In some cases, animal and human exposure to cyanobacteria can result in damage to the nervous system and liver.

MyRWA has developed a comprehensive map-based database to efficiently import and analyze the data collected through its programs. Using this tool, MyRWA prepares and distributes monthly reports for watershed municipalities, the MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The watershed municipalities, EPA, and DEP regularly rely upon MyRWA water quality data for strategic decision-making and enforcement actions.



**MyRWA is terrific! Melding hands-on science and policy. Working with businesses, government officials, and advocacy groups, MyRWA has the credibility and experience to activate this broad coalition for a cleaner Mystic River.**

**EUGENE B. BENSON**

Executive Director,  
Massachusetts Association of  
Conservation Commissions



### Key Investors

- CASWELL FOUNDATION
- EXELON COMPANIES
- EXXONMOBIL PIPELINE COMPANY
- NATIONAL FISH AND WILDLIFE FOUNDATION
- WYNN RESORTS

### Partners

- CITIES OF MEDFORD AND SOMERVILLE
- MASSACHUSETTS WATER RESOURCES AUTHORITY
- MA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
- MIT – CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES
- TUFTS UNIVERSITY
- U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

### ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND ADVOCACY

MyRWA monitors real estate development, industrial activity, municipal infrastructure, and other activities in the watershed to ensure that water quality is protected and to advocate for improved public access to the waterways. MyRWA forges links among environmental advocacy groups, community organizations, universities, businesses, and government agencies to address environmental issues of common concern. MyRWA has been an active participant in the development of environmental law and policy-making at all levels of government.

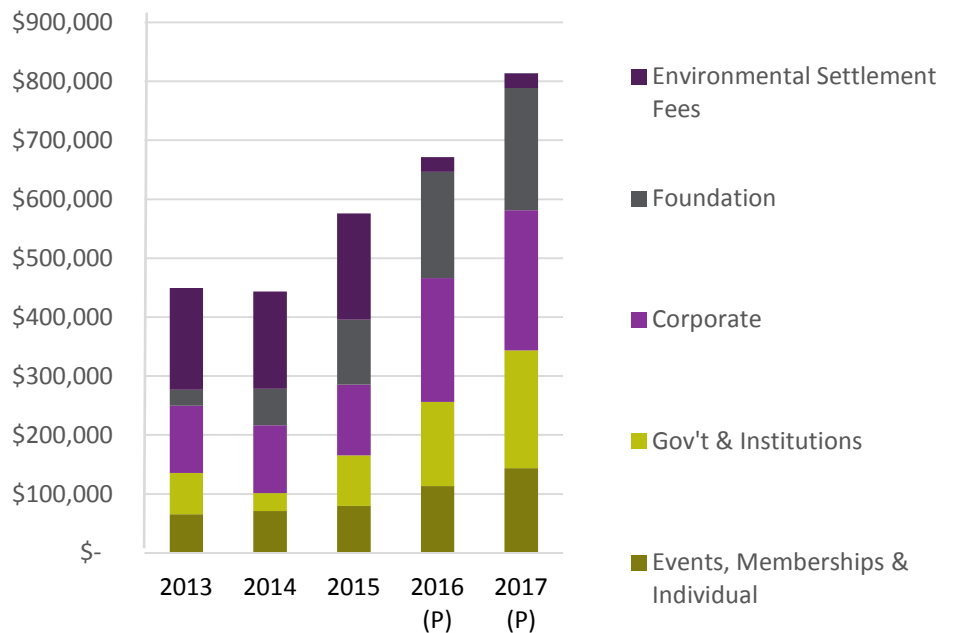
### OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Through outreach and education, MyRWA staff and volunteers work to connect concerned residents and the public to the resources of the watershed. MyRWA works consistently to promote concern and care for local waterways. MyRWA hosts and sponsors special events, including community festivals, river walks and paddles, research forums, and annual shoreline clean-ups. Each event is designed to draw in a wide range of participants, educate them about the environmental issues facing the watershed, and encourage stewardship.

### FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

In the last three years, MyRWA has been fortunate to generate close to \$1 million in program funding as an indirect beneficiary from environmental settlement fees arising from major oil releases and other environmental infractions in the Mystic. These funds have been used to increase staff and organizational capacity. This type of funding is unpredictable, however, and cannot be relied upon in budget projections going forward. For MyRWA to continue to strengthen its influence and significantly increase its impact on environmental protection, the organization must develop a reliable and diversified revenue stream. MyRWA intends to build upon its success and continue its mission by earning trust and ongoing support from corporate and foundation partners.

**Revenue by Source**



## Success Story: Michael Ripple

When Michael Ripple retired as the director of operations of the Providers Council, he decided to pursue his passion for paddling. He purchased a canoe and began regular exercise in his new boat on the Mystic River, right next to his house. Soon after, Michael directly witnessed the countless challenges that the river was facing, including poor water quality, ongoing contamination, and limited river access. Michael took an interest in learning more about the Mystic River Watershed Association and supporting its efforts to protect the Mystic and its communities. Now, as an active member and volunteer, Michael has been effectively advocating for the local natural environment and using his skills as an experienced lobbyist to persuade local officials and state legislators that the Mystic river needs attention and investment. Mr. Ripple continues to paddle on the River along with his family members and friends.



## PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH

Below is a summary of the key measures that MyRWA will use to demonstrate progress, capture lessons learned, and make course corrections as needed.

	FY 2015	FY 2016 (P)	FY 2017 (P)
<b>PROGRAM PERFORMANCE</b>			
Number of volunteers engaged in watershed work	1,500	1,750	2,000
Number of water quality reports prepared based on collected/analyzed samples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 Hotspot Reports</li> <li>1 River Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 Hotspot Reports</li> <li>2 River Reports</li> <li>1 Annual WQ Report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10 Hotspot Reports</li> <li>3 River Reports</li> <li>1 Annual WQ Report</li> </ul>
Increase resilience of the watershed and its communities to the impacts of climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate watershed flow monitoring</li> <li>Assess climate resilience capacity in watershed communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Initiate watershed flow model</li> <li>Scope watershed resiliency improvement study</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete watershed flow model</li> <li>Implement watershed resiliency planning</li> </ul>
<b>ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING</b>			
Develop and implement a five-year strategic plan (2015–2020)	Develop	Implement	Assess progress and continue implementation
Increase fundraising capacity	Hire a director of development; create a development plan	Implement development plan	Evaluate the development plan's progress
Strengthen board of directors	Conduct a board audit	Recruit new board members	Integrate new board members
Expand programming capacity	Develop job descriptions	Hire 1 FTE	Hire 1 FTE
Total revenue	\$559,100	\$671,200	\$813,700

## SOCIAL IMPACT

In the past six years, MyRWA has been extremely effective in protecting and restoring clean water and related natural resources in the Mystic River Watershed. The organization has significantly increased its influence and credibility among municipalities, government authorities, and local businesses. In the future, MyRWA will develop a robust evaluation process of its advocacy and policy efforts while continuing to track existing metrics.

INDICATOR	2014
Major policy statements used by public agencies	15
Number of major enforcement actions utilizing MyRWA data	2
People actively involved in the Mystic River programs	2,000
Percentage of the river that was cleaned from invasive water chestnut	90%

