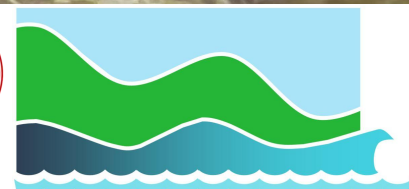


# Blackstone Watershed Collaborative

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Program Manager

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Blackstone Watershed  
Collaborative

# Why Watershed-Scale?

- Climate impacts related to water at forefront: flooding & drought
- Meaningful boundaries
- Manageable and impactful size



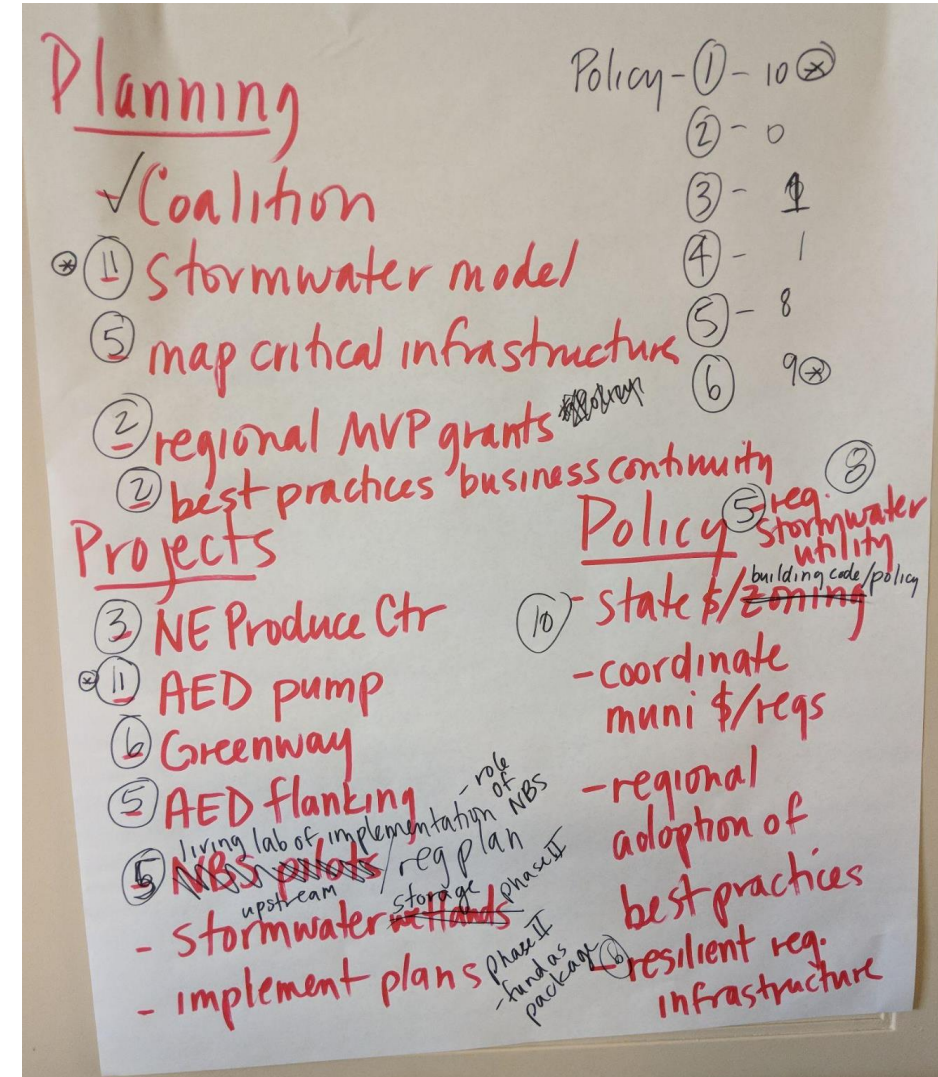
UMassAmherst

Center for Agriculture,  
Food, and the Environment

Photo: MA DER

# Why Collaboration for Climate Adaptation?

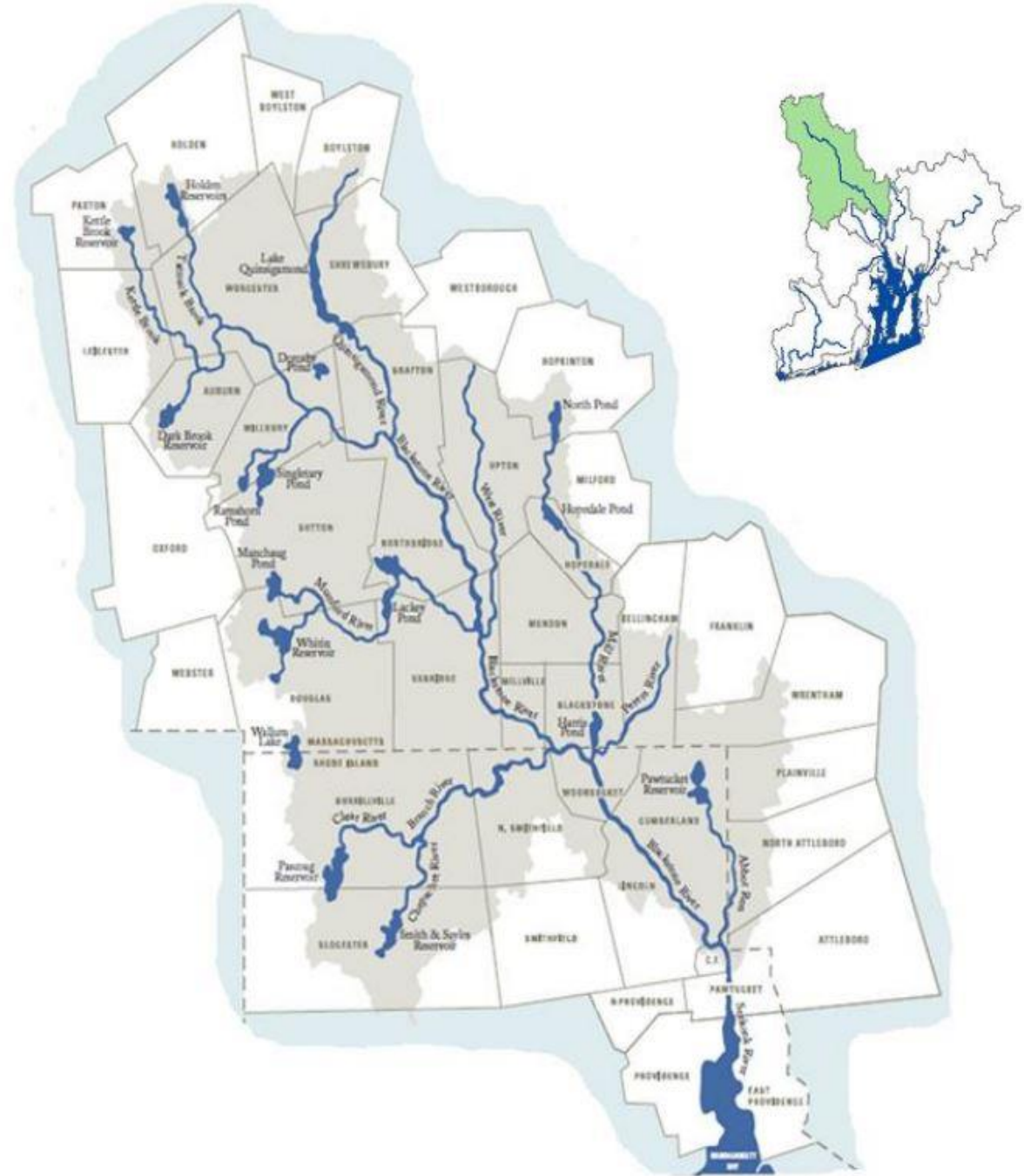
- Complicated: Across systems and sectors
- Urgency: No time to reinvent the wheel
- Emerging: Exploring best actions to take
- Collaboratives
  - Build community and camaraderie
  - Foster peer to peer learning
- ✓ Several in MA already



Photos: Leo March, PIE Rivers, Resilient Mystic Collaborative

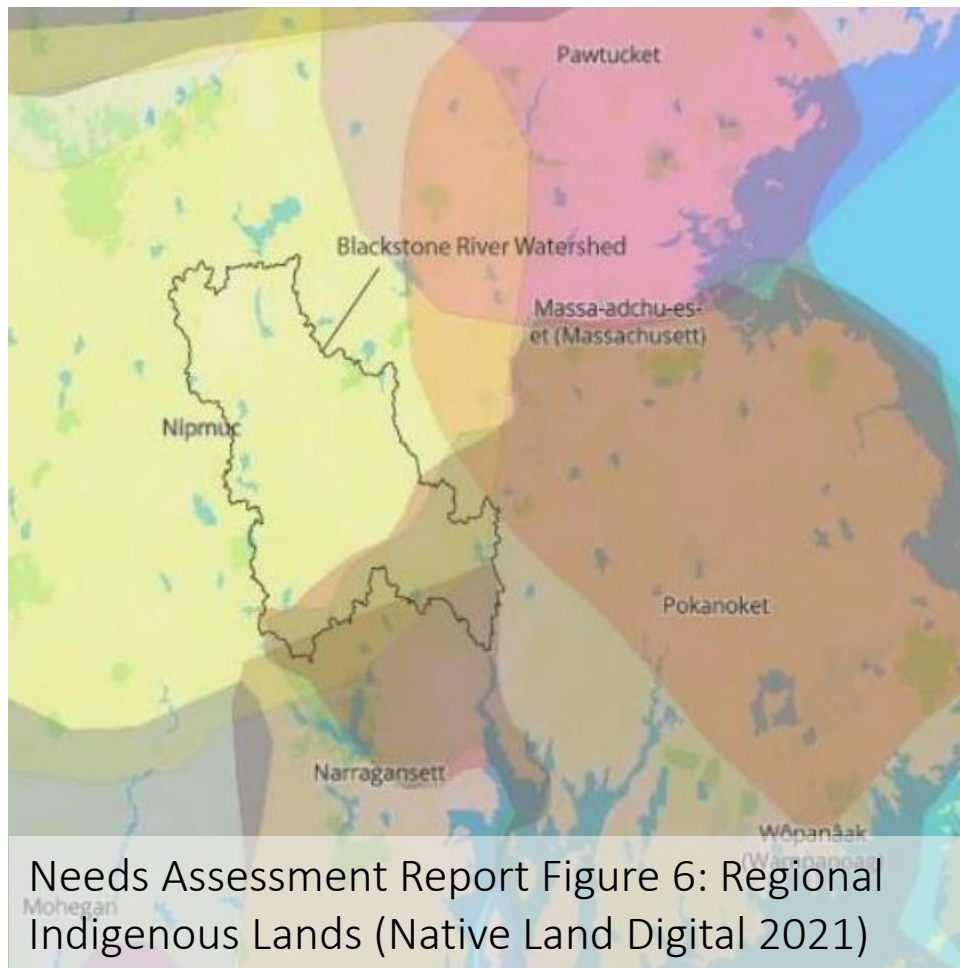
# Blackstone Watershed


- 48 miles long
- Drops 438'
- 475 square miles
- 39 communities
- 2 states



# Indigenous Land

- [Nipmuc Nation](#)
- [Pokanoket Nation](#)
- [Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe](#)
- [Narragansett Indian Tribe](#)



Linked! 



Centuries of careful land stewardship with close ties to the river

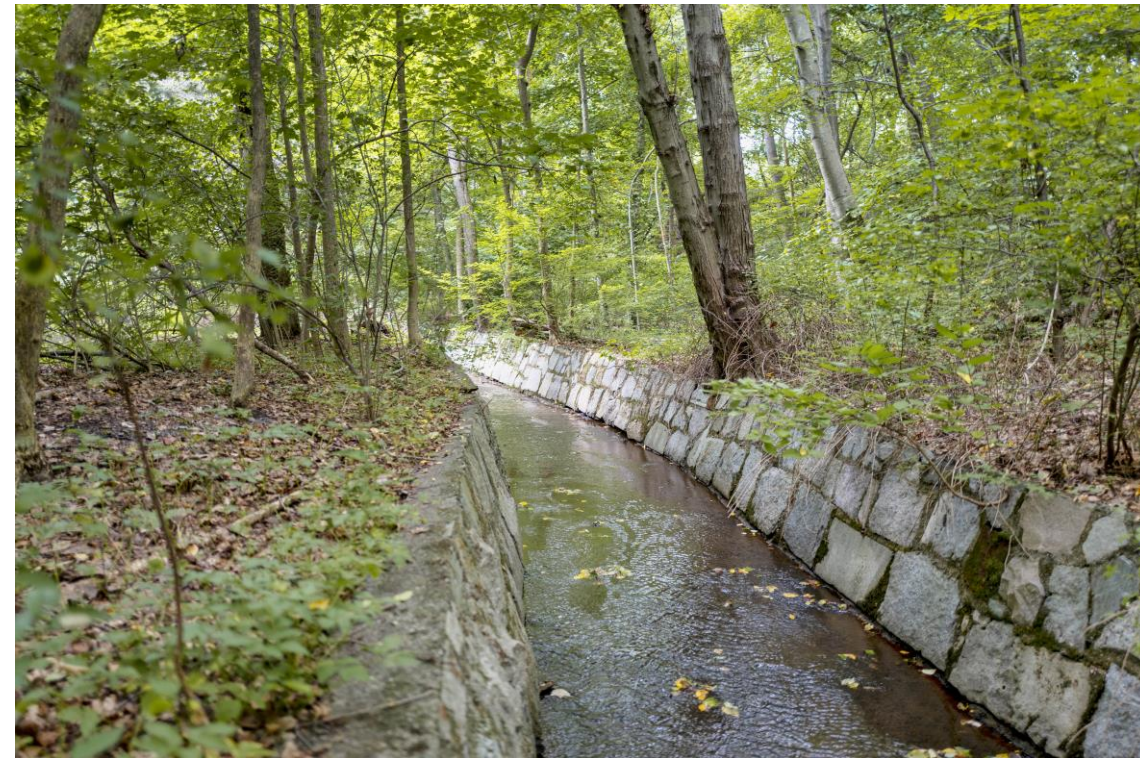
# Industrial revolution & transformation

*“America’s hardest working river”*

*“America’s most polluted river”*



*Slater Mill, America's first water-powered cotton-spinning mill in Pawtucket, RI (c.1790)*



*A portion of the Blackstone Canal – created from and near the River to transport goods through 49 locks*

# A River of National Significance

1900s – “Hardest working river in America”

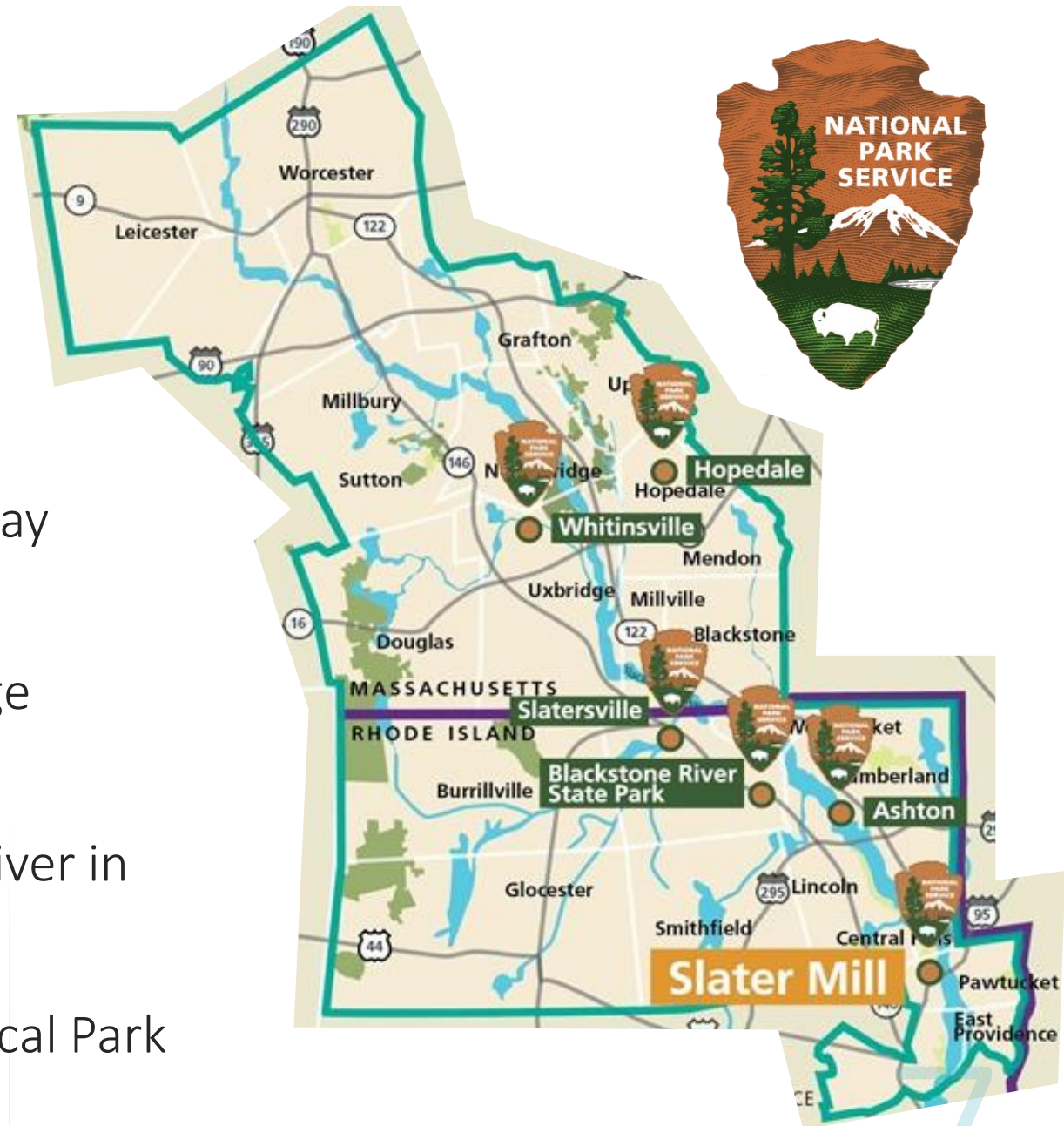
1972 – Operation ZAP: America’s largest one-day regional environmental clean-up

1986 – Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

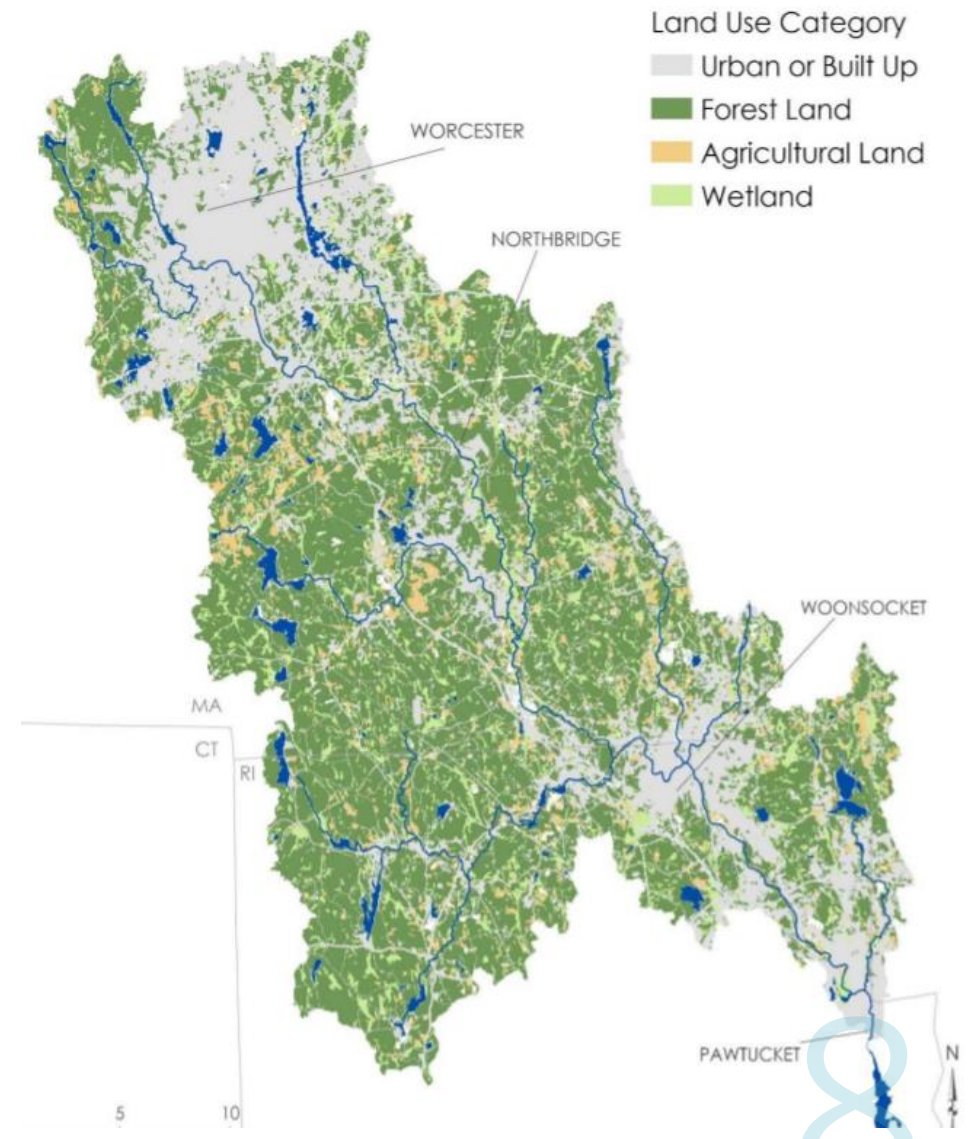
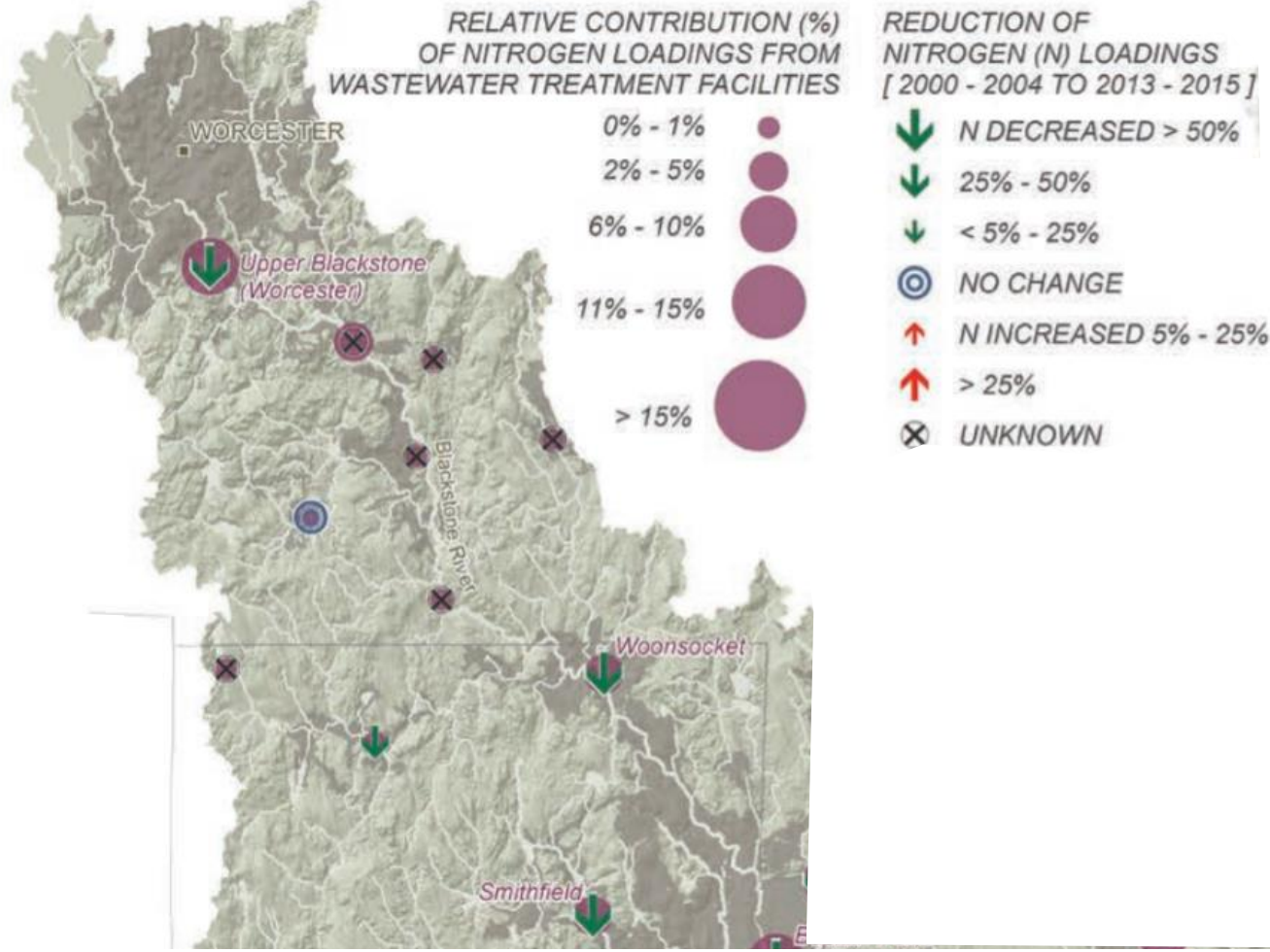
1990 – EPA sponsored report “most polluted river in America” (toxic sediments)

2014 – Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park

2022 – 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ZAP & the Clean Water Act



# While the water has gotten cleaner



**Reductions in Nitrogen Loading**



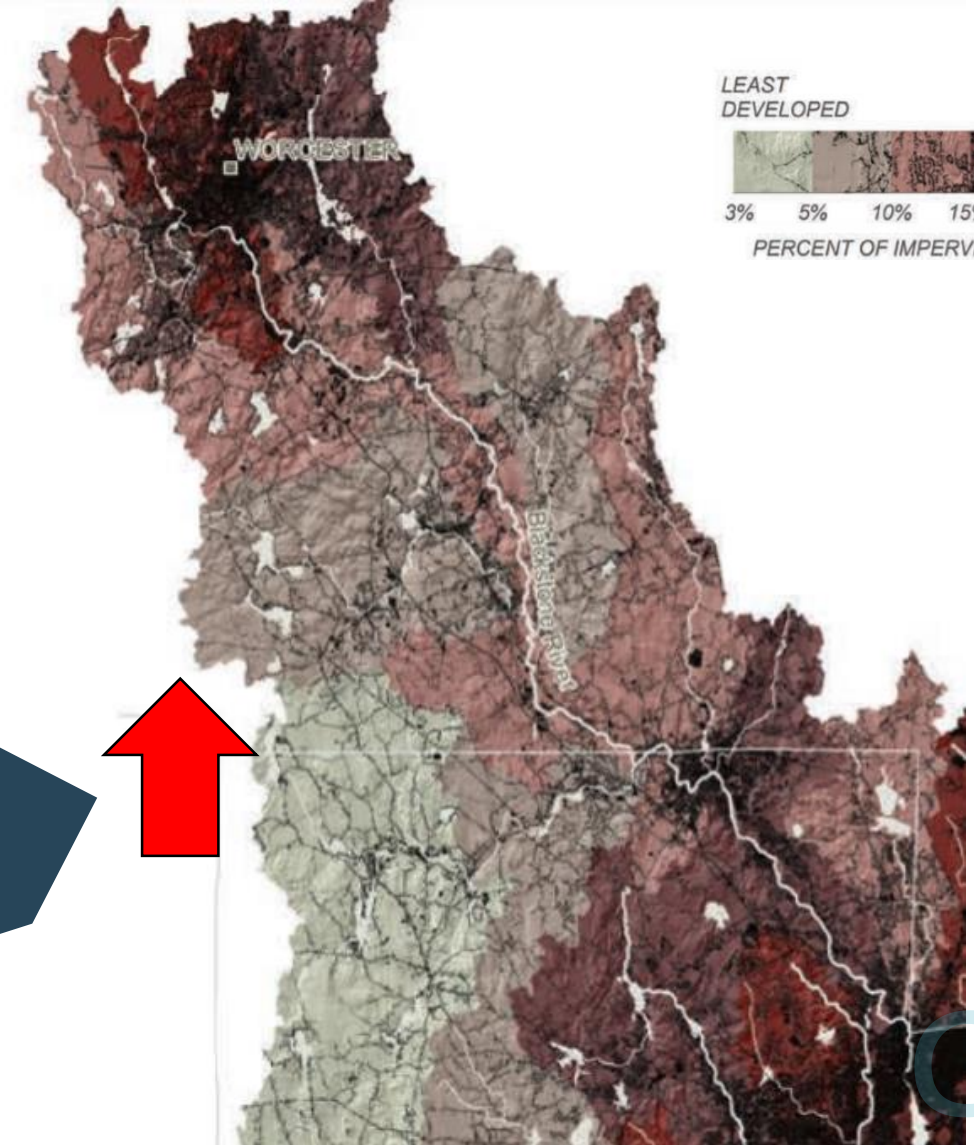
# ...current challenges are growing

WATER QUALITY CONDITIONS FOR AQUATIC LIFE

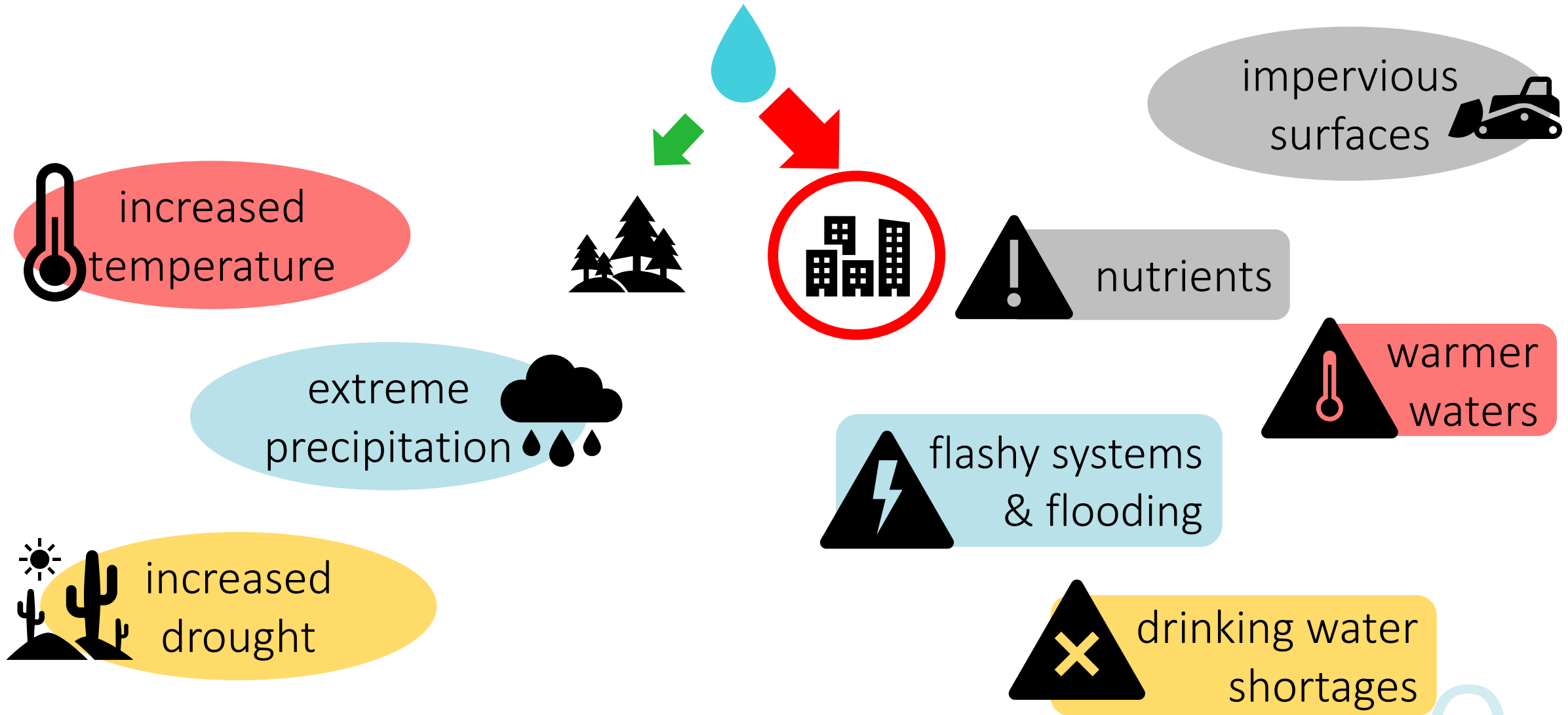


Water quality

Impervious surfaces

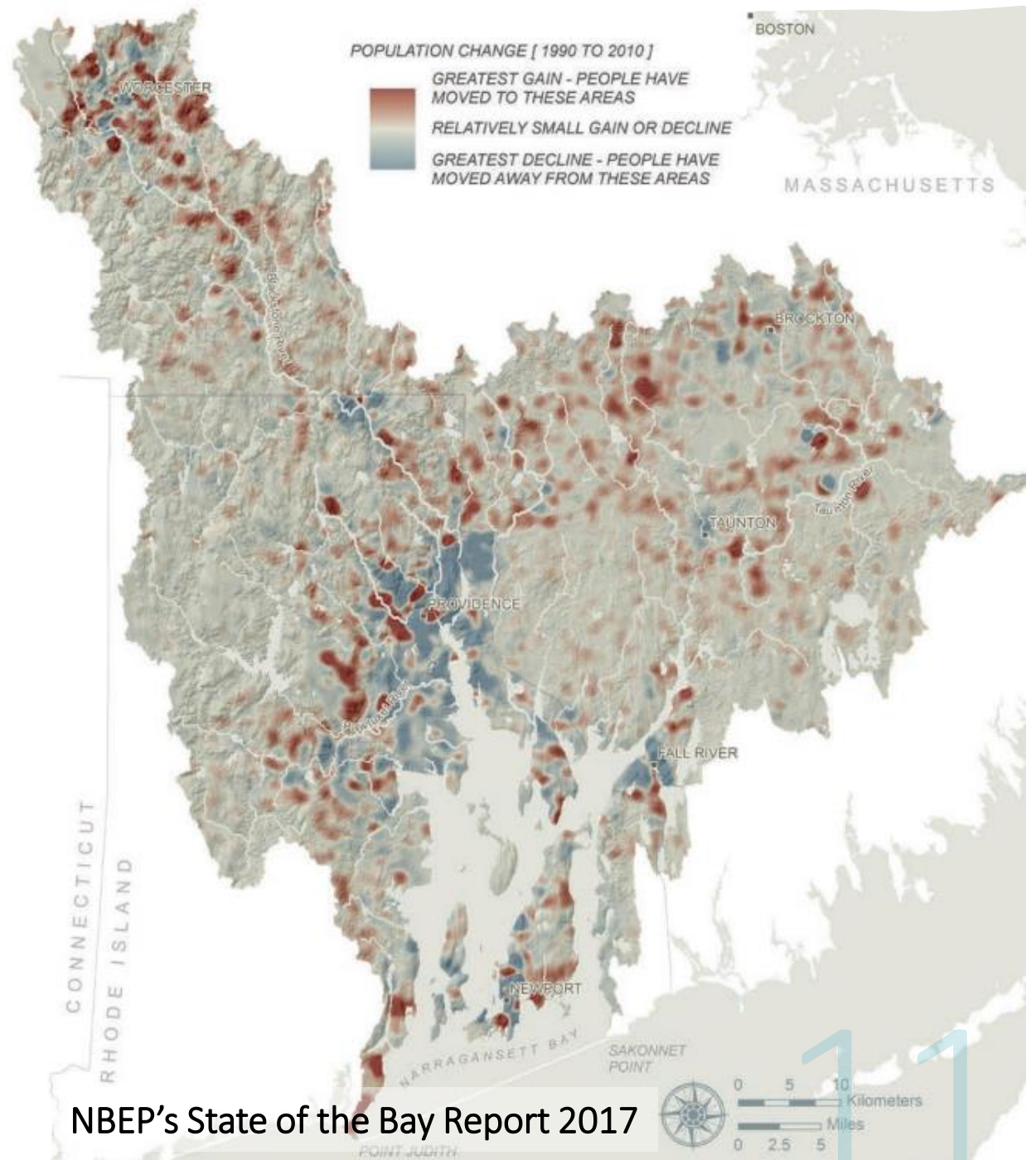


# ...climate change exacerbates impacts

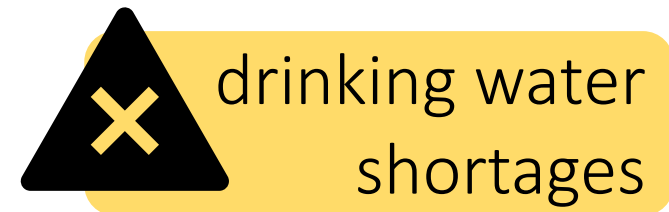
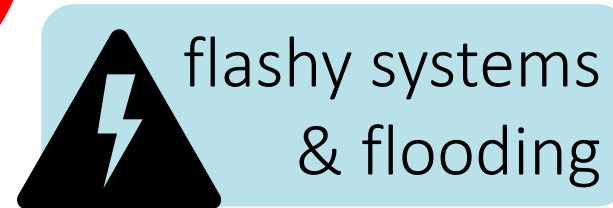


# ...and populations are still expanding

- ▶ 2020 Census: Worcester is fastest growing city in New England
- ▶ Watershed is in the sprawl frontier ([Losing Ground](#))
- ▶ Population gains throughout urban and rural



# Healthy communities depend on a healthy watershed



# Impacts are compounded & not felt equitably

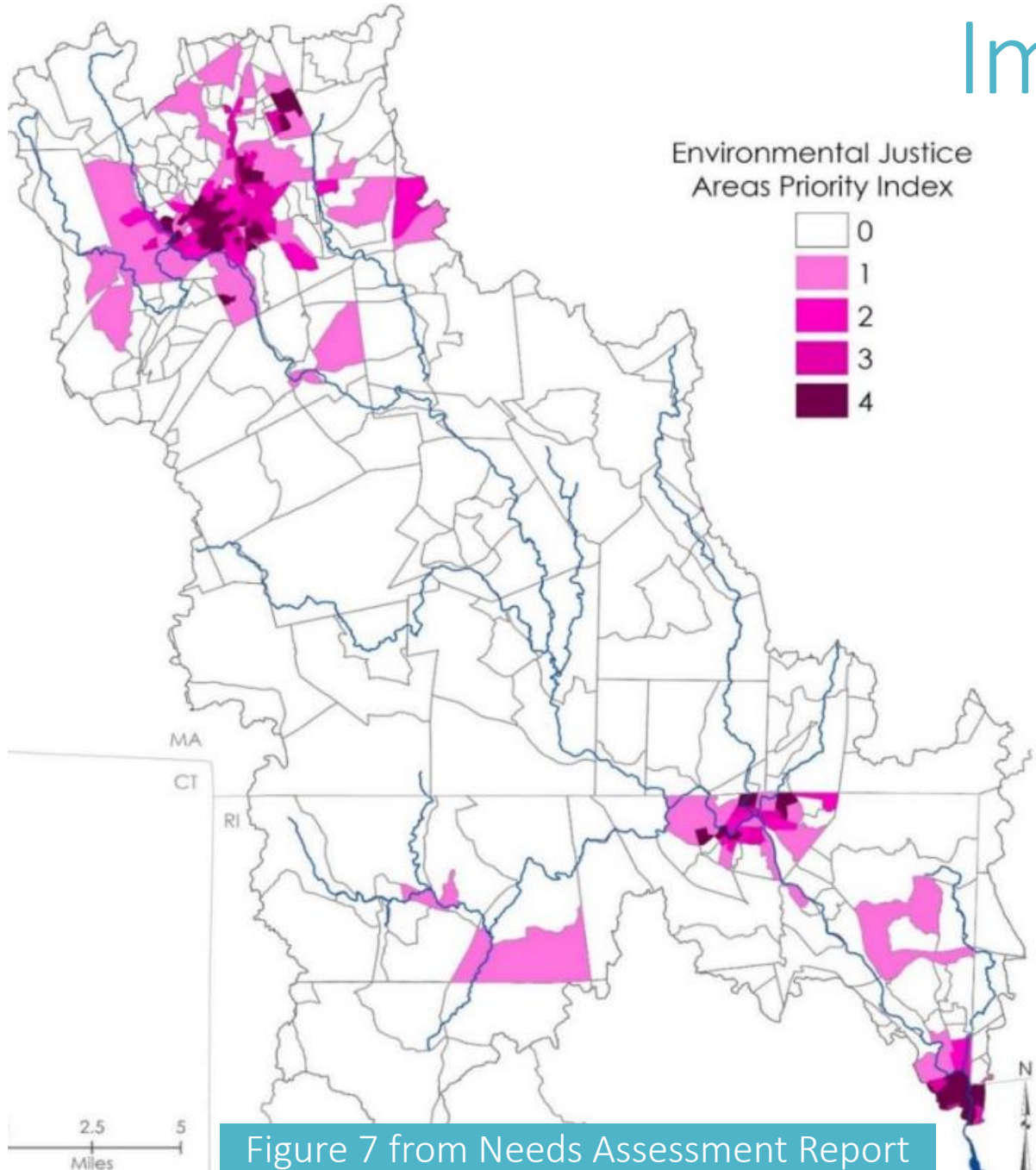
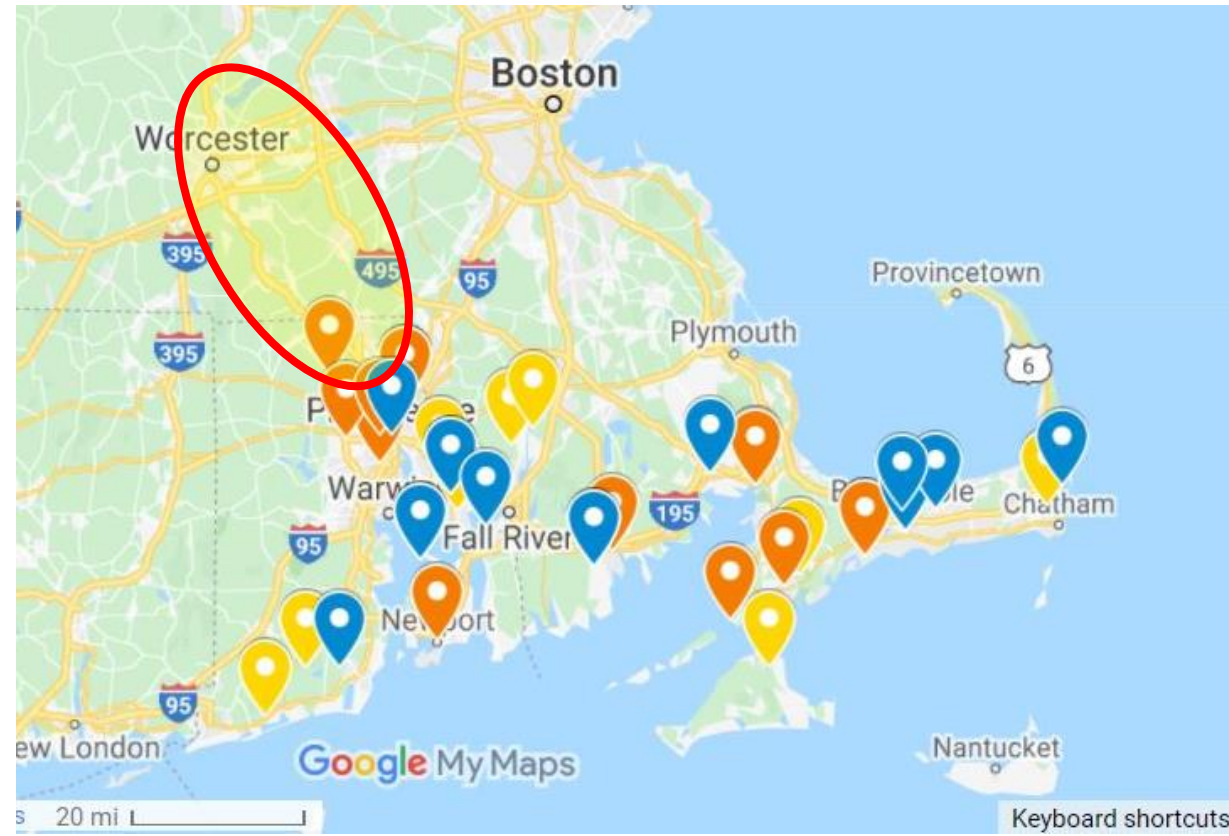


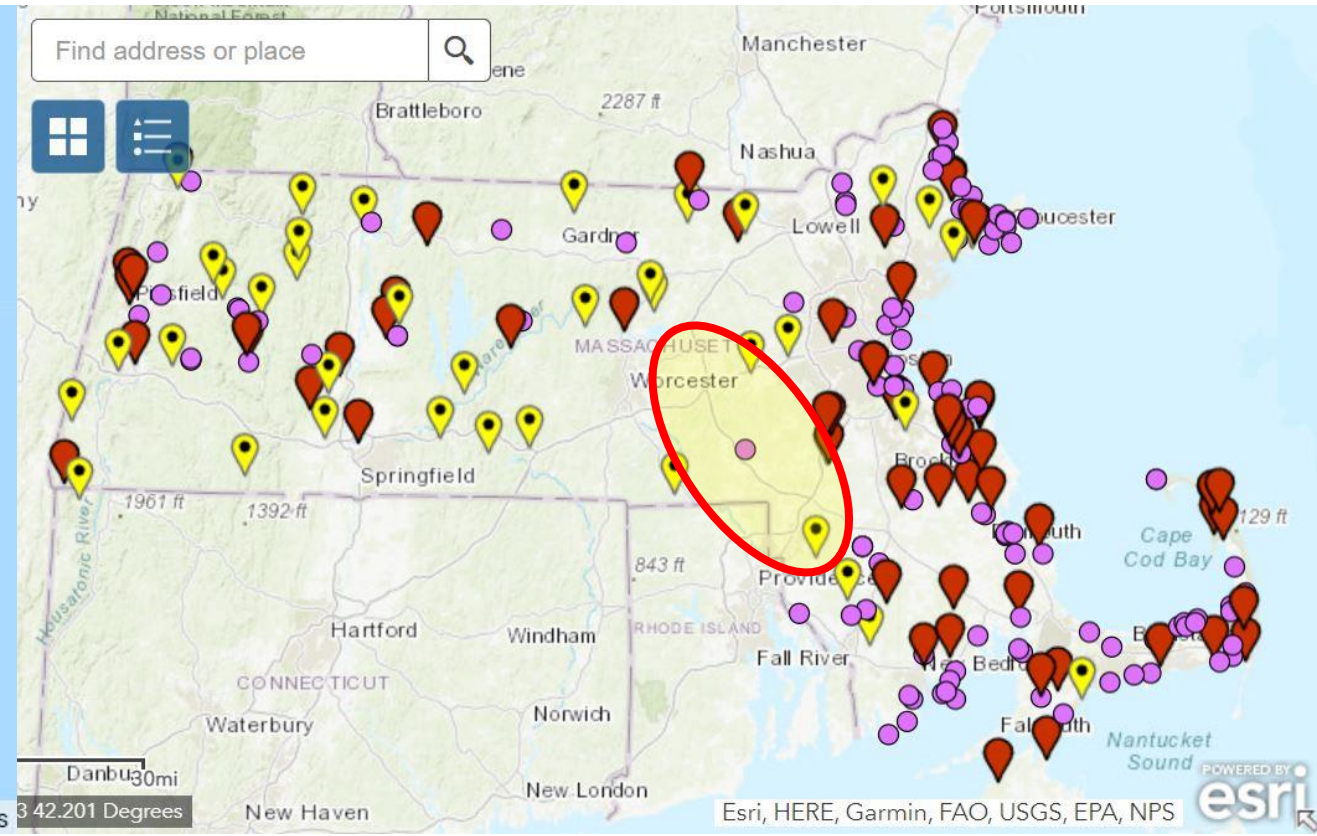
Figure 7 from Needs Assessment Report

- Heat islands
- Tree cover
- Asthma rates
- Flooding impacts
- Water quality

# Historic lack of participation/representation in funding and projects

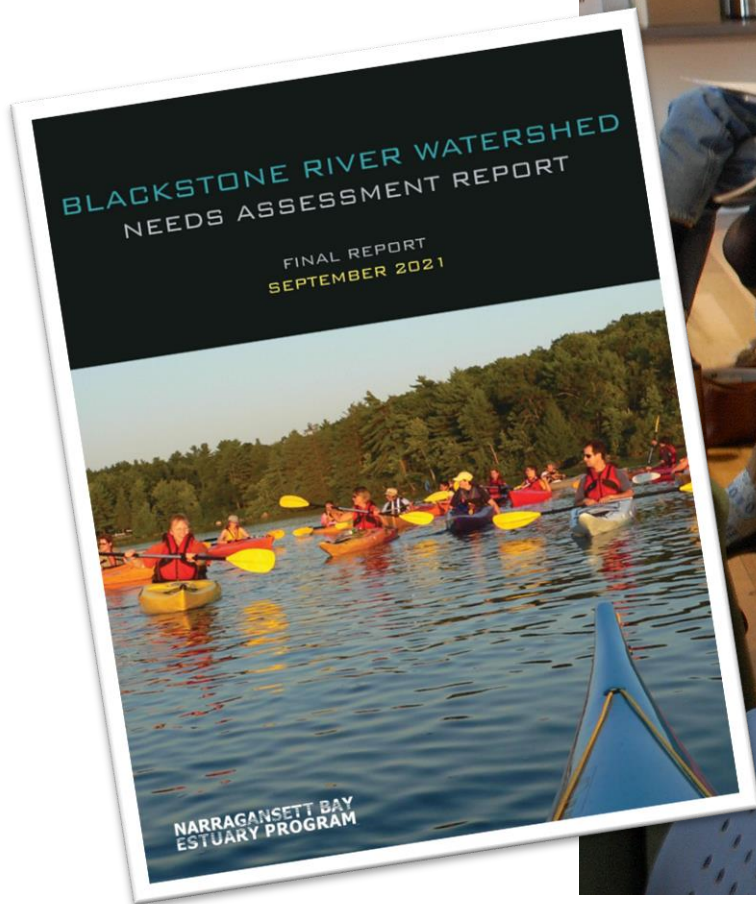


<https://estuaries.org/snepgrantprogram/map/>



<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/the-division-of-ecological-restoration-project-map>

“How can we help?”



## NARRAGANSETT BAY ESTUARY PROGRAM

- 2 years
- 8 meetings
- 140 people
- 40 organizations
- 11 govt agencies

# A Shared Watershed with Shared Goals



Maintenance of waterways



Equitable access to waterways



Water chestnut removal



Expanding the bike/greenway



Increased land protection

# A Shared Watershed with Shared Goals



Regulations that encourage cost-effective nature-based solutions



Green jobs program for maintenance



Maximizing effectiveness of long-term monitoring programs



Recognize developers using best practices



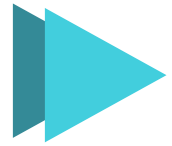
Improving aquatic connectivity

# Working together to achieve more



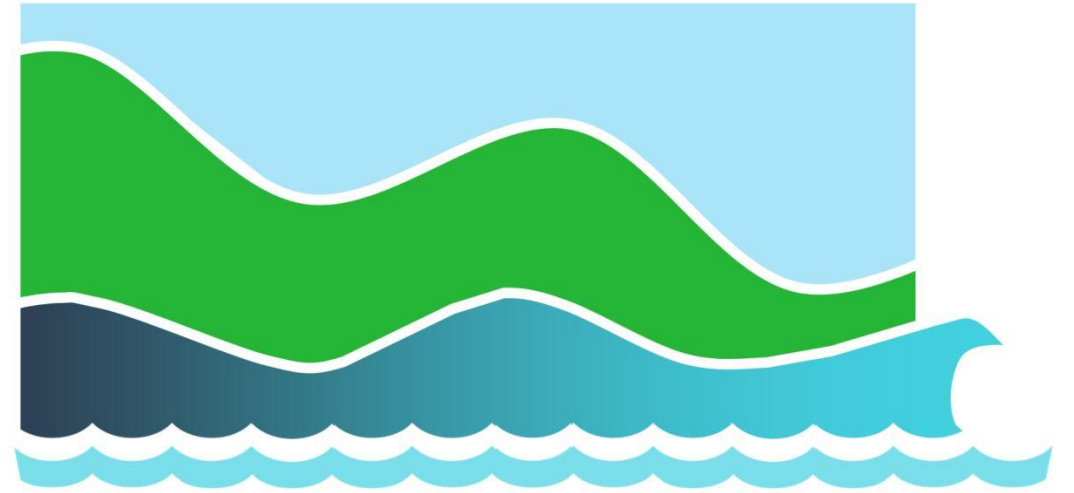
Blackstone Canal, looking toward the Stanley Woolen Mill

- Fill in **capacity** gaps
- **Prioritize** projects
- Provide technical **assistance**
- Regional **funding** & grant mgmt
- Unified **messaging**
- **Centralized** place to meet & share
- Celebrating **successes**



# blackstonecollaborative.org

- Began September 2021
- Include ~200 individuals from 100+ organizations & agencies
- One FT staff, no board
- Informal subgroups
- 40-50 people/call
- Called the “clearinghouse” of watershed information



**Blackstone Watershed  
Collaborative**



# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ZAP!

## Clean Up/Green Up August 27, 2022

Organize a group to clean up or green up an area of the watershed you love



Learn more & sign up at  
[zaptheblackstone.com](http://zaptheblackstone.com)

## Celebration September 10, 2022

Join us at the Old Slater Mill in Pawtucket, RI and celebrate the successes of the Blackstone River over the last 50 years with music, arts, food, and more!



20

# Blackstone Commons

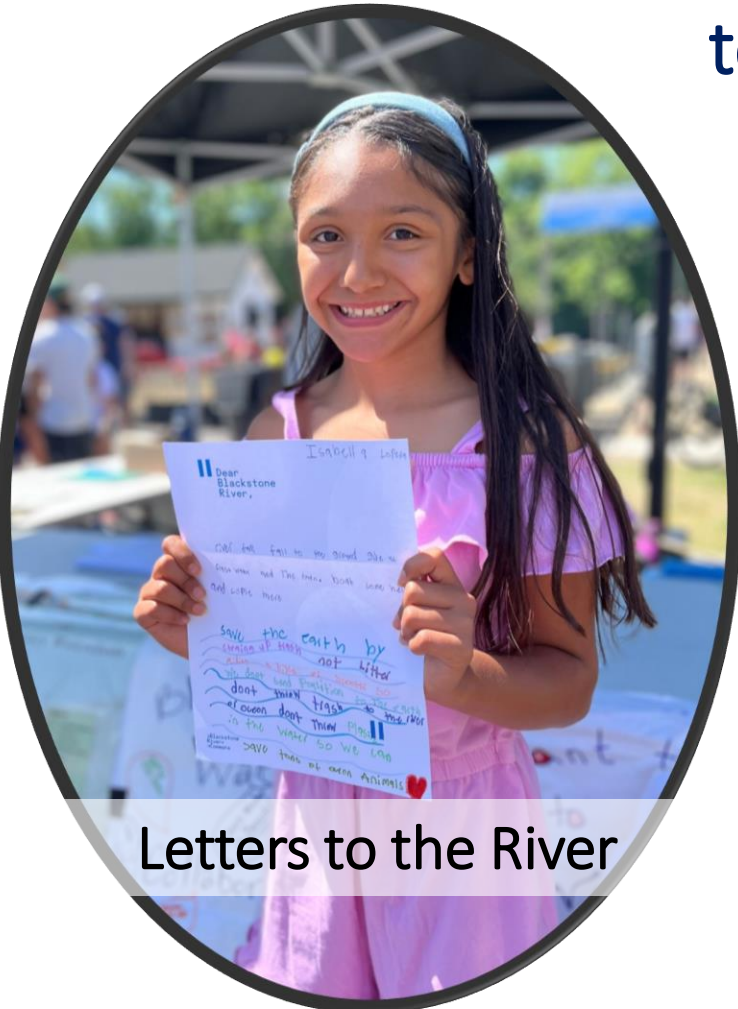
The Blackstone River is a commons - a resource shared by the community, to be kept open and protected for future generations.



BLACKSTONE RIVER  
WATERSHED COUNCIL  
Friends of the Blackstone



21



Letters to the River



Paddle: August 11-14, 2022

# Helping locally, representing everywhere

▶ [Urban wetland restoration](#) in Worcester EJ neighborhood

▶ MVP teams in Boylston, Millville

▶ Municipal presentations about Needs Assessment & tech assistance

▶ CMRPC [Imagine 2050](#) Steering Com.

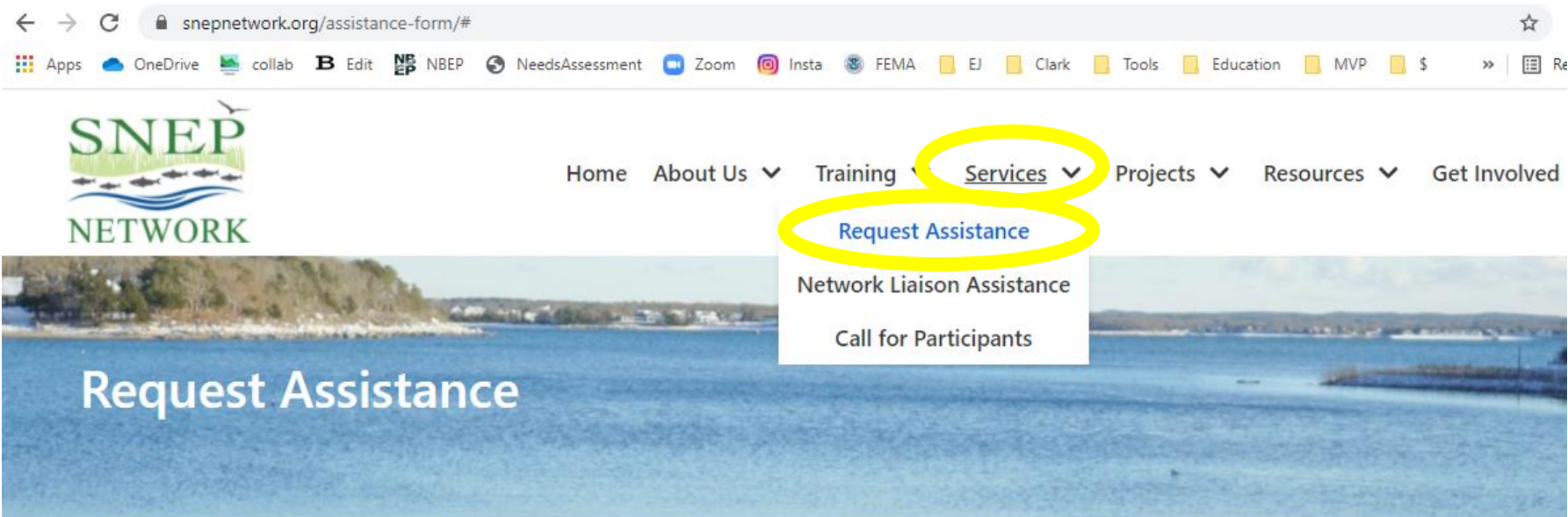
▶ [MassECAN](#) Nature Based Solutions

▶ [MA Statewide Climate Change Assessment Working Group](#)

▶ [NBEP](#) Steering Com.



# If you need help: [snepnetwork.org](https://snepnetwork.org)



▶ • Bylaw review

▶ • Project feedback

▶ • Financing/  
funding

## Online Portal to Access Network Services

In order to streamline requests for network services, The Southeast New England Network has an online portal to assist SNEP communities in accessing funding, contractors, and targeted technical assistance. The Network has two consultants who will act as [Network Liaisons](#) to help communities plan and execute activities and projects, utilizing the expertise of the Network and its pre-approved contractors. Our network members consist of environmental nonprofits, academic entities, regional planners, and consultants who offer expertise in leadership, financing, stormwater/watershed management, and climate resilience. Often times, solutions will be found through a phone call, at other times a site visit, a one

[HOME](#)[ABOUT](#)[CONFERENCE](#)[RESOURCES](#)[GET INVOLVED](#)

# MASS ECAN

Massachusetts Ecosystem Climate Adaptation Network

[LEARN MORE](#)

- Community of 500+ practitioners & researchers
- Natural resources & ecosystems in MA



- Started 2014
- Formed after grant brought groups together
- 42 muni & 560 sq mi
- Hosted by RPA
- Meets monthly
- 0-1 staff
- Comprised of NGO, muni, FP
- No formal board



- Started 2018
- Formed when munis needed to work x-boundary
- 21 munis & 76 sq mi
- 600,000 people
- Hosted by NGO
- Several FT staff
- Munis only
- Formal structure



- Started 2021
- Formed after Report ID'ed minimal capacity
- 39 munis & 475 sq mi (2 states)
- Hosted by uni
- 1 FT staff
- 100+ partners
- No formal structure

# Thank you! Questions?

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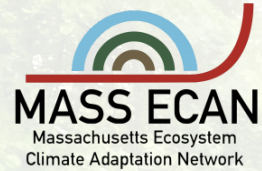
[blackstonecollaborative.org](http://blackstonecollaborative.org)



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