



Charles River Watershed Association

Background Information on EPA's new stormwater permit program in the upper Charles River watershed towns of Franklin, Bellingham and Milford

- Over a decade of scientific studies confirm that stormwater from impervious surfaces is the largest source of phosphorus pollution to the Charles.
- Voluntary programs, and programs targeted at new development, are not working well enough. Water quality continues to worsen in spite of these efforts. New regulation is necessary to tackle pollution from existing sources of pollution, not just new sources.
- Currently, cities and towns bear the entire burden of stormwater cleanup and flood control. New requirements in the municipal MS4 permit will significantly raise the bar for municipal programs, making it even harder for them to pay for stormwater control. The new permit will help municipalities by requiring that large private properties share the burden of stormwater control costs.
- EPA's new permit is targeted at large property owners who contribute significant volumes of stormwater runoff – and phosphorus pollution – to the Charles River, either directly or through private or municipal drain systems.
- CRWA's work over the past two decades has demonstrated that stormwater pollution can be controlled, that water budgets can be balanced, that green infrastructure is practical, and that good design and innovative approaches can create affordable solutions with many benefits beyond stormwater cleanup.
- The most effective way to reduce phosphorus pollution and control stormwater is to put it in the ground, where plants and soil microbes absorb and break down pollutants. Putting stormwater in the ground also recharges groundwater and aquifers, and reduces runoff and flooding.
- States, cities, towns, and private property owners and developers already spend significant resources on infrastructure and stormwater control. These new regulations direct those expenditures in new ways, using "green infrastructure" to replace conventional concrete "gray infrastructure." Green infrastructure has the potential to significantly improve the sustainability of our communities, and provides far more benefit than conventional infrastructure.
- This is not the first, or the only place that EPA is undertaking new stormwater regulations and permits. Work to clean up stormwater and reduce nutrient loading is ongoing in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, in the great Lakes watersheds, in Lake Champlain, Vermont and Portland, Maine, and in Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest. Green infrastructure is being implemented in cities and towns across the country to help reduce pollution, adapt to climate change and improve the urban environment.