



# 2020 2021 2022



## ANNUAL REPORT



Charles River Watershed Association



A scenic landscape featuring a pond with several white swans swimming. The pond is surrounded by lush green grass and dense trees, including tall evergreens on the right and deciduous trees on the left. The sky is overcast. The years 2020, 2021, and 2022 are overlaid in the center of the image in a teal color. The text is arranged vertically, with 2020 at the top, 2021 in the middle, and 2022 at the bottom. The 2021 text is significantly larger and bolder than the other two years. The 2020 and 2022 text are smaller and have a slight transparency effect.

2020

2021

2022



## A MESSAGE FROM EMILY NORTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Reflecting back on 2021, we are so grateful to you, our committed donors, for your generous support leading to numerous success stories within the Charles River Watershed. As you read on, you will see how your partnership made a significant impact on the health of the Charles River and its watershed. For example, many watershed communities invested in climate resilience to protect people and property from flooding, extreme heat, and storms. Natick and Watertown are building momentum to remove centuries-old dams that impede fish flow and harm river ecology. And a new law you helped pass is providing greater transparency on remaining sewage releases, which will help build public support to eliminate them once and for all. You made this vital work possible!

**We look forward to partnering with you in the year ahead and beyond to pursue bold innovative projects, seize more opportunities, and respond to unforeseen events.**

Together, we will continue to be the voice of the Charles for the good of all who live here.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emily Norton".

Emily Norton,  
Executive Director





## A PUBLIC HEALTH VICTORY

In 2021, over fifty combined-sewer overflow events released over 125 million gallons of sewage into the Lower Basin of the Charles River. With upwards of thirty-five inches of heavy summertime precipitation, our current wastewater system's fragility came to light: residents of our watershed were unjustly exposed to pollutant-laden water carrying bacteria, excess nutrients, pharmaceuticals, and even harmful PFAS compounds.

***Without your support, the public might never have known about these polluted discharges.*** In January, Governor Charlie Baker signed a landmark bill requiring prompt, timely public notification of all combined sewage discharges into our waterbodies. We believe once the public realizes the frequency of these discharges, there will be greater pressure to end them.

**Your partnership will leverage this increased transparency to lobby for the investments necessary to end these sewage releases once and for all.**

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*"We must center equity in all environmental advocacy. I support CRWA because climate change is bringing extreme weather that harms the most vulnerable among us—and CRWA is on the front lines equipping community members with tools to proactively advocate for a safer, more sustainable future."*

**Ihssane Hasnaoui Leckey, CRWA Board Member**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/PROTECT](https://www.crwa.org/protect)**

# RESTORING A CLEAN, FREE-FLOWING CHARLES RIVER

We are making real progress to remove failing, defunct mill dams and restore a free-flowing, resilient Charles River. Today, nineteen dams interrupt our river, impeding migratory fish passage, harming the river ecosystem, upholding the legacy of colonization and dispossession of Indigenous nations, and, in some cases, reducing the climate resilience of our river.

**Your investments have created momentum for dam removal.** Specifically, feasibility studies were completed for both Wrentham Eagle Dam and Watertown Dam, and the Town of Natick kicked off discussions for removing the Charles River Dam at South Natick. From public education events to press interviews; from site-visits and one-on-one meetings with community, state, and local leaders to a longform persuasive report on dam removal—**your gifts are having a transformational impact for our river** to achieve our collective vision for a free-flowing, restored, climate-resilient Charles for future generations.

**Let's make the river an even more beautiful place to be.**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/RESTORE](https://www.crwastore.org)**





## ASSESSING THE HEALTH OF OUR WETLANDS

The Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area (NVSA) is a network of 8,100 acres of preserved wetlands that provides significant flood mitigation for Boston and other downstream cities and towns. **With your support, along with a grant from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, we conducted stream health assessments** including a survey of fish populations, habitat assessments, and river bug sampling. We found that Dix Brook, a tributary of Mine Brook and the Charles River, is degraded and that the overall area is threatened by the many effects of development such as invasive species growth, loss of biodiversity, reduced riparian habitat, low streamflow, and poor water quality. Our work focused on an especially vulnerable priority area in the Town of Franklin and confirmed action is needed to rehabilitate coldwater fish populations, mitigate stormwater pollution, improve water quality, and restore biodiversity.

**Thanks to your partnership, residents in Boston and other downstream communities will be better protected from flooding as NVSA health improves.**

**A natural protection from flooding to keep our homes, neighborhoods, and communities safe.**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/RESTORE](https://www.crwa.org/restore)**



# GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE FOR MILFORD

Many of the ecological troubles in the Charles River can be traced back to the disruption of the natural water cycle as we have expanded our built environment: roads, buildings, sidewalks and other impermeable surfaces. That's why nature-based solutions are so important!

**This year, your gifts are at work installing green infrastructure in Milford.** By the end of summer 2022, you will find two beautiful new rain gardens in Milford Town Park. An underground infiltration chamber is also being installed, which is an unseen but essential part of this nature-based solution. It will reduce 25 pounds of nutrient pollution load into the Charles River, provide over 160,000 gallons of groundwater recharge, and help Milford meet required pollution reductions. These nature-based solutions will boost Milford's ecological resilience, especially in regard to drought and flood damage. By helping to eliminate significant phosphorus pollution, Milford Town Park will be drastically improved for the community, wildlife, and watershed as a whole. **We're especially excited for the project's extensive multilingual outreach, as Milford has multiple Environmental Justice neighborhoods and climate-vulnerable residents.** Providing opportunities for all residents to engage meaningfully and conveniently echoes our vision for equal access to our community's natural resources.

**Environmental justice for all.**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/DESIGN](https://www.crwastate.org/design)**





## RIVER RESIDENTS BECOME RIVER ADVOCATES

With donors like you—and the Barr Foundation—we are excited to be training a new cohort of strategic, passionate, educated watershed leaders on how to advocate for climate resilience in their communities. River Advocates Volunteer Program **will push for climate-smart policies and regulations and engage in local government processes and on-the-ground actions in their respective communities to address the climate crisis.**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/RIVER-ADVOCATES](https://CRWA.ORG/RIVER-ADVOCATES)**



*“CRWA is the organization that has been responsible for transforming the Charles River from a polluted, toxic river to a resource that can be enjoyed by millions of people each year. Using science they identified what needed to be done and pursued those actions through powerful legislative actions. Their work is not complete because there are still negative environmental impacts harming the river today.”*

**Jeryl Oristaglio, CRWA Board for Advisors**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/RIVER-ADVOCATES](https://CRWA.ORG/RIVER-ADVOCATES)**



# FORMING CONNECTIONS WITH WATER QUALITY DATA

CRWA has long kept tabs on water quality, but this year, with your support, **this data is even more relevant and accessible with the launch of the E. coli Dashboard.** It's a live interactive map, accessible on our website, that reveals E. coli trends across the watershed. Created in collaboration with Code for Boston, the E. coli Dashboard brings data to life. **It greatly improves the accessibility of our crucial data so everyone in our community is equipped to make informed decisions when getting onto the water.**

Additionally, **your generosity allowed us to expand outreach for our Flagging Program—the only resource alerting boaters, rowers, swimmers, kayakers, and paddlers alike to take precautions on the river.** This live notification system indicates if the river's water quality meets the boating safety standard. It uses color-coded flags posted at twelve participating boathouses between Watertown and Boston, daily email notifications, and a Flagging Twitter bot!

**Keeping you informed and safe.**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/ANALYZE](https://CRWA.ORG/ANALYZE)**

## YOUR IMPACT CONTINUES

The Charles is so much cleaner today than it was in 1965 when river lovers just like you founded CRWA to be the voice of the river. You've made a remarkable difference! Because of you—our passionate donors, partners, and volunteers – the voice of the Charles continues to be heard, creating change, increasing resilience, protecting public health, and promoting environmental equity. Thanks to your generosity and loyalty, this vital work of protecting and preserving the Charles River for future generations continues to grow.

Stay updated on the success of the projects and advocacy that you make possible by subscribing to our monthly e-newsletter, the *River Current!*

**We're in this together, for the Charles.**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/RIVER\\_CURRENT](https://CRWA.ORG/RIVER_CURRENT)**





# TOGETHER, *WE* ARE BUILDING RESILIENCE IN THE WATERSHED



Climate change isn't coming—it's here. Increased precipitation, extreme weather, blistering heat waves... the tangible effects of warming are already happening in Massachusetts, and our highly urbanized watershed and all of us who call it home are increasingly vulnerable. Compounding social factors such as poverty or isolation can lead to catastrophic outcomes and must be addressed in tandem with these environmental challenges.

**Together, we are stepping up to this challenge—in partnership with nearly two dozen of our watershed communities—with the launch of the Charles River Flood Model.**

This watershed-scale flood visualization shows how increased precipitation and inland flooding will affect our communities, identifying critical facilities and neighborhoods at risk. This essential resource will be of help selecting priority flood

mitigation interventions, influencing local and state policy and legislation, and empowering cities, towns, and residents alike to join together to adapt to climate change.

*"Sharing the Flood Model with our elected officials has reinvigorated conversations about adapting to climate change and making financial investments and regulatory changes. I am amazed at what has been accomplished in only two short years."*

**Stephanie Carlisle, Compliance Coordinator, Medway**

**LEARN MORE ► [CRWA.ORG/ADAPT](https://www.crwa.org/adapt)**

# FY21 FINANCIAL SUMMARY



## Revenue & Support

Event Income.....	\$297,073
Program Grants.....	\$465,665
Individual Contribution.....	\$444,728
Campaign.....	\$209,011

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**TOTAL** **\$1,416,477**

## Funding Sources

Individual.....	\$530,710
Corporation.....	\$62,634
Foundation.....	\$514,940
Government.....	\$281,539
Other.....	\$26,655

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**TOTAL** **\$1,416,477**

## Expenses

Programs.....	\$976,000
Fundraising.....	\$170,000
Admin.....	\$158,000
Events.....	\$33,000

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**TOTAL** **\$1,337,000**

## Program Expenses

- Outreach & Education.....30%
- Climate Change Adaptation.....23%
- Advocacy.....22%
- Stormwater Program.....13%
- River Science.....12%





## CRWA 2021 BY THE NUMBERS

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**987**

Unique Donors

**800+**

Tweets

**629**

water quality samples conducted

**\$530,710**

raised from individual donations

**985**

Total Volunteers

**2,940**

pound of water chestnuts removed

**\$46,705**

raised from corporate donations

**3,000+**

Volunteer Hours

**13,000**

acres prone to flooding identified

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## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

CRWA hosted **72** events to connect with the community including **11** Zoom webinars, **6** green-infrastructure training sessions with our partners at X-Cel Conservation Corps (a job skills training program), **17** school education visits, **15** community meetings, **8** tabling events, **5** site walks, **1** kayak tour, and **1** successful Champions of the Charles Gala (featuring **1** U.S. Senator!).

# CHARLES RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION DONORS

Your support continues a powerful combination of sound science, advocacy, and the law to address today's threats to our watershed and all who call it home. This critical work isn't possible without your partnership. A big thank you from all of us at Charles River Watershed Association!

## BLUE HERON SOCIETY

**\$25,000 and up**

Anonymous (5)  
Barr Foundation  
E & L Campbell Family Foundation  
Eaglemere Foundation  
Richard Saltonstall Charitable Foundation  
Robert and Lee Sproull

## AMERICAN SHAD SOCIETY

**\$10,000 - \$24,999**

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