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CRWA Announces \$11k Grant for Wetland Restoration in Franklin: Funding Provided through Environmental-Themed Specialty License Plates

WESTON, MA [October 1, 2020] — Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) announced today the group was awarded \$11,120 from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust to assess and restore the wetland health of the Charles River and improve water quality in a critical coldwater fishery resource waterway in the area of the Natural Valley Storage Area, including assessment of riparian vegetation to ensure a high quality streamflow in Dix Brook for improved climate resilience.

The Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET), housed within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), was established in 1988 as part of the Boston Harbor cleanup. MET is funded by the sales of the state's three environmentally themed specialty license plates: the Right Whale & Roseate Terns Plate, the Leaping Brook Trout Plate and the Blackstone Valley Mill Plate.

"We are grateful for the support from the Massachusetts Environment Trust and the Baker Administration," said CRWA Aquatic Scientist Lisa Kumpf. "This project will help us take proactive steps to restore a vital part of our watershed wetlands that are at risk from development and climate change." She added, "Purchasing an environment-themed license plate is a great way to support the environment in Massachusetts!"

The Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area (NVSA) encompasses 8,100 acres of natural wetlands in sixteen Charles River watershed communities. The NVSA serves as a natural sponge storing water during intense rain events, protecting downstream communities from flooding. Since its creation, the NVSA has prevented about \$12 million in flood damages and is a prime example of a nature based solution for climate resilience. The NVSA also provides vital habitat for fish and wildlife, and access to nature for the public.

The NVSA is at risk from invasive species growth, in particular oriental bittersweet vines. These fast-growing vines cover, shade, and outcompete the tall trees they grow on, eventually killing the tree and leaving it vulnerable to topple during winter storms. Trees are critical for both floodwater storage and natural filtration of stormwater runoff, and are a key component to assuring the NVSA stays resilient to climate change.

With this funding, CRWA will assess the health of wetlands in the Town of Franklin and engage community members to understand the value of the NVSA, preparing CRWA to organize future invasive bittersweet removal events. Empowering citizens to evaluate and restore the health of the NVSA wetlands is critical to climate resilience both within the Charles River Watershed and beyond.

Franklin was chosen because the area of the NVSA at the confluence of Mine and Dix Brooks is adjacent to I-495, a train line, and corporate developments, all of which bring additional stormwater

pollution into the Charles River. Additionally, this land helps protect Dix Brook, one of only nine Coldwater Fish Resource (CFR) streams in the Charles watershed. Changes in temperature, surrounding land use, and water levels can have a negative impact on these sensitive waterways, reducing their ability to support cold water fish species.

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Charles River Watershed Association uses science, advocacy, urban design and education to promote resilient communities and a healthy river ecosystem. CRWA was formed in 1965 in response to public concern about the declining condition of the Charles River. Since its earliest days of advocacy, CRWA has figured prominently in major clean-up and watershed protection efforts that have dramatically improved the health of the Charles.