



April 11, 2018

The Honorable Anne M. Gobi, Senate Chair  
The Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture  
State House, Room 513  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable William Pignatelli, House Chair  
The Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture  
State House, Room 473  
Boston, Ma 02133

Dear Honorable Chairs:

The Mystic River Watershed Association, a nonprofit organization serving the 22 cities and towns in the Mystic River Watershed, supports “An Act promoting climate change adaptation, environmental and natural resource protection, and investment in recreational assets and opportunity,” H. 4318.

We see this bond bill as an important step in supporting the Commonwealth’s efforts to address the impacts of climate change and invest in our environmental and recreational assets for the benefit of our economy, quality of life, and all citizens. The \$1.4 billion bill positions Massachusetts to maintain our leadership in mitigating and adapting to climate change while providing environmental protections and stewardship of our recreational and natural resources.

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) works to protect and restore the Mystic River, its tributaries and watershed lands for the benefit of present and future generations and to celebrate the value, importance and great beauty of our natural resources. To accomplish this mission, we partner with municipalities and regional and State agencies, to address the effects of climate change on water quality, river recreation, natural habitat and open space, and to advance climate resilience and preparedness.

More intense storms and flooding, temperature changes, and the very real prospect of future coastal storm surges reaching upriver communities, have highlighted the urgent need to implement climate preparedness plans that protect our natural resources and local economies. We applaud this forward-looking legislation which targets resources to explore nature-based resiliency solutions, encourage additional planning and vulnerability studies, and provide more adequate resources to communities to reduce their climate risks.

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We particularly support the inclusion of funding for the Department of Environmental Protection's water quality monitoring network in section number 2200-7022, which enables our Commonwealth to collect water quality data that is necessary to make appropriate permitting and planning decisions and water pollution control plans.

We know that a primary goal of the administration is to help communities within Massachusetts adapt to a changing environment. As part of this mission, **we urge the legislature to reinstate section 2800-7031 to support the Department of Conservation and Recreation's programs for aquatic invasive species management**, which was included in the 2014 environmental bond bill and is important to maintaining natural habitat, native species and water recreation.

In our own Mystic River watershed, we have worked closely with the Department to control the exponential growth of water chestnut, an invasive aquatic plant that forms thick continuous mats and renders portions of the Mystic River barely passable, impeding boating and swimming, crowding out native plants and reducing wildlife diversity. Decomposition of large quantities of water chestnuts may result in lower dissolved oxygen levels, which harms the Mystic's vulnerable fisheries. Management entails physical harvesting of the plants, and reducing the flow of nutrients, such as phosphorus, to the river. Since 2010, MyRWA has partnered with the Department and with municipalities, local environmental organizations, boat clubs, corporations and community members to harvest these rapidly growing plants and reduce the flow of nutrients such as phosphorus that drive their growth. In 2016 alone, 835 volunteers removed nearly 67 tons of plant material from the Mystic River and Arlington Reservoir. Managing invasive species is an important part of protecting our recreational and environmental resources, and deserves funding.

Governor Baker's Environmental Bond Bill recognizes that we must act now to prepare for and adapt to climate change and provides vital resources to do so. MyRWA will work collaboratively with our 22 watershed municipalities and with watershed associations and environmental organizations across the commonwealth to help propel our communities through this period of environmental change.

We strongly urge the legislature to advance this bond bill and promote climate preparedness as a statewide priority.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick M. Herron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Patrick Herron  
Executive Director  
Mystic River Watershed Association