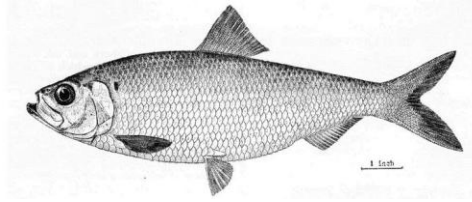


# Save the Alewife Brook



Environmental Health is Community Health

12/04/2025

The Honorable Rebecca Tepper,  
Secretary Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

MWRA Board of Directors  
c/o Frederick Laskey, Executive Director  
Massachusetts Water Resources Authority  
100 First Avenue  
Charlestown, MA 02129

Dear Secretary Tepper and Members of the MWRA Board of Directors:

Under Executive Director Fred Laskey's leadership since 2001, MWRA's strong finances have created a once-in-a-generation funding opportunity to finish the job and end sewage pollution in the Charles, Mystic, and Alewife—without increasing rates for the families and businesses that use the regional sewer system. This is something to be genuinely grateful for.

Between 2024 and 2031, MWRA will finish paying off about \$2.1 billion in long-term bonds. Each year, the Authority pays down around \$250–\$290 million of this debt. Because this old debt is coming off the books, **MWRA will be able to issue around \$2.1 billion in new bonds without raising water and sewer rates for households and businesses.** This is happening just in time to fund sewage pollution elimination projects for Alewife Brook and the Charles and Mystic rivers.

At the October 22nd MWRA Board of Directors meeting, Mr. Laskey announced that MWRA's Subordinate Bonds Credit Rating has been upgraded, proof of MWRA's strong fiscal position. Since MWRA's credit rating has been upgraded, MWRA is able to issue more bond debt at better rates. Those savings mean larger investments can be made on infrastructure projects— e.g., sewer separation, green stormwater infrastructure, storage tanks, dredging, and improvements at the Deer Island Wastewater Treatment Plant.

# Save the Alewife Brook

Environmental Health is Community Health

Households and businesses in the Greater Boston area have invested billions of dollars to clean up Boston Harbor and dramatically reduce sewage pollution. The numbers show that this investment has left MWRA financially strong. Thanks to expiring debt and improved credit ratings, MWRA can now afford to finance and finish the Boston Harbor Cleanup, including completing the final work on the Charles, Mystic, and Alewife to virtually end Combined Sewer Overflow sewage pollution.

Being grateful for MWRA in this moment means not only appreciating what it has accomplished in cleaning up Boston Harbor, but also recognizing the sound financial decisions that have been made which now enable the virtual elimination of sewage in our rivers.

While it may appear less expensive to dump untreated waste into our waters, this is only so if your analysis excludes health impacts and the burden on the wider community. MWRA is under regulatory and legal obligations, so financing the updated Long Term Combined Sewer Overflow Plan is not discretionary. It is required.

Importantly: people are getting sick. Stop dumping raw sewage into our rivers; instead send it where it belongs – to the wastewater treatment plant.

In 2023 alone, 29 million gallons of untreated sewage were dumped into Alewife Brook. That same year, the brook flooded its banks five times, sending sewage floodwater across state parkland and onto the Alewife Path. We watched children bike through it. We saw parents pushing baby strollers through untreated sewage. This is a public health crisis that impacts our most vulnerable, environmental justice neighborhoods.

Contrary to the materials supplied at recent MWRA Board meetings, there are six active CSO outfalls at Alewife Brook, not four. These pipes dump raw sewage into a densely populated, flood-prone area. MWRA's boast of an "88% reduction" in sewage pollution means nothing here, especially when two outfalls remain out of compliance with the Boston Harbor court case.

And let's be honest: MWRA's claim that "there's no problem 99% of the time" is a cruel joke. One percent of the year equals 88 hours. For those 88 hours, MWRA exposes the public to hazardous, disease-carrying sewage much of which remains in the Brook as foul-smelling sediment that is exposed during dry conditions. The CSOs are making people sick.

This is your opportunity to fix it. Do not fumble. Partner with Cambridge and Somerville to finish the good work that was started decades ago – to end sewage pollution in Alewife Brook.

# Save the Alewife Brook

Environmental Health is Community Health

The original Long Term CSO Control Plan did not achieve virtual elimination. But that Plan achieved closing of 7 CSO outfalls, significant sewer separation, and large green stormwater infrastructure. For the new plan, use the same proven tools: sewer separation, green stormwater infrastructure to clean and attenuate stormwater flows, and engineer the closure of five out of six CSO outfalls (CAM401A, SOM001A, CAM002, CAM401B, CAM001). Design for a 25-year level of storm control at MWR003 – a “virtual” elimination of sewage overflows.

Do not waste decades of ratepayer investments by rolling back progress. Finish the job.

**End sewage pollution at Alewife Brook.**

Sincerely,

*Kristin Anderson*

*David White*

*David Stoff*

*Eugene Benson*

*Ann McDonald*

*George Laite*

*Michael Lonetto*

*Eppa Rixey*

**Save the Alewife Brook**