

“... virtually nothing has been written about the trout-fishing opportunities in eastern Massachusetts – not because there are well-kept secrets, but because there are no such opportunities worth mentioning. Some of the scummy streams that flow behind strip malls and through culverts support populations of stocked trout for a month or two in the spring, until the heat and drought and toxic runoff get them.”

*William G. Tapply, Every Day Was Special, 2010, p.56*

Cold water streams are badly impacted by runoff and native trout have vanished from many brooks in densely developed places. Recreational lakes are another problem, as pollutants carried by streams feed the growth of invasive weeds and raise bacteria levels. State assessments find that two-thirds of local lakes and ponds are impaired, largely due to stormwater.



But healthy waters can be restored through the cleansing of storm runoff by community actions. Many low-cost and no-cost measures can reduce municipal expenses for water treatment and maintenance of storm sewers. These solutions also help communities to comply with state and federal mandates for eliminating stormwater discharges into streams.

## **Municipal Boards**

Municipal boards work hard to protect community health, safety and welfare. Public opinion surveys find water pollution is a top environmental concern. Yet few people know that stormwater is the main source of pollution, and how inexpensive practices can halt its harmful impacts on community waters.

Many municipal officials need information about stormwater for routine decisions on land development and redevelopment projects. Stormwater workshops sponsored by project partners during the past three years continue to be well-attended by municipal boards (see [www.commonwaters.org/events](http://www.commonwaters.org/events)).

We have also prepared [guidance](#) that can assist towns to apply state and federal stormwater policies. Municipal boards are on front line for implementing these evolving stormwater policies and regulations.

Communities with storm sewer systems are regulated by EPA permits for stormwater discharges to local waters, which require cities and towns to:

- Inform and involve community residents in preventing runoff problems
- Eliminate illegal discharges into storm drainage systems
- Control construction site runoff
- Examine local street and parking lot regulations to reduce runoff to streams
- Manage stormwater from new development and redevelopment
- Maintain good housekeeping and pollution prevention for municipal operations

Municipal planning boards, conservation commissions and public works/ highway departments are key officials because their activities can deter stormwater impacts.

**Conservation Commissions** are the primary boards responsible for the MassDEP stormwater regulations under the state Wetlands Protection Act.

[The DEP](#)

[Stormwater Handbook](#)

includes detailed guidance for stormwater management standards (Vol. 1, Ch. 1) and technical specifications for best management practices (Vol. 2, Ch. 2). This Stormwater Handbook is available for download from the DEP website and supplies a wealth of useful information.

Additional guidance for *Ten Ways Conservation Commissions Can Protect Cold Water Streams and Their Inhabitants* is available for download on this website. [Download document \(PDF 2.0 MB\)...](#)

**Planning Boards** are the primary boards for encouraging Low Impact Development (LID) practices that will protect and improve the health of local streams, lakes and water supplies. LID techniques also enable low-cost or no-cost solutions that comply with state and federal stormwater policies. The DEP Stormwater Handbook (Vol. 2, Ch. 1) has guidance about site planning, LID, pollution prevention and best management practices, which is helpful for reviews of new development and redevelopment projects by the Planning Board.



MWC has prepared [A Community Guide to Growing Greener](#) about low impact practices for municipal boards, developers and residents. This Community Guide can be downloaded from this website, and it offers a voluntary approach to prevent stormwater damages and remedy existing problems.

**Municipal Public Works/Highway Departments** have a primary role in managing storm sewer systems and road runoff. EPA permits for municipal storm sewers consider local roads to be part of the system.

[The MassHighway Storm Water Handbook](#)

complies with state and federal stormwater policies and it “focuses on the unique constraints of existing roadways”. This Handbook is available for download at the above link, and provides guidance on stormwater practices for highway improvement projects and new road construction.

Public Works/Highway Departments can apply simple, inexpensive methods as part of routine road maintenance to reduce polluted runoff discharges into local streams and ponds. BGY partner groups can assist local DPWs and Highway Departments with analysis of road drainage systems and help to identify stormwater solutions that reduce impacts on community waters.

### **Municipal Actions**

Communities can consider some of the following steps to improve stormwater management:

- Appoint a stormwater coordinator to review proposed development projects
- Enact a stormwater bylaw or LID bylaw to regulate runoff (required by EPA permit)
- Adopt A [Community Guide to Growing Greener](#)
- Update zoning regulations or create a voluntary approach to reduce runoff from parking lots – an inexpensive way to protect water and comply with EPA permits for storm sewer systems.
- Install infiltration practices for municipal buildings and roads to cleanse runoff