

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 6, 2014

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We respectfully request that you include legislative language in your Fiscal Year 2016 budget request for the Army Corps of Engineers to expand construction on both environmental restoration and flood damage control, which together will greatly enhance flood mitigation for the Emerald Necklace and Muddy River, situated between Boston and Brookline, Massachusetts.

The Muddy River restoration is one of the most important urban flood management and mitigation projects in our nation. The City of Boston, the Town of Brookline and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts have worked closely with citizen and business groups to determine the most environmentally sound and cost effective community supported plan that would help prevent future flooding of Boston's historic Fenway community, and to restore the proper and natural flow of the Muddy River. We believe that this project dovetails well with your recent initiative to create a "Climate Resilience Fund" to provide assistance to local communities to prepare for global warming. We strongly support your proposal to help communities across the country become more resilient to the effects of climate change.

In the wake of Sandy, the city of New York asked the Nature Conservancy to prepare a report¹ on how a hybrid of natural and man built defenses could be successfully integrated. The report found that the environmental restoration of natural features can be successfully used in a dense urban setting, in combination with "built" defenses, to provide efficient and cost-effective protection from sea level rise, storm surges and coastal flooding. Further the report found that once you start mixing natural and built defenses, you start seeing great returns on residential properties. Although it may seem like the only way to protect a dense urban area is with built infrastructure, the study demonstrates that there is a significant, cost-efficient role for nature to play.

The Muddy River restoration project is an excellent example of this type of hybrid approach. Flooding in recent years has produced extensive damage and economic loss to this densely populated and economically vital section of Boston and the neighboring Town of Brookline. To properly respond to the problem, the communities have worked closely with local and state governments to develop a restoration plan which is economically and environmentally sensitive and will effectively restore the Muddy River and prevent future damage to Boston's historic Fenway community.

The Muddy River Restoration Project includes the rehabilitation of elements of the historic landscape, within four sections of the Emerald Necklace: Charlesgate, the Back Bay Fens, the Riverway, and Leverett, Willow, and Wards Pond in Olmsted Park.

¹ Integrating Natural Infrastructure into Urban Coastal Resilience, Howard Beach, Queens December 2013 , The Nature Conservancy (<http://www.nature.org/media/newyork/howard-beach-report-12-23-2013.pdf>)

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The Muddy River Restoration Project's flood control objective will be accomplished by removing restrictions in the river so that flooding during major storms (such as the flood of 1996) does not damage adjacent properties or transportation infrastructure. The project will improve the water quality in the river itself and also improve the quality of stormwater entering the river from local storm drainage systems. It will enhance the wildlife habitat in and adjacent to the river. The subtle meandering of the river and the diverse and varied plantings designed by Olmsted created a rich habitat for wildlife.

As authorized in The Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2014 (WRRDA 2014, P.L. 113-121) the Master Plan to restore the Emerald Necklace and Muddy River is closer to reality.

However, the following additional legislative language and funding is needed to move the project forward as set forth in section 522 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-541):

"The Army Corps of Engineers is directed to carry out the project for flood damage reduction and environmental restoration, Muddy River, Brookline and Boston Massachusetts, substantially in accordance with the plans, and subject to the conditions, described in the draft evaluation report of the New England District Engineer entitled "Phase I Muddy River Master Plan," dated June 2000."


The inclusion of this legislative language and sufficient funding will allow the Muddy River project to stay on schedule and allow current construction related permits to be maintained. It would also enable design and construction of the project to include comprehensive dredging that would restore the river's natural flood resiliency, ensuring the longevity of the Muddy River's flood risk management and environmental protection goals – protecting the residences, businesses and institutions along the river, as well as the delicate urban ecosystem.

We believe this project is excellent opportunity for the Administration to demonstrate that environmental restoration in urban areas can be an importation component to combat flooding that has been exacerbated by climate change. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator

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Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy III
Member of Congress

Cc: Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works);
Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick, Commanding General and Chief of Engineers,
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers