



**Muddy River Restoration Project**  
**Maintenance and Management Oversight Committee**  
68 Harvard Street  
Brookline, Massachusetts 02445  
[www.muddyrivermmoc.org](http://www.muddyrivermmoc.org)

November 24, 2014

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*Emerald Necklace CAC*

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Muddy River Restoration Project Maintenance and Management Oversight Committee (the MMOC) requests that you direct the United States Army Corps of Engineers to advance the Muddy River Restoration Project as set forth in section 522 of the Water Resources and Development Act of 2000 (WRDA 2000) which directs the Army Corps of Engineers “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 MMOC is an independent oversight committee established in 2002 by the Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs (“the Secretary”) to provide independent evaluation of the Muddy River Restoration Project and ensure full compliance by the Project proponents (the City of Boston and the Town of Brookline with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) with their obligations under all environmental certificates and permits issued in connection with the Project. The Project has a number of interrelated goals, including flood control, water quality improvement, habitat enhancement and historic preservation.

Since its creation, the MMOC has worked hard to ensure proper long-term maintenance and management of the Project area, including the waterway itself and the surrounding parkland and parkways that are within and that surround the Muddy River Project Area. Through the efforts of the MMOC and its predecessor, the MEPA Citizens Advisory Committee, the non-federal sponsors have committed to detailed and enforceable maintenance plans for these areas, which are in addition to the non-federal sponsor’s maintenance obligations set forth in the Project Partnership Agreement with the Department of the Army.

## Background

The Muddy River area has a long history. The confluence of Stony Brook and the Muddy River in the late 1870's formed a tidal estuary that was severely polluted and flooded frequently. The Muddy River and surrounding parks were designed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Frederick Law Olmsted. The purpose of the design of the Muddy River Parks within what is now called the Emerald Necklace was to improve sanitary conditions and to alleviate flooding. Frederick Law Olmsted accomplished the goal, magnificently, creating natural land contours that could manage storm flow while providing a beautiful park system for the enjoyment of the public. It in fact was called the Muddy River Sanitary Improvement, and helped to improve water quality and control flooding at the time.

Notwithstanding its admirable design, in the 20th century differing economic interests changed the river area dramatically. A lengthy portion of the river was put underground and forced to flow through undersized culverts in order to accommodate commercial parking on the surface. Once again the health, safety and quality of life of the residents, institutions and businesses of Boston and Brookline were subjected to and threatened by significant flooding, impaired water quality and degraded habitat in the Muddy River. Storm flow in the river has been restricted by the culverts, an accumulation of sediment, and the ever expanding presence of extensive stands of invasive species including floating mats of phragmites, traditionally extremely difficult to control. If not fully eradicated as a part of the Project, the phragmites will continue to impede storm water flow and thwart efforts to minimize the effects of what are becoming ever more frequent and more severe storms.

The Muddy River Project provides a comprehensive approach to these problems. As conceived and permitted, it contains both structural and non-structural flood damage reduction elements as well as eco-system restoration elements, which will have the beneficial effect of helping to make this urban environment more resilient, and better able to withstand the anticipated impacts of climate change.

## Project Area

The Project area is in the midst of a critically important economic center for the Commonwealth. It abuts the Longwood Medical Area and the Fenway Cultural District, home to thirty-eight of the most significant medical, academic, cultural, and scientific institutions in Boston. Further along the river is an important transportation line, the MBTA's Riverside Line, which was shut down for several months in 1996, when significant rainfall sent storm water rushing down the railroad tracks leaving 30 feet of water inside the Kenmore Square train station and causing \$70 million in damage.

Boston is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The city and the Commonwealth have for many years worked proactively and have led the movement to make coastal cities more resilient to the effects of rising sea levels, more frequent and more severe storms, increased coastal and inland flooding, and rising temperatures.

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Your 2013 Executive Order on climate change directs agencies to identify changes to land and water related policies, programs and regulations to strengthen the climate resilience of watersheds, natural resources and eco-systems, recognizing that the federal government has a critical role to support cities in their efforts to build resilient communities.

The Muddy River Project is a national model for urban green stormwater infrastructure improvement, and both the flood damage reduction and the eco-system restoration elements are critical to its long-term success. If the eco-system restoration is not completed then the city, town and Commonwealth will be left with a project that is not sustainable, and does not meet the original goal of withstanding 20 year storms. Maintenance costs will be substantially increased as more frequent dredging will be required, which in turn will have a negative impact on river habitat.

The Muddy River is also a tributary to the Charles River, which the Commonwealth has spent considerable time, money and effort to restore to a healthy condition. A natural and cleaner Muddy River will enable continued progress in restoring full function to the Charles.

#### Summary

In the last four decades, advocates, elected and appointed officials and the private sector have collaboratively invested millions of dollars in master planning, early action projects and restoration of the Muddy River from Charlesgate, where the Muddy flows into the Charles, through the Fens, Riverway Park, and Olmsted Park, to Jamaica Pond and Franklin Park. This prior work done collaboratively by Brookline and Boston with the Commonwealth and with institutions, and the public needs the protection of a comprehensive Muddy River Project in order to ensure that this investment is not wasted.

As you know from the letters you have already received from Massachusetts' congressional delegation, Governor Deval L. Patrick and numerous institutions, organizations and individuals, this project is of utmost importance to the region.

A direction to the Department of the Army to complete the project as originally envisioned, supported by funding in your budget for the ecosystem restoration elements of the Project, will ensure the implementation of the comprehensive project originally conceived and will demonstrate a commitment to helping urban areas cope with the effects of future climate change. We thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,



Frances Allou Gershwin  
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cc: United States Senator Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator Elizabeth Warren  
United States Congressman Michael E. Capuano  
United States Congressman Joseph P. Kennedy III  
United States Congressman Stephen F. Lynch  
Governor Deval L. Patrick, Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Mayor Martin J. Walsh, City of Boston  
Kenneth Goldstein, Chair, Town of Brookline Board of Selectmen  
Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army (Civil Works)  
Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick, PE, Commanding General and Chief of Engineers  
Col. Christopher Barron, District Commander New England Region, USACE  
Lieutenant Colonel Charles Gray, Deputy District Commander  
Maeve Valley Bartlett, Secretary, Massachusetts Executive office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
Jack Murray, Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Brian Swett, Chief Environment, Energy and Open Space  
Christopher Cook, Commissioner, Boston Parks and Recreation Department  
Andrew M. Pappastergion, Commissioner, Brookline Public Works  
Erin Chute Gallantine, Director, Brookline Parks and Open Space  
Thomas D. Brady, Brookline Conservation Commission  
Margaret Dyson, Director, Historic Parks, Boston Parks and Recreation  
Michael F. Keegan, P.E., L.C.S., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
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4843-5669-7376.1