



MassDEP NEWS

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection

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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Funding to Support Connecticut River Water Quality Improvements

Grant Supports Sewage Overflow Abatement Efforts in Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke

BOSTON – The Baker-Polito Administration today awarded a \$1.5 million grant to the Connecticut River Clean-up Committee (CRCC), administered by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), to provide assistance to the cities of Springfield, Chicopee and Holyoke as they implement plans to reduce sewer overflows and wastewater discharges and improve water quality in the Connecticut River Watershed.

“The Connecticut River is a vital resource for communities along its banks and the funds announced today will support important ongoing community efforts to keep contaminants out of the river, greatly improving water quality and quality of life for local residents,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.**

“Water quality improvements in our rivers and streams is a high priority for our Administration, and we are proud to provide this funding to our project partners performing sewer separation work,” **said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito.** “Supporting this clean-up project will protect public health, native wildlife, and our beautiful natural resources in the Pioneer Valley.”

The Connecticut River Clean-up Committee has been working for more than 20 years to eliminate water pollution from combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the Connecticut River and its tributaries. This fourth round of funding will be used to assist the local communities in completing high-priority CSO reduction projects. As part of the Commonwealth’s Capital Investment Plan, \$3 million has been awarded to the CRCC efforts to date, with today’s award bringing the total to \$4.5 million.

“A tremendous amount of work is being done in the Connecticut River watershed by the local communities, PVPC and advocacy groups to eliminate contaminants and protect this critical waterway,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton.** “With this additional funding, we are supporting needed projects that eliminate sewer outfalls and halt the discharge of millions of gallons of pollutants to the river.”

The PVPC and the CRCC will soon determine what specific projects will be targeted with these funds, but the work will include upgrades to sewer pumping stations, designs for sewage



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abatement facilities within the three communities, and design and implementation of sewer separation projects that will greatly reduce discharges to the river.

Over the last 17 years, the PVPC and the CRCC have made great strides in cleaning up the river. With the use of local and federal funding, these organizations have reduced the number of CSOs discharging raw sewage to the Connecticut River from the original number of 132 down to 58 CSOs, reducing the volume of CSO effluent discharges significantly. The state grant announced today will support additional CSO elimination projects in the three municipalities.

“Joint federal, state and local efforts over the years have eliminated many CSO outfalls and reduced overflows that affect water quality,” **said Commissioner Martin Suuberg of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)**. “This important funding will allow these three cities to implement additional measures that will further improve water quality within the river and its tributaries.”

“The communities of Holyoke, Chicopee and Springfield have worked tirelessly to improve the water quality of the Connecticut River and have made great progress in doing so,” **said State Senator Donald F. Humason (R-Westfield)**. “I am pleased to work with the Baker-Polito Administration is providing additional funding to support these essential ongoing projects.”

“I grew up fishing and boating on the Connecticut River, so I know first-hand how vital it is to our families and to the Pioneer Valley’s ecosystem, natural heritage and regional economy. We must preserve it for future generations, and this much-needed funding will help us do that,” **said State Senator Eric P. Lesser (D-Longmeadow)**. “I’m grateful to the Connecticut River Clean-up Committee and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission for their persistent advocacy for this project, and look forward to seeing the good work they will do with this grant.”

“Cleaning up the Connecticut River is a critical piece of the overall Greater Springfield revitalization efforts,” **said State Senator James T. Welch (D West Springfield)**. “Myself and my colleagues from Western Mass have been advocating for this persistently. I am glad to see this grant go to the cleanup. As we look to improve our communities we cannot forget how important the Connecticut River is. The PVPC and the CRCC have done an incredible job reducing pollutants and I know they will be able to make this money go a long way in our efforts to provide residents a clean, beautiful river.”

“It was a great experience working with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to secure these funds, protecting Holyoke’s unique natural and economic resource: the Connecticut River,” **said State Representative Aaron Vega (D-Westfield)**. “We are grateful for the support in this vital clean-up effort.”



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“I’m very appreciative of Governor Baker’s continued environmental efforts. My administration has a good working relationship with MassDEP,” **said Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno.** “Our Connecticut River is a jewel and an ‘American Heritage River’ that continues to play an important role in economic and recreational development for Springfield.”

“The City of Chicopee conveys its appreciation to MassDEP and Secretary Beaton for their continued financial support of our CSO reduction work,” **said Chicopee Mayor Richard Kos.** “This grant is especially appreciated as it will allow for reduction of CSO volume and prevention of sewer backups to residents in the Baystate Road and Clarendon Avenue area without the need for a sewer fee rate increase to complete the work. The city looks forward to the continuation of the partnership with MassDEP for the mutual benefit to our residents and the environment.”

“Holyoke, Springfield and Chicopee share the Connecticut River and each community has been working as aggressively as we can to retrofit the region’s historical CSO issue. The work required to rebuild the region’s stormwater and sewer systems is expensive and more than most communities can shoulder alone. This grant will allow us to continue to meet federal and state requirements and protect our shared natural resources,” **said Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse.** “I’d like to thank PVPC for their continued advocacy in Boston, and the Baker Administration for their support.”

“The Connecticut River Clean-up Committee is an enduring example of what can get accomplished when communities facing mutual challenges pool their resources and energy to take them on regionally,” **said PVPC Executive Director Tim Brennan.** “The continued support for the Connecticut River Clean-up Committee by the Baker-Polito Administration will help ensure this critical work gets done without putting additional burdens on tight local budgets here in the Pioneer Valley.”

“Collaboration with our neighbors along the Connecticut River and with the Commonwealth is the key to making progress on CSO remediation efforts,” **said Josh Schimmel, executive director of the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission.** “We thank Secretary Beaton and MassDEP for this latest funding support, which is critical to our region as we all steadily work to address CSOs in addition to aging infrastructure challenges.”

MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.

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