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## **Mystic Watershed Communities Secure \$3.6m in Climate Resilience Funding**

*Resilient Mystic Collaborative cities and towns build on early momentum*

**Arlington, MA, August 31, 2020**—Following the release of [\\$20 million in state FY2022 MVP Grants](#), The Mystic River Watershed Association announced that Resilient Mystic Collaborative (RMC) cities and towns had secured a total of \$2.6 million in state funding to help prepare for extreme weather. Of these funds, \$1.1 million were grants for multi-community projects, and \$1.5 million went to individual municipalities. In addition, the Barr Foundation awarded the RMC a two-year, \$950,000 renewal grant, bringing the total in new climate resilience funding to over \$3.6 million.

Such regional partnerships are critical to addressing the increasing risks communities face. “The recent [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report](#) painted a daunting picture of the hotter, stormier Massachusetts we are becoming,” said Julie Wormser, deputy director of the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA). “These new resources, added to our work together over the past three years will help Mystic Watershed communities protect their people and places from increasingly extreme weather events.”

Convened by MyRWA in September 2018 and led by senior staff from 20 cities and towns and non-governmental partners, the Resilient Mystic Collaborative (RMC) focuses on:

- Managing stormwater flooding on a regional scale;
- Preparing critical energy, transportation, food and wastewater infrastructure for coastal storms;
- Increasing the resilience of vulnerable residents and workers to extreme weather events; and
- Working with state agencies to lower the bar for Massachusetts communities to prepare for climate challenges.

The RMC includes 20 of 21 communities (Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Burlington, Cambridge, Chelsea, Everett, Lexington, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Somerville, Stoneham, Reading, Revere, Wakefield, Watertown, Winchester, Winthrop, and Woburn) representing 98 percent of the Mystic River Watershed. It includes non-profit and private sector partners as content experts, with senior municipal staff serving as the group’s voting members. All Mystic Watershed municipalities are welcome to participate.

“Malden’s \$354,600 FY2022 MVP Grant will continue to allow us to move forward with the design work on Malden River Works which is our community’s effort to incorporate a climate resilient park

at the City's Department of Public Works yard," said Mayor Gary Christenson. "This is a crucial precedent-setting project for Malden as it establishes new models of community engagement, implements green infrastructure, and promotes the Malden River Greenway."

"Burlington is pleased to have received this \$108,500 MVP grant" said Paul Sagarino, Burlington Town Administrator. "This grant will enable Burlington to determine the best steps going forward to mitigate the impacts of climate change, including dealing with increased flooding and intensifying heat-island effects."

"Winter 2018's record Nor'easters repeatedly flooded the New England Produce Center with corrosive salt water," said Everett Mayor Carlo DeMaria. "This \$716,500 MVP grant couldn't have come at a better time. It will allow Everett and Chelsea to complete the engineering, design, community engagement, and permitting needed to prevent coastal flooding in this part of Everett for decades to come."

The City of Melrose received a \$108,655 MVP grant on behalf of 17 RMC communities. "Melrose is excited to be part of this regional effort to help identify solutions to issues of flooding," said Mayor Paul Brodeur. "We are extremely susceptible to flooding in certain areas. We were one of the first MVP communities and we will continue to focus on climate vulnerability and preparedness."

"Working with our counterparts in Melrose and Malden, our \$101,108 MVP grant will help ensure that affordable housing in our communities are both climate resilient and carbon neutral," said Medford Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn. "It will take strong partnerships and shared learning with other watershed communities to respond to the growing threats of climate change."

"We have seen numerous heat waves this summer, and they will only become more frequent," said Watertown Senior Environmental Planner Laurel Schwab. "This \$94,240 MVP grant will help us use trees and green infrastructure to cool off our hottest neighborhoods and help protect our most vulnerable residents."

"Belle Isle Marsh is the last significant salt marsh in Boston Harbor," said Winthrop Director of Planning and Development Rachel Kelley. "We're delighted to have received this \$145,307 regional MVP grant to see what interventions could both improve and extend the life of the marsh both as critical habitat and as a buffer against coastal storms for inland neighborhoods."

"This \$624,000 grant enables us to design, construct, and operate solar-powered battery systems at Chelsea's police station, City Hall, and an affordable housing complex," said Director of Housing and Community Development Alex Train. "We are grateful both to the MVP program and to our non-profit partner GreenRoots for bringing this project to fruition."

"Chelsea is surrounded on three sides by water," said GreenRoots Executive Director Roseann Bongiovanni. "Especially after seeing the damage caused by Hurricane Maria in 2017, creating a city-

owned microgrid to maintain essential services during and after big coastal storms became a top priority for us."

"With the slower, more intense rainstorms we're getting, parts of Belmont are starting to flood that never used to," said Town Administrator Patrice Garvin. "This \$195,000 MVP grant will allow us to model locations that are projected to flood and engage residents in setting priorities for capital investments."

Finally, the City of Revere received \$165,516 in MVP funding to support a living shoreline solution in Gibson Park that includes marsh restoration and a waterfront walkway.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, the Barr Foundation awarded MyRWA \$950,000 over two years to provide professional staffing and direct expenses for the RMC, as well as to perform a program evaluation for its first three years. RMC staff include MyRWA deputy director Julie Wormser, climate resilience manager Melanie Gárate, and environmental resilience manager Catherine Pedemonti, and collaboration expert Carri Hulet (Principal, CH Consulting).

"The communities involved in the Resilient Mystic Collaborative have made tremendous progress over their first three years together," said Kalila Barnett, Climate Resilience Program Officer for the Barr Foundation. "Their watershed approach and focus on social resilience and regional projects need to be replicated across the Commonwealth. We are glad to be able to provide the resources to help communities work together to protect people and places from harm."

The RMC was recognized in June by the Environmental Business Council of New England with its Award for Leadership by a Non-Profit Organization. "EBC was pleased to present this award in recognition of the incredible partnership of the 20 communities in the Mystic River Watershed working together to protect their people and places from climate intensified risks," said incoming President & Executive Director Ann Gisinger. "The Collaborative has supported incredible projects and made steps to close the climate equity gaps among residents in the Mystic River Watershed."

"It can feel like there is not much to celebrate in the world of climate change, but the incredible partnership among the municipalities in the Resilient Mystic Collaborative is a true ray of hope," said Hulet. "The residents and workers in these 21 communities can take real comfort in knowing that their leaders are working together to build resilience to these changes."

For more information: [resilient.mysticriver.org](https://resilient.mysticriver.org)

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### **Mystic River Watershed at a Glance**

The 76-square-mile Mystic River Watershed stretches from Reading through the northern shoreline of Boston Harbor to Revere. An Anglicized version of the Pequot word *missi-tuk* ("large river with

wind- and tide-driven waves”), it is now one of New England’s most densely populated, urbanized watersheds.

The seven-mile Mystic River and its tributaries represented an early economic engine for colonial Boston. Ten shipyards built more than 500 clipper ships in the 1800s before roads and railways replaced schooners and steamships. Tide-driven mills, brickyards and tanneries along both banks of the river brought both wealth and pollution.

In the 1960s, the Amelia Earhart Dam transformed much of the river into a freshwater impoundment, while construction of Interstate 93 filled in wetlands and dramatically changed the river’s course. Since then, many former industrial sites have been cleaned up and redeveloped into new commercial areas and residential communities.

The Mystic is facing growing climate-related challenges: coastal and stormwater flooding, extreme storms, heat, drought and unpredictable seasonal weather. The watershed is relatively low-lying and extensively developed, making it prone to both freshwater and coastal flooding. Its 21 municipalities are home to a half-million residents, including many who are disproportionately vulnerable to extreme weather: environmental justice communities, new Americans, residents of color, elders, low-income residents and employees, people living with disabilities and English-language learners.