



Wading and Cocasset Rivers Project Cluster

What is this project?

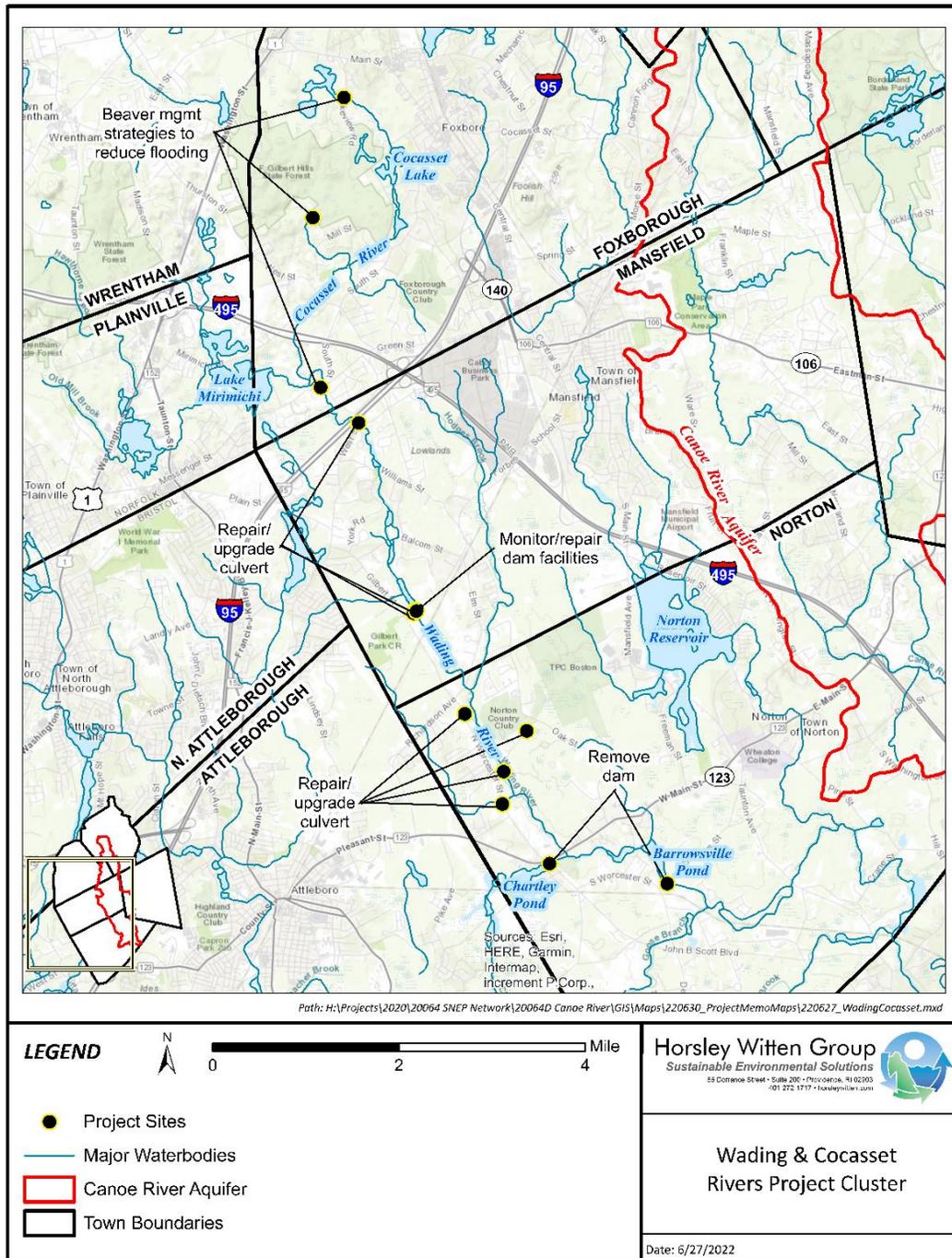
The Wading and Cocasset Rivers Project Cluster focuses on improving existing infrastructure and restoring drainage capacity to the areas immediately bordering the Cocasset River in Foxborough and the Wading River in Foxborough, Norton, and Mansfield, MA. The project includes assessments for seven culverts to determine if they are rightsized and could be transitioned to open bottom structures. Open bottom culverts use natural stream bed materials instead of a concrete bottom, providing improved fish passage and a more natural stream flow. Rightsizing the culverts will also ensure adequate flow to the waterways, minimizing infrastructure impacts during low and peak flows. The project also includes four dams which need to be assessed and repaired, of which two (the Chartley Pond and Barrowsville Pond Dams) are strong candidates for removal. Dam removals improve water quality by restoring natural temperature and river flows and reconnect habitats that benefit fish and wildlife. Dam removals can reduce threats to public safety and prevent flood damage to bridges, roads, and other downstream infrastructure. The project also includes two areas with reported flooding issues caused by beaver damming. The flooding has killed several trees in a White Cedar Swamp. Beaver deceivers (measures that prevent beavers from damming without harming the animals) and pond levelers (pipes that extend through beaver dams) should be considered to address this issue, and the area should be assessed for stormwater retrofits. Stormwater retrofits, including nature based solutions like rain gardens, can be implemented to minimize flooding, improve infiltration and drainage of runoff, and naturally treat pollution from stormwater. These improvements will enhance the health and sustainability of the Wading and Cocasset Rivers, as well as the surrounding areas. This river network is highly interconnected, and all three communities should partner together to coordinate interventions here. Isolated interventions could likely have unintended consequences both up and downstream.

Why is this project important for the environment and for Foxborough, Norton, and Mansfield?

- **Restoration of habitat.** Restoring how water naturally circulates through the Wading and Cocasset Rivers will help improve water quality and habitats for a variety of aquatic species and wildlife, including rare fish, and the area's functioning vernal pools.
- **Ecological benefits to the region.** Waterbodies and wetlands are interconnected. Restoration would help not only the Wading and Cocasset Rivers, but also other interconnected waters with critical habitats.
- **Improved flood storage.** Restoring how water naturally circulates through the Wading and Cocasset Rivers will protect the community from flooding by enabling the watercourses and surrounding vegetated land to absorb more stormwater runoff during storm events.
- **Protection against drought.** Restoring how water naturally circulates through the Wading and Cocasset Rivers, in addition to restoring surrounding drainage areas, will improve the ability of the floodplain to capture stormwater and store more groundwater, helping protect the region against future droughts when rainfall is low.



Figure 1. A segment of the Wading River in Norton, MA (MA Fish Finder).



If you care about this project, what should you do?

If you are interested in supporting efforts to make this project a reality, we encourage you to reach out to the Conservation Commission in Foxborough, Norton or Mansfield to voice your support. Let your community know that addressing this project should be a priority for the environment and for these communities!

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