

# **AN ACT ESTABLISHING A MYSTIC RIVER WATER QUALITY COMMISSION HOUSE BILL 841**

**Lead House sponsor: Representative Denise Provost  
Lead Senate sponsor: Senator Jarrett Barrios**

## **THE MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED**

The Mystic River watershed covers 76 sq. miles and includes all or parts of Arlington, Belmont, Burlington, Cambridge, Charlestown, Chelsea, East Boston, Everett, Lexington, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Revere, Somerville, Stoneham, Wakefield, Watertown, Wilmington, Winchester, Winthrop, and Woburn. Its water resources include the Mystic River itself, tributary rivers (the Aberjona River, Alewife Brook, Chelsea Creek, and the Malden River), numerous small streams, and many large and small lakes. The watershed is home to more than half a million people for whom the river could be a vital resource.

While the main stem of the Mystic is often clean enough for boating, and swimming is usually safe on Upper Mystic Lake, water quality throughout the basin suffers from urban runoff and industrial pollutants. Known pollutants include sewage and nutrients, especially in wet weather, and the levels of other pollutants have not yet been assessed. Sediments in many locations contain pollutants from the region's industrial past.

**The Mystic has become the most urbanized river in the Commonwealth, and its cities and towns include some of the state's most densely populated environmental justice communities. Most of the water bodies in the Mystic River watershed do not currently meet state water quality standards. A comprehensive strategy is needed to restore and protect this valuable urban resource.**

## **KEY PROVISIONS OF THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION**

- **Establishes the Mystic River Water Quality Commission:** The purpose of this special commission is to study the feasibility of bringing the water quality of the Mystic River to a level consistently safe enough for fishing, boating and swimming.
- **Investigation into Mystic River Water Quality:** The bill provides for the collection of new and existing data concerning the water quality of the Mystic River including: bacteria, viral, turbidity, clarity, water-borne sewage, toxins, water flow and flooding, sediment, and all other water quality and environmental parameters that may affect human exposure to water from the Mystic River.
- **Identification of Water Quality Improvement Methods:** The bill instructs the commission to identify technology and environmental and engineering solutions necessary to improve the water quality in the Mystic River, and to report the approximate cost of each proposed solution.
- **Designation of Possible Public Swimming and Boating Sites:** The commission would be charged with recommending potential areas along the Mystic River to develop for public swimming

For more information, please contact Representative Denise Provost  
at [denise.provost@state.ma.us](mailto:denise.provost@state.ma.us) or 617-722-2810

and boating, creating more recreational opportunities.

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