

[Homepage](#) 

# Flood relief coming to Alewife Brook

**Mon Jul 16, 2007, 01:26 PM EDT**

CAMBRIDGE - Citizens in low-lying neighborhoods along the Mystic River and Alewife Brook, from Winchester and Belmont to Everett, may, in the long term, see some relief from flooding as a result of a new initiative in this year's state budget.

Rep. Paul Donato of Medford, chairman of the House Committee on Steering and Policy, announced the appropriation of \$100,000 to take first steps toward improving the pumping capacity of the Amelia Earhart Dam.

The Amelia Earhart Dam seals the end of the Mystic River in Everett from the high tides of Boston Harbor. The water in the Mystic River and Alewife Brook is maintained at about mid-tide level, all the way out to Little Pond in Belmont and the Lower Mystic Lake at the Arlington/Medford line. When rain has been heavy and the tide is high and the dam is closed, water can pile up behind the dam.

Donato said, "Studies done for the town of Winchester suggest that an additional pump could make a difference in flooding. These funds will allow the state to verify those studies and evaluate the feasibility of adding a pump."

Donato was the lead signer of a letter to the Legislature's House and Senate Ways and Means committees earlier this year that requested the funds. The letter was also signed by all of the representatives and senators along the Mystic River.

Rep. Paul Casey of Winchester said, "Winchester has a severe flooding problem and we have been working hard to solve it for several years. Our work suggests that an additional pump could draw down flooding in the Belmont to Medford stretch of the watershed. That, in turn, would allow us to implement measures that will give us some relief upstream."

Rep. Jim Marzilli of Arlington and Medford, said, "The Sunnyside neighborhood of Arlington, at the confluence of the Mystic and the Alewife, has some of the worst flooding in the area. I'm committed to taking every step possible to solve this problem."

Marzilli noted that another important improvement in flooding would come from the rebuilding of the Craddock Bridge over the Mystic in Medford Square. "Rep. Donato and I feel that the new bridge will significantly increase the clear opening to draw down flooding through the bridge."

Clarissa Rowe, an Arlington selectman and the current chairman of the Arlington-Belmont-Cambridge Storm Water Flooding Board, said that the other key element of flood control along the Alewife Brook and in the Mystic River is the simple maintenance of the channels, especially around the bridges. "Obstructions caused by branches and other debris can make flooding much worse. We are pleased that the Department of Conservation and Recreation has affirmed its commitment to channel maintenance."

Rep. Denise Provost of Somerville welcomed the initiative, saying, "Periodic flooding in Somerville is known to be related to operation of the Earhart dam." Provost, sponsor of a bill to improve Mystic River quality, also said, "Controlling flooding and improving water quality go hand-in-hand. Flooding contributes to sewage overflows which, in turn, lower water quality. What makes flooding in the Mystic basin so bad is the fact that these flood waters are typically contaminated with sewage."

Rep. Stat Smith of Everett said he wants to see the feasibility study results and confirm that improving the pumping capacity will benefit Everett and have no side effects. He said, "This initiative is a careful step forward and I am satisfied that we'll be able to know where we stand before going further."

Sens. Bob Havern, Steven Tolman and Pat Jehlen, who also joined in the original letter, all indicated their support for the initiative. Tolman is vice-chairman of the Senate Ways and Means Committee and served on the conference committee that finalized the budget. Havern said, "This is a complex problem. We are now coming together to connect the dots and create long-term watershed-wide initiatives."

Rep. Will Brownsberger of Belmont, a past chairman of the Arlington-Belmont-Cambridge Storm Water Flooding Board, said, "This progress reflects the hard work of many caring people. We all look forward to working with the Department of Conservation and Recreation to make this initiative successful. We are also hopeful that by changing operating protocols for the dam, we can reduce flooding risks even before a new pump is added."

WEB BROWSING REDEFINED  FIREFOX 2