



Massachusetts Water Resources Authority



City of Cambridge



City of Somerville

**April 2006**

## ***JOINT PUBLIC NOTICE*** **Alewife Brook Combined Sewer Overflows Progress Update**

This notice as required by DEP, is an annual update on the progress of Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) control measures undertaken to improve the water quality of Alewife Brook. Discharges to Alewife Brook originate in the watershed communities of Belmont, Arlington, Cambridge and Somerville, all of which are undertaking programs to identify and control sources of pollution.

You are also receiving this notice if your property lies in the extended floodplain of Alewife Brook.

The water quality of Alewife Brook is often impaired due to bacteria and other pollutants from a number of sources, including cross connections between sanitary sewers and storm drains, urban stormwater runoff and CSOs. During both wet and dry weather, Alewife Brook generally fails to meet state bacteria standards for fishing and swimming.

Portions of Cambridge and Somerville are served by combined stormwater and sanitary sewer systems common in older cities. There are now eight CSO outfalls along Alewife Brook that release untreated discharges during moderate and heavy rainfall. These discharges relieve the sewer system, preventing sewage backups into homes, businesses and streets.

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) in conjunction with the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville are in the process of designing and constructing several CSO projects that when completed will significantly reduce combined sewer overflows (CSOs) into the Alewife Brook. These efforts are required by a federal court order issued to the MWRA for the Boston Harbor clean up. MWRA, along with the affected CSO communities, is implementing 26 different CSO control projects along Boston Harbor, the Mystic, Charles and Neponset Rivers and Alewife Brook.

Work already completed by the MWRA, Cambridge and Somerville over the last several years has noticeably reduced the number of CSO events and the total volume discharged to the brook. MWRA and Somerville closed four CSO outfalls through CSO control efforts.

The current project under design is Cambridge's planned stormwater outfall and treatment wetland associated with sewer separation work in the neighborhood east of Fresh Pond Reservation. In April 2005, a DEP issued Superseding Order of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act was appealed by a group of 10 residents. The case was transferred to the Division of Administrative Law Appeals (DALA) and is currently under review. The start of construction is dependent upon receiving the final wetlands permit approval from DALA. A decision is anticipated in June 2006.

For more information on CSOs and the CSO abatement program, contact MWRA at (617) 788-1170 or visit their website at [www.mwra.state.ma.us](http://www.mwra.state.ma.us) or visit the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville websites at [www.cambridgema.gov/~TheWorks](http://www.cambridgema.gov/~TheWorks) and [www.ci.somerville.ma.us](http://www.ci.somerville.ma.us).

Updated information on water quality in the Alewife Brook watershed can be found at the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) website, [www.mysticriver.org](http://www.mysticriver.org) and at a “real time” site co-sponsored by the City of Somerville and MyRWA at [www.mysticriveronline.org](http://www.mysticriveronline.org).

It is important to understand that floodwaters in all cases can present health risks, and proper precautions are necessary to minimize these risks during flooding events. Public health officials recommend avoiding contact with the Brook during rainstorms and for 48 hours afterwards, as there may be increased health risks due to bacteria or other pollutants. The Department of Environmental Protection has developed guidance for responding to flooding or sewer backups for homeowners, which can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/laws/flooding.htm>

Available on-line at: [www.mwra.com](http://www.mwra.com) and [www.cambridgema.gov/~TheWorks](http://www.cambridgema.gov/~TheWorks).

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## CSO Outfalls along the Little River/Alewife Brook

