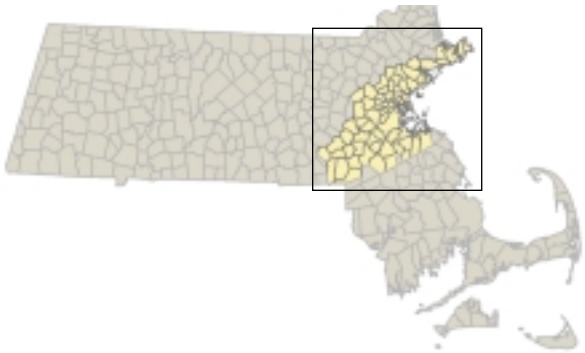
THE GREATER BOSTON WATERSHEDS

The Greater Boston Watershed Region is the most urbanized region in Massachusetts, yet it is full of vibrant open spaces for recreation and hosts a wealth of rare and endangered habitat. The region also boasts a long history of open space protection including the first public park in the United States, the Boston Common in 1630, a network of landscaped parks created by world renowned Frederick Law Olmsted, and a multitude of parks owned and managed by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), including the 11-square mile Blue Hills Reservation. The continued maintenance of these parks is essential to ensure their long-term sustainability. The reclamation of Brownfield's, or underutilized parcels, provides great opportunities to expand open spaces in this region. There are currently projects to expand greenways on each of the six rivers (Neponset, Charles, Mystic, Weir, Weymouth, and Saugus Rivers) that comprise the Greater Boston Watershed Region. There are also efforts to create greenways along Boston Harbor including East Boston.

Boston Harbor and its rivers are still a key part of the economic livelihood and quality of life of the region. The restoration of the waters of Boston Harbor, the creation of the Harbor Islands National Park Area, and the creation of nearly 30 acres of new parks near the Harbor and along the Charles River are a key to the future quality of life in Boston.

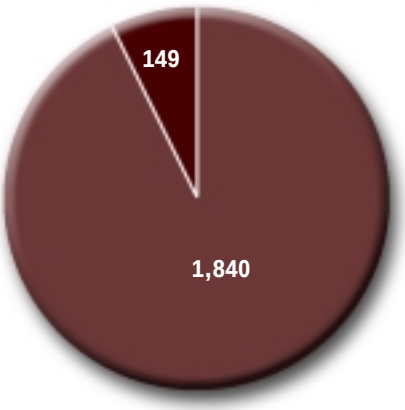
The nearly 2,000 acres recently protected in this urban region represent a success for the wide range of conservation partners who work in this urban region. Over the next several years,



EOEA, in partnership with land trusts and local communities, hopes to enhance the open-space network of the Boston Basin. The MDC is working to extend its parks along the Charles and Neponset Rivers so there is an unbroken greenway from Boston Harbor to beyond Route 128. MDC is working to finalize the few acquisitions to complete the 550-acre Stony Brook Reservation. The 30,000-acre Saugus River Greenway is one of six land conservation focus areas that EOEA has designated across the state. MDC and DEM hope to extend the Saugus River Greenway to the Reedy Meadow, an extensive wetland at the river's headwaters. The National Park Service has designated the 500-acre Reedy Meadow as a National Natural Landmark because it contains seven state-listed rare species. EOEA is also working with municipal and non-profit partners to protect large blocks of land in the upper Charles Watershed.

Greater Boston Land Protection Summary

ACRES

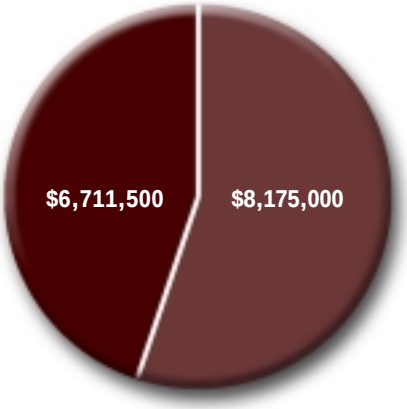


Total Acres: 1,989

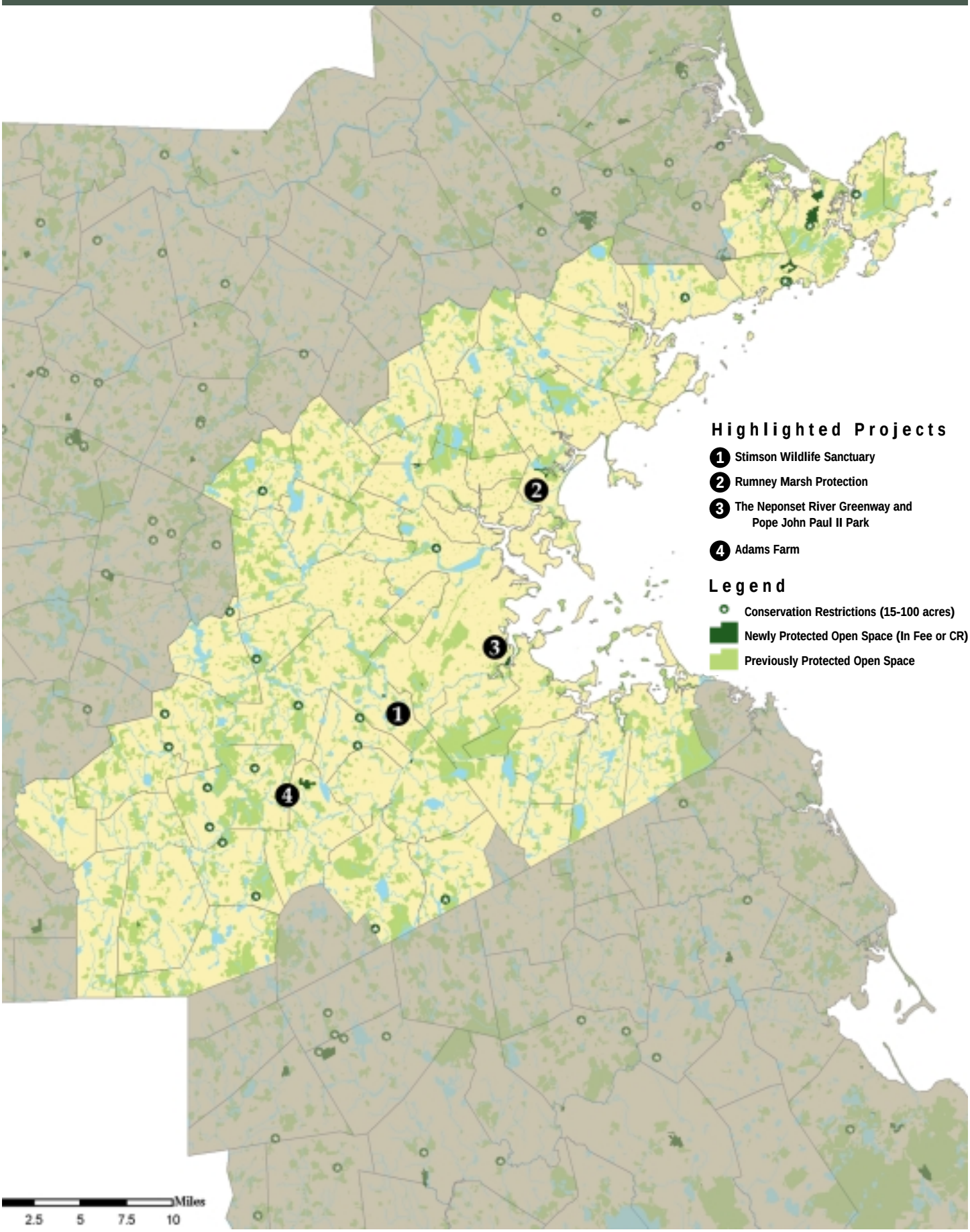
AGENCY

Total Projects: 91

STATE FUNDS



Total Funds: $14,886,500


Highlighted Projects
1 Stimson Wildlife Sanctuary
2 Rumney Marsh Protection
3 The Neponset River Greenway and Pope John Paul II Park
4 Adams Farm
Legend
Conservation Restrictions (15-100 acres)
Newly Protected Open Space (In Fee or CR)
Previously Protected Open Space
Miles
2.5
5
7.5
10

STIMSON WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

MDC • Dedham • 20 acres • Fee • $75,000

In July 2001, the MDC acquired 20 acres of land in two locations along the Charles River from the Dedham Historical Society. The larger of the two sites, known locally as the Stimson Wildlife Sanctuary, is a remarkable natural area. It protects over 17 acres of freshwater wetlands, 1,500 feet of riverbank, and a small forested upland that offers Charles River Reservation users a quiet respite from nearby Route 1.

The smaller parcel off Pleasant Street supports a strong regional demand for water-based recreational uses of the Charles River. Once the home of the Dedham Boat Club, this site preserves a century-old tradition of recreational boating along the river. With its acquisition by the MDC, future generations will be assured easy access to the river for car top boats, canoes, and kayaks.

This acquisition complemented a multi-year effort to protect open space within the Charles River Watershed. Since 1991, the MDC has permanently protected 28 properties, for a total of 514 new acres of open space within the Charles River Basin. These acquisitions help connect the Commonwealth's citizens with one of America's most important rivers. These acquisitions further EOEA's goal of protecting the state's river corridors for their scenic, historic, and natural values.

RUMNEY MARSH PROTECTION

MDC • Revere, Saugus • 76.5 acres • Fee • $275,000

With three recent transactions within and adjoining the Rumney Marsh Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), the MDC continues its efforts to secure conservation protection of Greater Boston's largest coastal estuary.

The most important of these three sites is a 72-acre transfer from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) of the unbuilt section of Interstate 95 in Revere. This acquisition secures conservation protection for the "Camel's Hump," a rare and important wooded knoll off busy Route 107. The MHD transfer also protects acres of recently restored shellfish beds and coastal wetlands. Rumney Marsh has been called "the epicenter of coastal wetlands restoration in the Commonwealth." This multi-agency project offers strong testimony to the Commonwealth's commitment to restoring and protecting its coastal wetlands.

The two smaller recent acquisitions, one in the Oak Island section of Revere and one near Baker Hill in Saugus, secured conservation protection for ecosystems adjoining the ACEC. These ecological transition zones – where habitat shifts from wetland to upland – are vital to the biological diversity of the marshes.

THE NEPONSET RIVER GREENWAY AND POPE JOHN PAUL II PARK

MDC • Dorchester • 2,235 feet of river frontage
Fee and CR • $4,200,000

Since October of 1998, the MDC has been actively acquiring and restoring land within the Neponset River Watershed. With a special focus on protecting lands that connect urban users to the river, the MDC has successfully protected 2,235 feet of riverbank in Dorchester in three separate transactions. All three projects relate directly to the Neponset River Greenway and the 2.5-mile multi-use Neponset River Trail, which links Pope John Paul II Park to other estuary resources owned and managed by the MDC.

The $8,000,000 transformation of Pope John Paul II Park, from a previously acquired abandoned drive-in and an old landfill, began in earnest in 1998. It is an impressive example of waterfront restoration. The multi-use fields, playground area, and walking trails are already drawing large crowds. Pope John Paul II Park also includes picnic sites, passive use areas, and restored wetlands.

The MDC's efforts to acquire and restore lands along the banks of the Neponset River have renewed the Dorchester waterfront. These investments strengthen the quality of life in this urban neighborhood and help build relationships between city dwellers and the natural areas that make up the Neponset River Reservation.

ADAMS FARM

DCS • Walpole • 122 acres • Grant
$300,000 DCS, $2,530,000 total cost

In 1998, the Town of Walpole had the extraordinary opportunity to purchase the 293-acre Adams Farm in northern end of the town. Walpole received a $300,000 Self-Help grant from the DCS toward the purchase in fee simple of a 122-acre portion of the farm. This portion of the farm was formally dedicated for conservation use, and was of particular interest to the Self-Help program because it protected rare species habitat as well as the town's drinking water supply, and contained two vernal pools. In addition, the Adams Farm abuts Farm abuts other forested properties protected by CRs, and is in close proximity to the Bay Circuit Trail.

A property of this size, location, and road frontage not only attracted the town as a potential buyer, but many real estate developers as well. However, the town had previously identified Adams Farm as a high priority parcel for future protection in its Open Space and Recreation Plan, and was willing and able to move quickly to acquire the farm when it became available for purchase. The sheer size of the parcel allowed the town to satisfy other municipal land use needs, while preserving the most sensitive natural resources on the property.