

BLACKSTONE RIVER COMMONS HIGHLIGHTS WATERSHED NEEDS THROUGH 60-MILE PADDLE EXPEDITION AND PUBLIC EVENTS

WORCESTER MA - PROVIDENCE RI AUGUST 1, 2022: The Blackstone River is a commons – a resource shared by the community, to be kept open and protected for future generations. This is an exciting year for the Blackstone River – it marks the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, the primary driver of our cleaner water today, as well as [ZAP the Blackstone](#), the largest one-day regional environmental cleanup in U.S. history, where 10,000 volunteers removed 10,000 tons of debris from the river. Recently, the [Blackstone Watershed Collaborative](#) was created at [Clark University](#) to bring partners together and solve water quality and climate resilience challenges in the region, as identified in the recently published [Blackstone Needs Assessment Report](#). Designers and faculty from [the Rhode Island School of Design \(RISD\)](#) and [Counterform Studio](#) are working with the Collaborative and other water and community advocates, including the [Friends of the Blackstone](#), [Save the Bay](#), and others to find creative ways to connect people to the river. The goal is to acknowledge and celebrate the work that has been done in the past and identify the work that remains to create a vibrant, resilient and diverse future for the river.

Current challenges such as climate impacts, stormwater runoff, invasive species, equitable river access, and fish passage require varied strategies to solve, but they also count on public support, active stewardship, and engaged decision makers. To bring attention to these challenges as well as opportunities to work together to solve them, the group is organizing a [60-mile paddle](#) from the headwaters of the Blackstone in Worcester, MA through its connection to the Seekonk River and on to the Narragansett Bay in Providence, RI from **August 11 - August 14, 2022**. Each day will offer new perspectives, stops to discuss specific issues, and an opportunity to highlight the diverse voices and issues along the river.

Thursday, August 11: The group will kick off the paddle at 9am with a press event at the Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center (3 Paul Clancy Way Worcester, MA 01607). Several speakers, including MA State Representative Dan Donahue, Representative Mary Keefe, Worcester Department of Public Works Commissioner Jay Fink, and Save the Bay Advocacy Director Topher Hamblett will give remarks on the challenges of climate change and impervious surfaces in flooding, the need for nature-based solutions, and how integrated water management can improve watershed conditions. The group will then launch their expedition, paddling from Worcester to Grafton, MA.

Friday, August 12: The paddlers will make their way to Uxbridge, MA for a free, family-friendly public RiverFest from 3-7pm at River Bend Farm Visitor Center (287 Oak St, Uxbridge, MA 01569), held in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. All are invited to this festival featuring food trucks, craft beer, live music, games and interactive community activities to discuss access to the river. This event will draw attention to the issues facing the Blackstone River and provide ways to get involved with ongoing community initiatives, as well as an opportunity to recreate along this accessible stretch of river. From Uxbridge, the team will continue to Blackstone, MA.

Saturday, August 13: On Saturday, the paddle will highlight water quality issues on the river. The group will meet with the Blackstone River Coalition's Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program that collects and analyzes water samples from the Blackstone River and its tributaries the second Saturday of each month. They will also meet with 18 wastewater treatment plant operators to paddle from

Woonsocket to Manville. Operators will paddle a portion of the river and discuss shared goals of promoting healthy water quality for people and wildlife.

Sunday, August 14: On the final day, the group will begin with a discussion about aging dams and fish passage at Slater Mills at 10:00. Following that, the public is invited to join the last leg of the paddle from Pawtucket to Providence. Canoes are available on a first come-first serve basis or bring your own boat; sign up at [blackstonecollaborative.org](https://www.blackstonecollaborative.org) by August 9. All are welcome at the final celebration hosted by Narragansett Brewing (271 Tockwotton St, Providence, RI 02903) at 4pm, with a screening of the short film [Kittacuck Speaks](#). Speakers at 4:30 will commemorate the expedition and set the stage for the work to come, including RI Senator Jack Reed, EPA Regional Administrator David Cash, RI Department of Environmental Management Director Terry Gray, and Narragansett Bay Estuary Program's Executive Director Mike Gerel.

For more information, contact Stefanie Covino at scovino@clarku.edu or visit <https://www.blackstonecollaborative.org/commons>