



WESTPORT RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

Working together to protect and preserve the Westport River Watershed now and for future generations

July 11, 2023

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

R. Michael Sullivan
President

Joop Nagtegaal
Vice President

Gigi Priebe
Vice President Development

Sean Mullaney
Treasurer

Harold Cooper
Secretary

Wendy Nicholas Dorsey
Joanne Leary
Mark Luttmann
Nancy Mobley
Paul Mooney
Katharine Rosenfeld
Ken Short
Don Swift
Cindy Wilson

STAFF

Deborah Weaver
Executive Director

Kim Botelho
Education Director

Roberta Carvalho
Science Director

Steve Connors
Community Engagement Manager

Jennifer Lynch
Development and Finance

Michaelah Vasconcellos
Environmental Educator

Dear Representatives Michlewitz, Cusack and Soter and Senators Rodrigues, Moran and Tarr:

We, the 36 undersigned, are writing regarding H.3770/S.2406, *An Act to improve the Commonwealth's competitiveness, affordability, and equity* currently before this conference committee.

We ask for inclusion of Sections 10-14 of S.2046 in the conference committee's final report, language amending the current septic system tax credit. This language will increase the current septic system tax credit, mitigating the cost to homeowners who replace their failed cesspool or septic systems with a system consistent with the current State Environmental Code. The proposed increase in the credit reflects the increase in septic system design and installation costs since the current statute was enacted nearly 30 years ago. The Senate version (Sections 10-14, inclusive, of S. 2406) builds upon similar language included in the Governor's tax relief package.

As leading environmental organizations and municipal public health agencies concerned for the health of Massachusetts' waters, we know that properly functioning septic systems are essential to the quality of communities' drinking water, to swimmable, fishable rivers, streams, ponds, bays and oceans, and to the health of entire watersheds. Many communities across the Commonwealth – particularly the more rural and less densely developed communities – rely on septic systems, rather than sewers, to treat their waste water. In the 25+ years since the current septic tax credit was adopted, the cost of fixing failed systems has increased dramatically, while the current credit is subject to limitations that are no longer appropriate.

Here is a summary of the language in Senate Bill 2406, Sections 10-14 . . . changes to the current septic system tax credit, Chapter 62, Section 6(i):

- Increases the % of design and construction cost for upgrades or replacements of failed cesspools and other septic systems eligible for the credit from 40% to 60%;
- Deletes the current statute's reference to the 1995 Title 5 regulations and inserts "the State Environmental Code;"
- Increases the maximum system upgrade cost eligible for a rebate from \$15,000 to \$30,000;
- Increases the maximum annual credit from \$1,500 to \$4,000; and
- Increases the maximum amount of credit carryover over a 5-year period from \$6,000 to \$18,000.

We ask for the inclusion of Sections 10 -14 of S.2406 in the conference committee's report of H.3770/S.2406, *An Act to improve the Commonwealth's competitiveness, affordability, and equity.*

Sincerely yours,

Deborah Weaver, Executive Director
Westport River Watershed Alliance

Mark Rasmussen, President
Buzzards Bay Coalition

Richard Delaney, Executive Director
Center for Coastal Studies

Bradley Campbell, President
Conservation Law Foundation

Jen Ryan, Deputy Director of Advocacy
Charles River Watershed Association

Ron Rhodes, Interim Executive Director
Connecticut River Conservancy

Jen Mergel, James & Audrey Foster Executive Director
Esplanade Association

Aimee Petras, Executive Director
Farmington River Watershed Association

Brian Yellen, President
Fort River Watershed Association

Eric Grunebaum, Director/Cofounder
Friends of Jerry's Pond (Cambridge)

Karen Buck, President
Friends of the Malden River

Mike Yeomans, President
Greater Boston Trout Unlimited

Lynn Werner, Executive Director
Housatonic Valley Association

Wayne Castonguay, Executive Director
Ipswich River Watershed Association

Pine duBois, Executive Director
Jones River Watershed Association

Sam Anderson, Director of Legislative and Government Affairs
Mass Audubon

Julia Blatt, Executive Director
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Ivan Ussach, Director
Millers River Watershed Council

Caroline Reeves, Co-Founder
Muddy Water Initiative

Patrick Herron, Executive Director
Mystic River Watershed Association

Kerry Malloy Snyder, JD, Advocacy Director
Neponset River Watershed Association

Alison Field-Juma, Executive Director
OARS

Rob Moir, PhD, Executive Director
Ocean River Institute, Inc.

Kate McPherson, Narragansett Bay Riverkeeper
Save The Bay

Tom Bell, President
Straits Pond Watershed Association

Anne Slugg, Chair and Sudbury Representative
Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Wild and Scenic River Stewardship Council

Joseph Callahan, President
Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Steve Long, Director of Policy and Partnerships
The Nature Conservancy in Massachusetts

Linda Orel, Sr. Director of Government Relations

The Trustees of Reservations

Keven Desmarais, Health Agent

Town of Freetown

Edward Cullen, Health Agent

Town of Lakeville

Lori Desmarais, Director of Public Health

Town of Marion

Gail Joseph, Health Agent

Town of Mattapoisett

Karen Walega, Health Director

Town of Rochester

Matthew Armendo, Director, Board of Health

Town of Westport

Lundy Bancroft

Western Massachusetts Rights of Nature