



An act to create the Merrimack River Collaborative

SD.701 & HD.3935

Sponsored by Senator Bruce Tarr and Representative Dawne Shand

Merrimack River water quality degradation

The Merrimack River is a **coveted natural resource**, connecting and defining communities throughout Northeastern Massachusetts and serving as a source of cultural, ecological, and recreational value for all who engage in its many uses. However, the interconnected nature of this resources also ensures that degradation in one location can have impacts at a regional level.

The Merrimack River has a long history of flourishing commerce, trade, and economic growth with its roots in the Industrial Revolution. However, due to limited knowledge on protections against illicit discharges during this time, the revolution inadvertently caused pollution and degradation of the river. In recognition of this degradation, the Clean Water Act of the early 1970s was passed, which banned untreated sewage from entering the Merrimack River and established Wastewater Treatment facilities along the river, improving water quality significantly.

Wastewater Treatment facilities did not solve all water quality problems associated with the river. The combined sewer design of these facilities allowed for the proliferation of **Combined Sewage Overflow events (CSOs)** - instances during heavy rainfall when the volume of sewage and rain exceeds system capacity, causing untreated stormwater and wastewater to discharge directly into the river. Other emergent pollutants, including microplastics and PFAs, also continue to pose a threat to the river's water quality and the health of those who interface with it.

The Merrimack River Collaborative

The Merrimack River Collaborative (MRC) is a community based group composed of municipal officials, state legislators, and subject matter experts, spearheading the improvement of water quality and the revitalization of the Merrimack River. Led by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, the Merrimack River Watershed Council, and the Northern Essex Council of Governments, this group intends to be a clearinghouse of knowledge, data, resources, and funding opportunities related to the river's water quality.

This legislation will formalize the Merrimack River Collaborative and support their ongoing efforts to coordinate the monitoring and improvement of water quality along the Merrimack River to enhance the health of river adjacent communities. The MRC represents the communities of Amesbury, Andover, Merrimac, Dracut, Groveland, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell, Methuen, Newbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Salisbury, Tewksbury, and West Newbury and will connect them with funding sources, application support, public education, pertinent data, and a space to work towards regional solutions to water quality related issues.

The Merrimack River Collaborative: Because those who live, work, and play along the Merrimack River deserve a collaborative as interconnected as their coveted natural resource.

