

Construction Begins on Pine Tree Brook Water Quality Project

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Milton, MA — With any luck, Pine Tree Brook will receive a major gift in time for Christmas. Construction is slated to begin Thanksgiving week on a series of water quality improvement structures along the Brook between Blue Hill Parkway and Thacher Street. If the weather cooperates, the first phase of construction should be finished by Christmas.

Cali Corporation of Natick will be building three “bioretention cells” along the north side of the Brook. The cells are essentially depressions built along the riverbank that are filled with special soils and plants. Polluted water from the streets will now be directed into the bioretention cells; previously, it was piped straight into the Brook. The polluted water will soak into the depressions, leaving behind its pollutants to be naturally broken-down by plants, microorganisms and the soil. Clean water will then percolate out of the depressions and into the Brook.

On the other side of the Brook, another large storm drain that currently dumps polluted water into the Brook will be diverted into a restored wetland area, actually the historic streambed, which was abandoned years ago when the Brook was straightened. Much like the bioretention cells, the restored wetland will filter the polluted water before it reaches the Brook. Soils, microorganisms and plants will catch and break down pollutants.

The major concern in the Pine Tree Brook area is bacterial water pollution caused by pet waste and garbage that is left on streets, paths and sidewalks. When it rains, the waste—along with fertilizers, oil and other pollutants—is washed into catch basins along the streets. From there, the storm drain system carries the polluted water, untreated, to the Brook.

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This stormwater treatment project is being undertaken through a joint effort of the Neponset River Watershed Association and the Town of Milton, using a major grant from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and additional matching funds from a variety of sources.

In addition to the construction effort, there is a parallel education campaign aimed at getting pet owners to clean-up after their furry friends, not only along Pine Tree Brook but also throughout the Town of Milton. This past spring, literature was distributed door-to-door throughout the Pine Tree Brook neighborhood. Pet owners who pledged to clean-up after their dogs were given special tags to put on their pets' collars, announcing that their pet is a member of the "Pine Tree Brook Chapter of the Dogs for Clean Water Club."

This past spring, Milton also adopted a bylaw making it illegal to leave behind pet waste and imposing fines for violators. And, within water and sewer bills, Milton residents have also received information from the Milton Department of Public Works about pet waste pollution. Additional measures to encourage pet owners to clean-up their act are planned for next spring.

Attached Photo: From left to right: Construction Contractor Paul Chouinard, Consulting Engineer Marcus Quigley, Town Engineer John Thompson, Town Conservation Agent Kara Barry and Watershed Association Executive Director Ian Cooke take a final walk-through along Pine Tree Brook before construction of the water quality improvement project begins.

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