Resilient Neponset Policy Toolkit

Neponset River Watershed Communities

Boston (Hyde Park, Mattapan & Dorchester) • Canton • Dedham • Dover • Foxborough • Medfield • Milton • Norwood • Quincy • Randolph • Sharon • Stoughton • Walpole • Westwood

About the Resilient Neponset Policy Toolkit as a Web Tool

The Resilient Neponset Policy Toolkit is an interactive web-based resource designed to help municipal planners, conservation staff, and local officials in the fourteen Neponset River Watershed communities review, update, and strengthen their local policies for climate resilience. The tool translates technical best practices, grounded in the Neponset Region Flood Model (NRFM) where possible, into practical, actionable guidance tailored to the watershed's specific flood, heat, and stormwater risks.

The web tool will be organized into **eight interconnected sections**:

The **Hazard Navigator** allows users to select one or more climate hazards- such as flooding, extreme heat, drought, etc. and be immediately directed to the most relevant policy tools through a visual decision matrix.

The **Diagnostic Self-Assessment** enables municipalities to score their existing policies across four dimensions - climate-specific language, NRFM/flood risk integration, green infrastructure provisions, and environmental justice considerations - generating a live resilience score and a prioritized list of recommended actions.

The **Policy Guidance** section provides detailed, expandable modules for eight policy tools: Stormwater regulation, Wetlands protection, Floodplain Overlay Districts, Subdivision regulations, Tree Preservation and Canopy Expansion, Managed Retreat Planning, Climate-Resilient Site Plan Review, and Reducing Barriers to Green Infrastructure. Each module includes tabs explaining why the policy matters, what to look for in existing language, how to update it, and specific policy design elements presented as expandable dropdowns.

The **Equity** section outlines environmental justice principles that apply across all policy updates, such that all municipalities can consider framing their policies through this lens.

The **Example Library** is a growing, filterable collection of model policy language and guidance, and real examples from comparable Massachusetts communities, organized by policy type.

Supporting sections cover **Grants & Funding** opportunities to help municipalities undertake regulatory updates, and a **Phased Next Steps** guide with a four-phase action sequence from assessment through adoption and monitoring.

This document contains the full text content of the web tool in an editable format for review, internal circulation and coordination for developing the web tool.

HOME PAGE: Neponset Watershed Context and How to Use

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is a practical, action-oriented resource designed to help municipalities in the **Neponset River Watershed** evaluate and strengthen local policies that support climate resilience. Drawing on watershed-specific climate hazard modeling, it translates established resilience planning best practices into actionable guidance tailored to the region's fourteen communities, with a focus on key risks such as flooding, extreme heat, and stormwater impacts.

Users can begin with a brief self-assessment to identify local priorities and regulatory needs. From there, the toolkit offers a flexible, 'choose-your-path' approach, allowing users to explore recommended policy and regulatory strategies based on the specific climate hazards they wish to address. Each pathway includes best practices, implementation considerations, and examples from peer communities to support informed decision-making.

Intended Users

- Planning Directors, Town Planners, and Zoning Administrators
- Conservation Commissions and staff
- Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals
- Select Boards, City Councils, and municipal leadership
- Stormwater program managers and Department of Public Works Directors
- Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA) staff and regional planning partners

Relationship to the Neponset Climate Collaborative Workplan

This Policy Toolkit directly supports Priority Action 7 of the Resilient Neponset Climate Collaborative Workplan: '***Conduct a bylaw review across the region to identify regulations that address regional vulnerabilities and priorities and support towns in implementing regulatory updates.'***

The toolkit serves as a starting point for municipalities seeking to assess and strengthen local regulations and identify gaps related to climate resilience, environmental protection, and community adaptation. Because many climate-related challenges including flooding, extreme heat, stormwater management, and ecosystem degradation cross municipal boundaries, coordinated regional action is critical. This resource helps communities identify some policy approaches and regulatory strategies that address shared watershed-wide vulnerabilities while remaining adaptable to local conditions and priorities.

By providing model approaches, examples of effective policies and implementation guidance, the toolkit helps communities translate regional climate goals into practical local action.

About the NRFM (Click for Model Here)

The Neponset Region Flood Model (NRFM) is a high-resolution hydraulic and hydrologic model covering the entire Neponset River watershed. It provides community-specific data on current and projected flood extents under various storm and climate scenarios. Throughout this toolkit,

recommendations reference NRFM outputs as the preferred basis for identifying locally relevant flood risk areas, supplementing the FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs).

Additionally, by June 30, 2027, this model will include mapping of Urban Heat Island (UHI) impacts around the watershed, using both publicly available data, as well as community-specific data based on heat and humidity sensors deployed around the watershed during Spring and Summer months of 2026.

About the Neponset River Watershed

The Neponset River Watershed encompasses approximately 117 square miles of eastern Massachusetts, draining through 14 municipalities before emptying into Dorchester Bay and Boston Harbor. The watershed includes a mix of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes - from the dense neighborhoods of Hyde Park, Mattapan, and Dorchester to the more rural towns of Dover and Medfield.

The watershed faces mounting climate pressures, including:

- Increased frequency and intensity of precipitation events leading to riverine and flash flooding
- Expansion of flood-prone areas as storm return frequencies shift under climate change
- Elevated risks for Environmental Justice (EJ) communities concentrated in lower-elevation, historically underinvested areas such as parts of Hyde Park, Mattapan, Dorchester, Randolph, and Norwood
- Urban heat island effects compounding flood vulnerability and heat in densely developed areas
- Lack of shade and access to air-conditioning
- Degraded wetlands and impervious surfaces reducing the watershed's natural capacity to absorb stormwater

Why Local Policies Matter

Massachusetts municipalities have significant authority over land use and development. Local bylaws and regulations are among the most powerful and durable tools available to watershed communities to:

- Prevent new development from increasing flood exposure
- Require green infrastructure and low-impact development practices that reduce runoff and heat island effects
- Guide long-term managed retreat of uses away from highest-risk areas
- Protect and restore wetlands and riparian buffers that buffer flood peaks
- Protect and restore open space to reduce impervious surfaces and enhance local cooling
- Remove regulatory barriers that currently prevent property owners from making climate-resilient improvements

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Climate pressures

- Increased frequency and intensity of precipitation and flooding
- Expanding flood-prone areas under climate change
- Urban heat island effects intensify extreme heat
- Imperviousness compounds flood vulnerability.
- Elevated risks for EJ populations, especially in low-lying areas since they are more susceptible to flooding from stormwater runoff.

Why local policies matter

- ✓ Prevent new development from increasing flood exposure
- ✓ Require green infrastructure and LID practices
- ✓ Guide long-term retreat from highest-risk areas
- ✓ Protect and restore wetlands and riparian buffers
- ✓ Remove policy barriers to climate-resilient improvements

EQUITY TAB: Leading with Equity in the Neponset Watershed

The majority of the Neponset watershed's Environmental Justice (EJ) population is in the Lower Neponset, particularly in Hyde Park and Mattapan. These downstream communities face significant climate-related risks, including flooding, and EJ communities have historically been burdened by development patterns that place them at disproportionate risk from climate change impacts. Regulatory updates that fail to consider equity can inadvertently harm the very communities most vulnerable to climate change- through displacement, increased housing costs, or regulatory burdens that make affordable housing harder to build.

Environmental Justice Communities in the Neponset Watershed

11 out of 14 municipalities within the Neponset River Watershed contain designated Environmental Justice communities. These census blocks are so designated based on the number of residents of color, lower income residents, those with lower English proficiency or a combination thereof. However, these designations don't tell the entire story. Climate vulnerable residents live in all of our communities. These include not only the environmental justice criteria, but also seniors, youth, those living with disabilities and those living in flood-prone neighborhoods, to name a few. Therefore any policy update anywhere should consider equity principles and ensure that policies do not exacerbate existing burdens on or cause new burdens for those residents.

Equity Principles for Regulatory Updates

1. Build Community Buy-In Through Early Engagement

- Engage residents, businesses, and community organizations before drafting regulations.
- Use accessible meeting locations, times, and formats.
- Clearly communicate policy goals, benefits, tradeoffs, and implementation impacts.

2. Ensure Meaningful Participation

- Provide materials in appropriate languages and plain language formats.
- Use multiple outreach methods beyond traditional public hearings.
- Support participation and build trust through community leaders and CBOs.
- Consider offering remunerations or stipends to value time.
- Demonstrate how community feedback informed the final policy.

3. Consider Intended and Unintended Consequences

- Evaluate potential impacts on housing affordability, redevelopment costs, small property owners, and vulnerable populations.
- Assess whether resilience requirements could create barriers to affordable housing or climate adaptation investments.

4. Look Beyond Formal EJ Designations

- Consider other vulnerabilities, including, renters, seniors, children, residents with disabilities, and repeatedly flood-impacted neighborhoods.
- Recognize that vulnerable populations may exist even where formal EJ designations do not.

4. Promote Equitable Outcomes

- Design regulations so that resilience benefits such as reduced flooding, improved public health, and enhanced environmental quality are shared across all neighborhoods, prioritizing those who are more heavily impacted.
- Consider incentives, technical assistance, or flexible compliance options to reduce disproportionate burdens.

Key Question:

Will this regulation reduce climate risk while avoiding unintended burdens on vulnerable residents and ensuring equitable community outcomes?

Diagnostic Self-Assessment Tab

Ask yourselves:

- Does your policy explicitly mention flooding, heat, or address stormwater?
- Are your policies based on future climate parameters for temperature, precipitation, and sea level?
- Are there clear performance standards (not just intent)?
- Does it reflect current state or federal requirements?
- Does it include an implementation or enforcement mechanism?

Where does your municipality stand?

Score each policy across four parameters. Your total score places you on the resilience spectrum and generates priority actions tailored to your situation.

- **Climate Language**: Whether the policy explicitly acknowledges climate change, climate resilience, future conditions, or climate-related hazards in its purpose, findings, or requirements.
- **Flood Risk**: Whether the policy incorporates flood risk considerations, including current and future flood hazards, the Neponset River Watershed Flood Model (NRFM), floodplain management, or flood-resilient development standards.
- **Heat Risk**: Assesses whether the policy addresses increasing extreme heat through measures such as urban heat island mitigation, tree canopy preservation, shade, cool materials, building design, cooling access, or protection of vulnerable populations. Because extreme heat is an emerging climate risk in New England, most existing policies are unlikely to address it without updates.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Whether the policy encourages, requires, or incentivizes green infrastructure and low-impact development practices that reduce runoff, improve infiltration, and enhance resilience.
- **Environmental Justice (EJ) and Equity Considerations**: Whether the policy considers equitable engagement, impacts on vulnerable populations, potential unintended consequences, and strategies to ensure climate resilience benefits are shared fairly across the community (see EJ section for guidance).

For each policy below, answer the five questions using the 0–2 scale. **0 = not present / outdated, 1 = partially addressed, 2 = strong / specific provisions.** Your live score updates as you go.

Output:

Based on answers, users get:

“You are here” category (e.g., outdated / partially aligned / strong but improvable) on a ‘*Spectrum Bar*’

The results crosslink to relevant policy sections.

Total available points will depend on no. of parameters as well as number of policies being considered.

Hazard Navigator Tab

A **Decision Path** helps users quickly identify the policy tools most relevant to their community's climate resilience goals. Users can select one or multiple climate hazards, and the toolkit will generate a tailored set of recommended regulatory strategies. Because many local policies address more than one climate challenge, selecting multiple hazards can reveal opportunities for integrated solutions.

How it works:

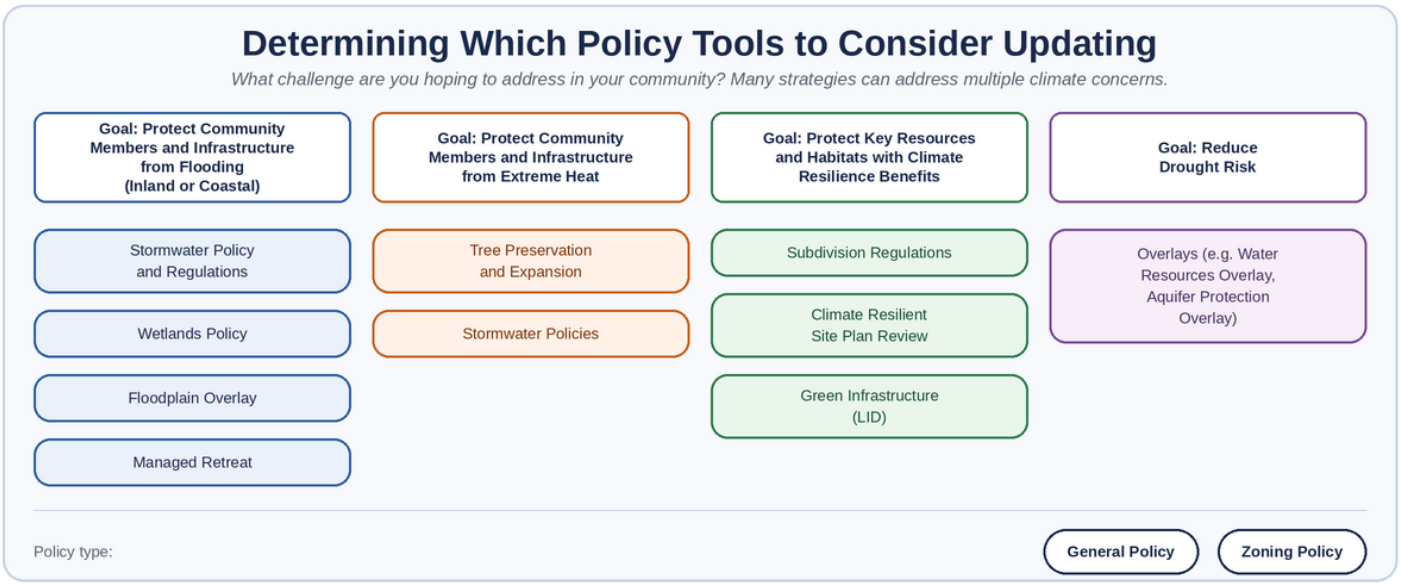
1. Select one or more climate hazards that your community is seeking to address.
2. The toolkit identifies bylaws and regulatory tools that are commonly used to reduce those risks.
3. Explore recommended policies, implementation considerations, and examples from municipalities within and beyond the Neponset watershed.
4. Use the results to prioritize regulatory updates that address multiple community objectives simultaneously.

Available Hazard Categories and ways to address them:

- **Flooding-** Inland and coastal flood risk, floodplain management, and flood-resilient development.
    - **Stormwater** can be addressed through runoff reduction, water quality protection, green infrastructure, and low impact development (LID).
- **Extreme Heat-** Urban heat island mitigation, community cooling, tree canopy, physical shade, increased albedo and public health resilience.
- **Natural Resources and Ecosystem Degradation-** Protection and restoration of wetlands, waterways, natural resources, and ecosystem resilience.
- **Drought Risk-** Water conservation, groundwater recharge, vegetation management, and long-term water supply resilience.

Tip: Many regulations support multiple resilience objectives. For example, wetland protection, tree preservation, and green infrastructure policies can help reduce flooding, improve water quality, mitigate extreme heat, and strengthen natural resource preservation at the same time. Starting with your most pressing concern is a good entry point but consider the full picture during your policy review.

Note: While developing web resource, we can also include goals as a part of the decision matrix (refer to example graphic below, adapted from Climate Resilience Playbook)


Determining Which Policy Tools to Consider Updating
What challenge are you hoping to address in your community? Many strategies can address multiple climate concerns.
Goal: Protect Community Members and Infrastructure from Flooding (Inland or Coastal)
Goal: Protect Community Members and Infrastructure from Extreme Heat
Goal: Protect Key Resources and Habitats with Climate Resilience Benefits
Goal: Reduce Drought Risk
Stormwater Policy and Regulations
Wetlands Policy
Floodplain Overlay
Managed Retreat
Tree Preservation and Expansion
Stormwater Policies
Subdivision Regulations
Climate Resilient Site Plan Review
Green Infrastructure (LID)
Overlays (e.g. Water Resources Overlay, Aquifer Protection Overlay)
Policy type:
General Policy
Zoning Policy

Policy Guidance Tab

This section provides Neponset-specific guidance for each major bylaw/regulation or policy tool. For each, we describe: the general purpose of the policy, how it can advance climate resilience in the watershed, specific recommended updates tailored to Neponset conditions, and examples from comparable Massachusetts communities.

General Organization for Each Policy Module

A. Why it matters

- Climate risk it addresses
- Why municipalities are updating it now-Improved availability of information, more visible climate change impacts, reference NRFM and increasing heat risks where possible.

B. What to look for

- Key provisions that should be included in existing policy
- Common flags: Vague or unclear language, outdated thresholds, provisions split across or housed in different departments or regulatory areas

C. How to update

- Provides implementation guidance not legal guidance
- Practical steps for integrating updates into existing frameworks

D. Policy Elements (Drop Down Menu)

- Neponset relevant considerations
- Recommended policy approach for specific elements

E. Example language

- Examples from comparable municipalities with links to actual policy in an example library
- Comparable town context such as coastal versus inland communities

General Tips Across All Policies

Implementation approach

Make sure your proposed update isn't overly complicated or extensive (may jeopardize support for lack of understanding). Remember that you can start updating small sections first. Simplicity is effective.
Align with existing plans such as hazard mitigation plans and comprehensive plans.
Coordinate early with legal counsel and relevant boards.

Getting to adoption

Engage boards and committees early and align with related bylaws to ensure consistent standards
Coordinate early with Town Counsel Conservation Commission and Select Board

Conduct public outreach to build buy in for Town Meeting approval
Recognize that incremental updates are often more feasible than large scale changes and do what is feasible while using outreach to support more comprehensive updates over time
Integrate equity considerations using the equity tab in the web tool

Common pitfalls in Town Meeting approvals

Poor or insufficient communication
Bylaw language that is too complex for the public to understand
Keep language simple and accessible
Delegate detailed implementation to a board through regulations where appropriate

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Stormwater Management

A. Why this policy matters

- Improves water quality
- Reduces flood risk
- Reduced impervious/enhanced green spaces can reduce heat island effect

B. What to aim for

- MS4 sets minimum requirements on large projects but communities can implement policies beyond these minimums to increase climate resilience
    - Apply development and redevelopment stormwater standards to smaller projects-in our urban/suburban watershed, communities have few opportunities for large projects. Smaller projects can add up and contribute to reduced water quality and/or flood risk.
    - Require green infrastructure and low-impact design be incorporated into projects. Infiltration or retention of at least the first inch on site wherever possible
    - Preserve trees, which mitigate urban heat island and stormwater runoff
    - Include clear enforcement strategies
    - Require clear and enforceable Operation & Maintenance plans
    - Use most up-to-date rainfall data (forward looking)
- Make sure requirements are consistent across all policies guiding construction projects

C. How to update

- Establish authority for regulation/rule-making through the local bylaw or ordinance. Leave detailed requirements for the regulation/rule so that they may be amended in a timely manner to respond to new requirements or updated data.
- Choose a single Stormwater Authority responsible for developing those rules to ensure consistent application and enforcement. Make sure regulations or rules are adopted in a timely manner after adoption of bylaw or ordinance.
- Talk to that Stormwater Authority ahead of time- make sure they are ready and able to take on the responsibility for enhanced permit review, new procedures, increased volume of applications, etc.
- Set a permit fee that is adequate to support the work necessary for review
- Don't reinvent the wheel-refer to model language for guidance (Neponset Model Bylaw and Regulation)

D. Policy Elements

Regulation / Tool	Neponset Watershed Relevance	Recommended policy elements	Lead Authority*
Purpose Statement	MS4 permits apply to all Neponset watershed municipalities; policies should align with climate goals	Include explicit climate resilience and flood risk reduction language to purpose sections; reference NRFM findings;	Conservation Commission / DPW
Applicability standards	Most Neponset communities are built out and won't have many applications for 1 acre + projects. But smaller projects	Apply to projects less than 1 acre	Conservation Commission / DPW

Regulation / Tool	Neponset Watershed Relevance	Recommended policy elements	Lead Authority*
	can add up and compound climate-driven impacts		
Retention/Detention Standards	Increased rainfall and storm intensity in the Neponset Watershed are putting pressure on existing stormwater systems, leading to more flooding and runoff.	Update standards to manage larger storm events and require systems that hold and slowly release more water on site. Require the use of updated (forward-looking) rainfall data in calculations.	Conservation Commission / DPW
Low Impact Development (LID)	Many communities lack explicit LID requirements	Require LID practices like rain gardens, permeable pavement, green roofs and infiltration to increase bioretention.	Conservation Commission / DPW
Long-Term Maintenance	Stormwater systems may fail over time if they are not properly maintained, reducing their effectiveness.	Require maintenance agreements and inspections as condition of stormwater permit approval; establish clear and effective enforcement mechanisms; require owner to inspect and report findings each year to Stormwater Authority	Conservation Commission / DPW
Illicit Discharge Control	Pollution entering storm drains can impact water quality in the Neponset River and surrounding wetlands.	Strengthen enforcement and public awareness to prevent dumping and improper connections to the stormwater system. Limit exemptions	Conservation Commission / DPW
Rainfall Data Used	Many policies require the use of outdated rainfall projects—they look backwards, rather than into the future.	Use the most current NOAA precipitation frequency estimates (currently NOAA Atlas 14) or Cornell projections and update local standards as newer federal datasets become available.	Conservation Commission / DPW

*May vary, depending on municipality

D. Example language

- Neponset River Watershed Model Bylaw and Regulation
- Canton Stormwater
- Hudson Stormwater
- Quincy Stormwater Ordinance
- Concord Stormwater and Utility Fee

Databases:

Cornell Precipitation Projection

F. How to frame changes (cost, safety, compliance)

- Compliance with federal stormwater permit (MS4) and therefore avoids enforcement penalties (fines)
- Reduces flood risk moving forward, thereby reducing risk of property damage and associated economic impacts to residents and businesses

- Reduces pollution in local streams and ponds, enhancing environment and recreational opportunities as well as public health
- Reduces risk of overburdening existing infrastructure, thereby reducing maintenance costs

Wetlands Protection (Local Bylaw supplementing WPA)

A. Why this policy matters

- Preserves natural resources and critical habitat, which mitigates climate-driven flood risk and protect water quality
- Healthy wetlands sequester carbon, provide localized cooling and support biodiversity
- Maintain buffers around areas that are prone to flooding, which protects not only the environment, but the project itself as floodplains enlarge due to climate change
- State Wetlands Protection Act is minimum and not adequate to addressing precipitation due to climate change

B. What to look for

- Explicit reference to climate change impacts to wetlands
- Protect valuable resources excluded from Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, including isolated wetlands, vernal pools, and intermittent streams that feed wetlands.
- Enlarge area of protection beyond state-mandated
- Explicitly protect against alteration of wetlands function, not just the wetland resources themselves (upstream alterations may affect carbon sequestration or localized cooling benefits of wetlands)
- Buffer zones
- Enhance protection of vernal pools, whose breeding season may shift due to climate impacts

C. How to update

- Establish authority for Conservation Commission to adopt regulations/rules through the local bylaw or ordinance. Leave detailed requirements for the regulation/rule so that they may be amended in a timely manner to respond to new requirements or updated data.
- Set a permit fee that is adequate to support the work necessary for review
- Don’t reinvent the wheel—refer to model language for guidance

D. Policy elements

Regulation / Tool	Neponset Watershed Relevance	Recommended Updates	Lead Authority
Buffer Zone Width	State WPA requires 100-ft buffer; may not be enough to protect against flooding in parts of the Neponset Watershed, especially where floodwaters extend beyond mapped areas.	Expand buffer zones in high-risk areas according to NRFM (for example, to 150–200 feet) and limit impervious surfaces to better absorb and slow floodwaters.	Conservation Commission
Isolated Wetlands	State WPA does not protect small/isolated wetlands; many exist in Neponset watershed and play an important role in storing water and reducing flooding.	Adopt local jurisdiction over isolated wetlands; define minimum size threshold.	Conservation Commission

Compensatory Storage	Filling or altering flood storage areas can increase flooding elsewhere in the watershed.	Require 1.5:1 compensatory storage ratio for any flood storage alteration; require storage to be within the same watershed	Conservation Commission
Climate Projections	State WPA does not require use of climate-adjusted flood projections	Require applicants in NRFM high-risk areas to demonstrate no adverse impact under climate-adjusted 100-year scenarios	Conservation Commission
Riparian Buffer Restoration	Degraded riverfront areas and buffers along Neponset provide opportunity for restoration	Allow and incentivize buffer zone restoration as mitigation or community initiatives.	Conservation Commission

E. Example language

- MACC Recommended Climate Smart Wetlands bylaw provisions: https://www.maccweb.org/page/CSWBR_All_Wetlands
- MACC Database of Sample Bylaws and Regulations
- MACC 2023 List of Wetland Bylaws/Ordinances

F. How to frame changes (cost, safety, compliance)

- Enhances climate resilience for community, reducing flood risk, improving cooling, preserving biodiversity
- Ensures growth occurs in a sustainable manner
- Climate change has already altered weather patterns, and communities must update these bylaws in order to protect people and nature from impacts of extreme storms

Tree Preservation and Planting

A. Why it matters

- Trees enhance local cooling in the face of climate-driven heat waves and protects public health.
- Street trees can provide moderate stormwater management benefits and forested land can provide substantial stormwater management benefits. They can absorb nutrients to reduce pollution, and slowing and absorbing stormwater before it reaches stormwater infrastructure.
- Advances equity, as high percentages of low-income and historically marginalized residents typically have less tree canopy and are more at risk from the impacts of extreme heat.
- Most tree canopy loss occurs on private property; adopting a tree preservation policy can protect canopy on both public and private property.

B. What to look for

- Protect trees excluded from Massachusetts Chapter 87, Shade Tree Protection statute
- Protect trees and their roots from construction damage or injury
- Require review for any plan to remove trees on public and private property and require replacement or compensation for removal
- Flags (vague language, outdated thresholds, housed under different departments)

C. How to update

- Work with landscape architects and arborists/urban foresters to develop a plan appropriate for your community that prioritizes preservation and planting of resilient species
- Incorporate strategies for healthy soil management to prevent injury to existing trees (https://masshealthysoils.org/guide/)
- Ensure requirements are based in science related to the protection of public health, safety or welfare
- Align with zoning and other local policies affecting development and redevelopment
- Don't reinvent the wheel—there are lots of existing resources to help develop language that works for your community

D. Policy elements

Regulation / Tool	Neponset Watershed Relevance	Recommended Updates	Lead Authority
Tree Preservation policy	The Neponset River Watershed is largely urban/suburban with lots of impervious cover. Preserving mature trees and expanding canopy cover can mitigate stormwater runoff, urban heat island effects and enhance equity.	• Adopt tree bylaw/regulation that protects all public trees and regulates removal on private property • Protect trees from construction damage • Require permit for tree removal • Require replanting of trees to mitigate removals	Planning Board/Conservation Commission/DPW
Soil protection	Urban tree roots are critically important, but invisible. Protecting soil function will protect the health of trees.	• Codify guidelines for soil-smart site development to avoid root damage and soil compaction during construction activities	Planning Board/Conservation Commission/DPW

Acquire and preserve open space	Preserving open space as public parks can protect trees from being removed for development. Moreover, it mitigates the impacts from impervious surfaces.	• Designate existing public open space as parkland for Article 97 protection • Purchase open spaces, particularly those contiguous with other public parks • Work with developers and property owners to protect private forestland through conservation restrictions	Planning Board/Conservation Commission/DPW
Stormwater management	Trees can enhance municipal stormwater management by slowing runoff and absorbing nutrients.	Include requirements during and after construction activity in stormwater and wetlands regulations: • Require tree retention and protection in construction projects • Protect soil during and after construction with post-construction performance standards • Require green infrastructure be included in development/redevelopment projects	Planning Board/Conservation Commission/DPW
Zoning bylaw	Neponset communities should ensure future development is implemented in a climate-resilient way. That includes preserving existing urban forests and open space, as well as expanding community tree canopy.	• Require tree retention and protection • Include climate resilience incentives through zoning that includes tree preservation and planting, green roofs and cool pavement • Require public tree planting for public projects • Incentivize tree planting to mitigate development	Planning Board/Conservation Commission/DPW
Urban forest master plans and forest management plans	Planning for preservation and expansion of tree canopy is essential in an urban/suburban region like the Neponset watershed. These plans serve as the blueprint and the operational guide for managing tree canopies as essential community infrastructure	• Inventory existing canopy • Identify areas where canopy expansion would have most benefit • Embed tree protection and planting across municipal plans, including capital projects, development and redevelopment regulations, etc., rather than managing it separately	Planning Board/Conservation Commission/DPW

E. Example language

- Guide to Local Tree Bylaws for Communities in Massachusetts
- Dover Tree Preservation Study
- Tree Preservation Bylaw | Lynnfield, MA
- Westwood Tree Preservation Guidelines
- Lexington Tree Policies (Bylaws and Regulations)
- Cambridge Zoning Bylaw
- Brookline Stormwater Management Bylaw
- Cambridge Urban Forest Master Plan
- Medford Urban Forest Management Plan

F. Getting to adoption:

- Regulation of activity conducted on private property may be controversial; clear alignment of policy with community goals is critical
- How to frame changes (cost, safety, compliance)

- Ensures development/redevelopment occurs in a resilient manner
- Enhances public health and improves stormwater management

Subdivision Rules and Regulations

A. Why it matters

- Subdivision regulations determine how new roads, drainage systems, utilities, and lots are designed, making them one of the most effective tools for reducing future flood and heat risks.
- Many regulations were written using historical rainfall assumptions and older flood mapping that do not reflect current conditions.
- Updated flood modeling, including the Neponset River Watershed Flood Model, provides better information about future flood exposure and infrastructure vulnerabilities.
- Climate-resilient subdivision standards can reduce long-term municipal costs associated with flooding, drainage failures, road damage, and emergency response.

B. What to look for

- Stormwater and drainage standards that require Low Impact Development (LID), infiltration, groundwater recharge, and reduced impervious cover.
- Requirements to preserve natural features such as mature trees, drainage corridors, wetlands, and natural topography.
- Roadway and infrastructure standards that minimize unnecessary pavement while maintaining safety and emergency access.
- References to outdated design storms, reliance solely on FEMA maps, or lack of coordination with stormwater, wetlands, and erosion control regulations.

C. How to update

- Incorporate updated flood studies and watershed models alongside FEMA flood maps when evaluating subdivision design.
- Require applicants to demonstrate how stormwater will be managed on-site through infiltration and other Low Impact Development practices.
- Prioritize preservation of existing trees, natural drainage systems, and flood storage areas during subdivision design.
- Cross-reference subdivision regulations with local stormwater, wetlands, floodplain, and tree protection bylaws to ensure consistent standards
-

D. Policy elements

Regulation / Tool	Neponset Watershed Relevance	Recommended Updates	Lead Authority
Low Impact Site Design	Traditional subdivision design often increases runoff through paved surfaces and storm drains, contributing to flooding in the watershed.	Promote simple low impact design approaches like rain gardens, permeable surfaces, and natural drainage to reduce runoff.	Planning Board
Flood Risk Considerations	Subdivisions are sometimes approved based on current conditions	Require developers to consider future flood risk (use NRFM, not just current	Planning Board

	without fully considering future flooding or nearby flood risks.	maps) when designing subdivisions, especially near rivers and low-lying areas. Flood risk assessment using NRFM data as part of subdivision application; restrict lot creation in NRFM high-risk zones	
Open Space Requirements	Conserved open space within subdivisions reduces runoff and provides flood storage	Encourage or require preserving open space in flood-prone or environmentally sensitive areas to help manage stormwater and reduce flood risk.	Planning Board
Street Design Standards	Wide roads and excessive pavement in subdivisions increase impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff.	Encourage narrower streets, reduced pavement where appropriate, and designs that incorporate green infrastructure (Eg: vegetated swales) to manage stormwater.	Planning Board / DPW
Open Space Residential Design	Zoning and subdivision regulations should guide growth in a way that preserves open space and clusters developed areas together to prevent sprawl. This may also support MS4 compliance by limiting impervious surfaces and soil alterations.	• Clearly lay out municipal goals regarding open space and density • Make OSRD mandatory rather than require a special permit • Use a flexible OSRD 4-step review process for permit applications • Require open space be contiguous, consider adjacent land uses and require open space be used to advance conservation and recreational goals • Authority to monitor open space be granted to a conservation organization	Planning Board

E. Examples

- PVPC Model Subdivision Rules and Regulations
- Milton SRR
- Norwood SRR
- Canton SRR
- Massachusetts Model Open Space Residential Design bylaw

F. How to frame changes

- Frame updates as infrastructure protection measures that reduce future costs for roads, drainage systems, and emergency response.
- Emphasize that standards apply primarily to new development, helping avoid creation of future flood and heat vulnerabilities.
- Focus on practical improvements to subdivision design rather than regulatory expansion, using examples from peer Massachusetts communities that have already adopted similar standards.

Climate Resilient Floodplain Overlay District

A Floodplain Overlay District bylaw regulates development in areas at risk of flooding, typically based on FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). The goal is to reduce flood damage, protect public safety, maintain eligibility for the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), and improve long-term climate resilience as storms and sea levels change.

A. Why it matters

- Floodplain bylaws reduce damage to homes, roads, utilities, and public infrastructure during storms and flooding events.
- Stronger local standards can lower future recovery costs and reduce flood insurance premiums for property owners.
- FEMA maps are based on historic data and may not fully account for climate change and sea level rise, so local resilience measures (like freeboard/elevation requirements) provide added protection.

B. What to look for

- Clear reference to the latest FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs)
  - Note: FEMA FIRMs are based on historical data
- Definition of:
  - Base Flood Elevation (BFE)
  - Floodway
  - Substantial Improvement/Substantial Damage (50% rule)
- Elevation (“freeboard”) requirements above FEMA minimums
  - Example: lowest floor elevated at least 1–2 feet above BFE
- Restrictions on:
  - New development in high-risk floodways or velocity zones
  - Fill that increases flood risk
  - Critical facilities in flood-prone areas
- Requirements for:
  - Flood-resistant utilities and mechanical systems
  - Stormwater management
  - Wet floodproofing for enclosed areas below design flood elevation
- Coordination with:
  - Conservation Commission
  - Building Department / Floodplain Administrator
  - Hazard Mitigation Plan
  - Wetlands Bylaw
  - Emergency management planning

Flags / warning signs

- Bylaw only references old FEMA maps or outdated terminology
- No mention of climate resilience, sea level rise, or freeboard
- Uses only minimum NFIP standards with no added local protections
- Floodplain provisions split across multiple departments with unclear authority
- No standards for redevelopment or substantial improvement projects
- Allows new critical infrastructure in flood-prone areas

- Vague language like:
  - "adequately elevated"
  - "where feasible"
  - "reasonable protection" without measurable standards

C. How to update

- Start with targeted amendments to definitions, map references, and elevation requirements before pursuing a full bylaw rewrite.
- Update references to current FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps and consider incorporating locally adopted flood studies, such as the Neponset River Watershed Flood Model, where available.
- Strengthen freeboard requirements by requiring buildings and critical infrastructure to be elevated above Base Flood Elevation.
- Limit new development in the highest-risk flood areas, protect flood storage capacity, and ensure utilities and mechanical equipment are elevated or floodproofed.
- Coordinate review and implementation across Planning Boards, Conservation Commissions, Building Departments, and other permitting authorities to ensure consistent standards.

D. Policy elements

Regulation / Tool	Neponset Watershed Relevance	Recommended Updates	Lead Authority
FIRM vs. NRFM Alignment	FEMA FIRMs in Neponset watershed communities may not reflect all current climate projections as per NRFM	Consider using updated local data (NRFM-based flood risk maps) in addition to FEMA maps to guide decisions.	Conservation Commission / Planning Board
Elevation Requirements	Buildings in flood zones are often required to be elevated, but current standards may not account for increasing rainfall and flooding.	Require slightly higher elevation (freeboard) for new buildings and substantial renovations to reduce future flood risk. Set building height from BFE instead of the ground	Building Department / Planning
Protection of Critical Facilities	Important buildings like hospitals, emergency services, and public safety facilities may still be located in or near flood-prone areas.	Limit new critical facilities in flood zones and encourage relocating or floodproofing existing ones	Planning Board / Building
Development Restrictions in Flood Zones	Some development is still allowed in floodplain areas, which can increase flooding impacts over time.	Reduce or limit new development in high-risk flood areas and encourage open space, flood storage, or nature-based solutions instead.	Planning Board / Building

E. Example language

- MA 2020 Model Floodplain Bylaws
- Boston- Coastal Flood Resilience Guidelines and Zoning Overlay District
- Dedham Overlay Districts (applied regional flood model)
- Hull Floodplain Overlay District Bylaw (2024) - With climate adaptation

- Easton FPOD (includes freeboard and climate resilience)

F. How to frame changes

- Frame updates as a **public safety upgrade** that reduces flood risk to homes, roads, utilities, and emergency access routes by applying stronger elevation standards, updated flood mapping, and limiting development in the highest-risk areas.
- Emphasize **long-term cost savings for the municipality and property owners**, including reduced damage from flooding, fewer emergency repairs, and lower future infrastructure replacement costs.
- Position changes as **proactive compliance with evolving federal and state standards**, including FEMA flood maps, NFIP requirements, and consistency with modern climate-informed flood risk data such as local watershed models.

Managed Retreat Planning

A. Why it matters

- Managed retreat reduces long-term risk in areas with repeated or worsening flooding.
- It responds to increasing flood risk from climate change in the Neponset watershed.
- NRFM identifies locations where long-term inhabitation may become unsafe or unsustainable.
- It works alongside other flood protection strategies, not instead of them.

B. What to look for

- Clear identification of high-risk and repetitive flood areas using NRFM and FEMA maps
- Options for buyouts, relocation, or converting land to open space
- Limits on rebuilding in repeatedly damaged areas

C. How to update

- Start by mapping highest-risk and repetitive flood areas using NRFM and local data
- Explore regulatory tools such as floodplain overlay districts to gradually limit or control redevelopment in the most flood-prone areas
- Align with hazard mitigation, open space and comprehensive planning

D. Policy Elements

Policy / Tool	Description	Neponset NRFM Application	Considerations
Conceptual Emerging Strategies			
Voluntary Buyout Program	This is a non-regulatory measure. Municipality purchases flood-prone properties from willing sellers.	Prioritize NRFM-identified High Risk zones	Requires funding; community engagement critical; avoid displacement without relocation support. Notes: This tool is in a very early consideration phase.
Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)	Allows density to be transferred from high-risk sending areas to lower-risk receiving areas	Prioritize NRFM-identified High Risk zones	Requires enabling zoning bylaw; complex to administer but powerful tool. Note: This tool is not widely implemented, especially for managed retreat.
General Strategies			
Floodplain Overlay District	Restricts development in identified flood zones	Ground in NRFM flood model rather than only FEMA FIRM maps; use climate-adjusted scenarios	Must be adopted at Town Meeting / City Council;
Disclosures & Flood Risk Communication	Requires sellers/landlords to disclose flood risk to buyers/tenants	Reference NRFM data in disclosure materials for Neponset watershed communities	State law limits local mandates; consider voluntary disclosure and public education programs

E. Examples

- **Nantucket** - The Town has previously explored TDR as a tool to protect open space while directing growth to more appropriate locations, and its planning documents specifically call for

development of a TDR bylaw (mentioned the potential development of a TDR bylaw in Master Plan).

- **Martha's Vineyard** -The regional planning framework has supported TDR concepts as a way to balance conservation with development, although implementation has generally been project- or district-specific rather than through widespread municipal TDR bylaws.
- **Devens** - While not a traditional municipal TDR program, the redevelopment authority uses density transfer and development allocation tools with similar objectives to concentrate growth and preserve open space.

Although they have been occasionally explored conceptually, there are no current well established MA precedents for the emerging strategies for managed retreat.

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F. Framing changes

- Frame as protecting safety and reducing repeated public costs such as infrastructure repair and upgrades, redevelopment of damaged facilities, lost capacity for municipal services, as well aspersonal financial burdens (Eg: repeated repair and loss of businesses).
- Emphasize voluntary, phased approach rather than forced relocation
- Highlight eligibility for state and federal resilience funding as available.
- Focus on reducing repeated flood damage and improving long-term land use planning

Climate-Resilient Site Plan Review

A. Why it matters

- Site Plan Review (SPR) is one of the most direct tools to shape how individual developments handle flood, heat, and stormwater risk.
- It can embed climate resilience into projects without creating a new bylaw, often through Planning Board regulations.
- Helps reduce downstream flooding, urban heat, and infrastructure strain at the project level.
- Allows use of updated tools like NRFM to evaluate site-specific climate exposure.

B. What to look for

- Whether SPR includes climate criteria such as stormwater retention, flood risk, and heat mitigation
- Thresholds that trigger review (impervious area, building size, or disturbance limits)
- Use of outdated stormwater standards or no reference to future climate conditions or NRFM
- Lack of requirements for trees, green infrastructure, or heat island reduction

C. How to update

- Add a climate resilience checklist for larger projects to standard SPR applications
- Require on-site stormwater management and green infrastructure as part of design review
- Require applicants in NRFM-identified flood areas to show no increase in flood risk
- Add optional incentives such as expedited review for projects exceeding resilience standards

D. Policy Elements

Sample Climate Resilience Checklist Categories:

1. **Stormwater**: On-site retention volume, LID techniques used, maintenance plan.
2. **Flooding**: Site elevation relative to NRFM flood zones, flood-resistant design measures.
3. **Green Infrastructure**: Type and area of bioretention, permeable pavement, green roof, tree canopy.
4. **Heat**: Tree canopy coverage of parking and pedestrian areas, cool roof or green roof specification.
5. **Energy**: Solar-ready design, EV charging provisions.
6. **Equity**: Accessibility, language access, community benefit provisions for EJ areas.

E. Example language

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- MA Climate Resilience Design Standards & Guidance
- MAPC Resilience Checklist Compilation
- Chelmsford Sustainability Checklist for SPR
- Winthrop SPR Checklist
- Eg: Article IX: Administration and Procedures - Town of Dedham, MA -SPR, incorporates trees

F. Framing Changes

- Frame updates as improving safety and reducing future flooding and heat impacts from new development

- Emphasize cost savings from reduced drainage infrastructure and municipal maintenance needs
- Highlight that changes can be made through Planning Board regulations without Town Meeting action
- Position as modernizing review standards to reflect projectedclimate data and watershed modeling like NRFM

Reducing Barriers to Green Infrastructure

A. Why this matters

- Many municipal bylaws inadvertently discourage or prohibit green infrastructure (GI) that could reduce flooding, and improve water quality and mitigate urban heat islands.
- Reducing these barriers will likely be required by the next MS4 permit.

B. What to look for

- Unnecessary Minimum Parking Requirements: Increases impervious surfaces and increases costs
- Impervious Surface Maximums: Some bylaws set maximums too high
- Setback Requirements: Rigid setbacks can make bioretention or rain gardens infeasible
- Lawn and Landscaping Norms:
- Street Standards: Conventional curb-and-gutter requirements prevent vegetated swales
- Stormwater Pipe Requirements: Some subdivision regulations require all stormwater be piped

C. How to update

- Likely will require updating different policies and plans.
  See Mass Audubon Fact Sheet for examples:
  https://www.massaudubon.org/content/download/19238/file/LID-fact-sheet-4-lid-in-regulations_revised.pdf?inLanguage=eng-US&version=5
- As a result, interdepartmental coordination is key
- Ensure LID is designed for FUTURE storms

D. Policy elements

Regulation / Tool	Neponset Watershed Relevance	Recommended Updates	Lead Authority
Zoning, Subdivision Rules, Site Plan Review, Stormwater Management	Protect existing natural resources and open space. Allowing open natural resources to function as they should, communities will be more resilient to the impacts of more frequent heat waves and heavy storms	• Prohibit removal of topsoil • Require soil prep after compaction during construction • Require minimization of clearing with specific standards • Require native/drought resilient plantings	Depends on which policy is being updated. All should work together.
Zoning, Subdivision Rules, Site Plan Review	Promote efficient, compact development patterns and infill Minimize impervious surfaces and development areas will help communities comply with MS4 requirements and reduce impact of flooding and urban heat island	• Allow open space residential design by right • Allow multifamily residences by right in most residential areas; encourage cluster development with density bonuses for LID features • Encourage native planting bylaws and limit turf grass	Depends on which policy is being updated. All should work together.

		requirements for new development	
Smart Design through Zoning, Subdivision regulation and/or Site Plan Review	Minimize impervious surfaces and development areas will help communities comply with MS4 requirements and reduce impact of flooding and urban heat island	• Require no net increase in site runoff; require equal or greater infiltration on site post-development compared to pre-development • Street design/construction should minimize grading, avoid natural features and minimize road length • Allow secondary emergency access roads and all shoulders to use permeable materials • Minimize street width based on neighborhood and use • Require bioretention in cul de sacs • Reduce curbing in favor of open drainage through swales or curb cuts to vegetated LID features • Placement of utilities should allow roadside LID • Reduce sidewalks (e.g., only on one side of road)	Depends on which policy is being updated. All should work together.
Zoning, Subdivision Rules, Site Plan Review and Stormwater Management	Support Stormwater Management updates through other regulatory tools. This makes it easier for permittees to understand what's expected, and ensures no loopholes. Will also help communities comply with MS4.	• Redirect clean roof runoff to vegetated areas • Establish LID design standards to encourage infiltration, manage larger volume storms and account for future precipitation predictions • Credit for green roofs; incentivize with increased floor ratio • Allow easy siting of LID • Post construction should resemble preexisting volume, velocity, quality and location of stormwater runoff	Depends on which policy is being updated. All should work together.
	Encourage efficient parking to minimize impervious surfaces and development areas. This will help communities comply with MS4 requirements and reduce impact of flooding and urban heat island	• Establish max parking spaces allowed • Allow shared commercial parking for uses with different peak demands • Limit parking stall size	Depends on which policy is being updated. All should work together.

		Require minimum LID/bioretention in landscaped areas • Consider green scores	

Refer to part B

E. Examples

- Fact sheet:

  https://www.massaudubon.org/content/download/19238/file/LID-fact-sheet-4-lid-in-regulations_revised.pdf?inLanguage=eng-US&version=5

  - Self assessment: https://snepnetwork.org/bylaw-review/
  - Self assessment: https://www.massaudubon.org/content/download/54077/file/Bylaw-Review-Tool-MS4-Updated-2022.xlsx?inLanguage=eng-US&version=1'
  - Boston Green Building and Climate Resiliency Guidelines

F. **How to frame changes:**

- Expedited Review: Fast-track SPR or Conservation Commission review for projects meeting GI standards
- Fee Reductions: Reduce stormwater permit fees for projects using certified LID design
- Align with existing plan, such as Open Space and Master Plans
- Coordinate early with legal/boards

Incentive Approaches

Technical Assistance: Partner with other organizations or stakeholders to offer free GI design assistance to property owners and small developers

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Section 7: Grants & Funding Opportunities

Updating local bylaws and regulations requires staff time and often external legal and technical assistance. The following funding sources can support Neponset watershed communities in undertaking climate resilient regulatory updates. Municipalities should consult NepRWA, MAPC, and the MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) for the most current program details and deadlines.

Grant / Program	Funder	Eligible Uses	Award Range	Eligibility	Timing	More Info
MVP Action Grant	MA EEA / EOEEA	Planning, regulatory updates, community engagement	Up to $400K	Municipalities with completed MVP Assessment	Annual (spring)	https://www.mass.gov/info-details/mvp-action-grant
District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)	MAPC	Zoning, planning, regulatory assistance	Varies	MAPC member municipalities	Rolling	https://www.mapc.org/get-involved/legislative-priorities/district-local-technical-assistance-dlta/
EEA Planning Assistance Grant	MA EEA	Comprehensive plans, zoning updates, floodplain work	Varies	All MA municipalities	Annual	https://www.mass.gov/info-details/planning-assistance-grants
Placeholder for additions as tool evolves						

Tips for Successful Grant Applications

- Reference the NRFM: Grant applications are strengthened by citing specific local flood risk data from the Neponset Region Flood Model
- Demonstrate regional coordination: Applications that show coordination among multiple Neponset watershed municipalities are viewed favorably by funders
- Lead with equity: Applications that prioritize EJ communities and include meaningful community engagement plans are increasingly competitive
- Connect to planning documents: Link regulatory updates to adopted plans (MVP, Master Plan, Open Space Plan) to demonstrate strategic alignment
- NepRWA as partner: The Neponset River Watershed Association can serve as a technical partner or co-applicant on several grant programs; engage NepRWA early in application development

Section 8: Resources

Guidance Documents & Toolkits

- MAPC Climate Resilient Land-Use Strategies Toolkit: https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/climate-resilient-land-use-strategies/
- MAPC Low Impact Development Toolkit: https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/low-impact-development-toolkit/
- MA DEP Stormwater Handbook: https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-stormwater-handbook-and-stormwater-standards
- MA Climate Resilient Design Standards and Guidance: https://www.mass.gov/doc/crdst-site-suitability/download
- PVPC Understanding Site Plan Review: https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/files/PVPC-Site%20Plan%20Review(1).pdf
- PVPC Green Infrastructure in Zoning: https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/files/PVPC-Green%20Infrastructure%20and%20Zoning.pdf
- PVPC Model Subdivision Regulations: https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/PVPC%20Model%20Subdivision%20Regulations.pdf
- MA 2020 Model Floodplain Bylaw Training: https://cms5.revize.com/revize/georgetownma/3-12-25%20MA%20Model%20Floodplain%20Bylaw%20Training%20Slides.pdf
- Hopkinton Resilient Bylaws StoryMap: https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/34e6ee4316024c6ab8868cc98de83d64

Model Bylaws & Sample Regulations

- Neponset Stormwater Partnership Model Stormwater Bylaw (NepRWA/EPA): https://www3.epa.gov/region1/npdes/stormwater/ma/nsp-model-stormwater-bylaw-may-2019.docx
- MA Model Floodplain Bylaw 2020 Version 3 (contact MA DHCD)
- Greenscapes Model Bylaw Toolkit: https://mvpc.org/greenscapes-model-bylaw-toolkit/
- MACC List of Model Bylaws: https://www.maccweb.org/page/Model_Bylaws_Regulations_Sample_Docs
- MA Local Water Conservation Model Bylaws: https://www.mass.gov/guides/model-bylaws
- Model Open Space Design / Natural Resource Protection Zoning: https://srpedd.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/02090436/Model-Open-Space-Design-OSD-Natural-Resource-Protection-Zoning-NRPZ.pdf
- Boston Coastal Flood Resilience Overlay District (Article 25A): https://www.bostonplans.org/planning-zoning/planning-initiatives/flood-resiliency-building-guidelines-zoning-over

Regional Partners & Technical Assistance

- Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA): https://www.neponset.org
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) - DLTA and planning assistance
- MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs -MVP and Planning Assistance Grants
- MA Association of Conservation Commissions (MACC): https://www.maccweb.org

- MA Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP): https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-environmental-protection

Appendix: Suggested Next Steps for Municipalities

The following phased action sequence is recommended for municipalities beginning a climate-resilient regulatory update process:

Phase 1: Assess (Months 1-3)

- Complete the Municipal Bylaw Status Assessment Matrix (Section 2) for your community
- Run the Self-Assessment Scoring System (Section 5) to identify highest-priority bylaws
- Pull NRFM data for your community to understand local flood risk geography
- Identify internal champions: Planning Director, Conservation Administrator, Stormwater Manager
- Convene a brief internal working group meeting to review results and set priorities

Phase 2: Plan (Months 3-6)

- Develop a Regulatory Update Work Plan identifying: which bylaws to update, in what sequence, with what resources
- Identify and apply for funding (MVP Action Grant, DLTA) to support external legal/technical assistance
- Engage NepRWA and MAPC or others as regional partners and technical resources
- Begin stakeholder engagement: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, DPW, Select Board briefings

Phase 3: Draft & Adopt (Months 6-24)

- Work with staff and legal counsel to draft specific bylaw language updates; use model bylaws as starting points
- Conduct public engagement including hearings in EJ communities
- Present to Town Meeting / City Council for adoption
- Develop implementation guidance (checklists, application forms, staff training)

Phase 4: Monitor & Refine

- Track how new regulations are being applied; collect data on green infrastructure installed, flood losses avoided
- Revisit bylaws every 5 years or after major flood/hazard events
- Share learnings with other Neponset watershed communities and NepRWA