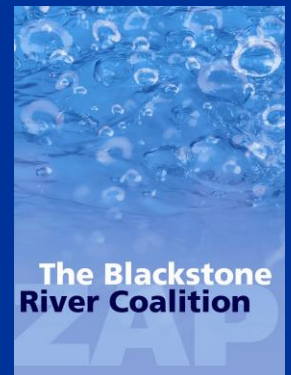
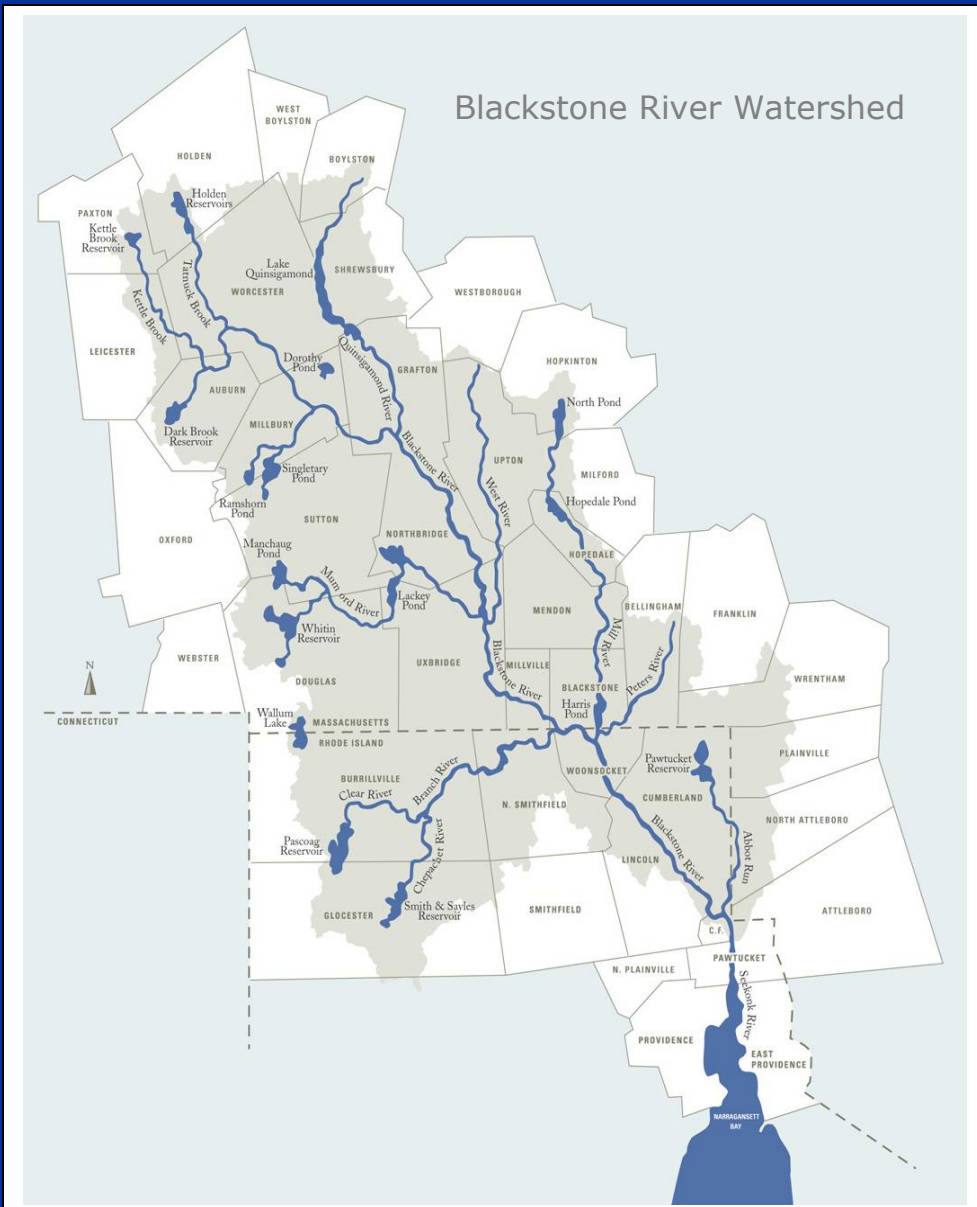


A Homeowner's Guide to Protecting Water Quality in the Blackstone River Watershed



If you live in the shaded area of the map, then you live in the Blackstone River watershed. You can help restore and protect its water quality. Look inside to learn how. A cleaner Blackstone River begins in your own backyard!

Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

A Homeowner's Guide to Protecting Water Quality in the Blackstone Valley

A Cleaner Blackstone River Begins in Your Own Backyard!

Lawns/
Gardens

Terrific
Trees

Car Care

Pet Waste

Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens

Household
Hazardous
Waste

Pervious
Surfaces

Stream
Buffers

THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY is, in fact, a watershed – a drainage basin that includes all the land over which rain and snowmelt flow to the Blackstone River. Reducing polluted runoff, or nonpoint source pollution, in the watershed is the major goal of the Blackstone River Coalition. We're working with homeowners, business owners, developers and local decision makers to all do their part – it's called the "Tackling Stormwater in the Blackstone River Watershed" initiative. Together, we can all help reach the goal of a fishable and swimmable Blackstone River.

Introduction:

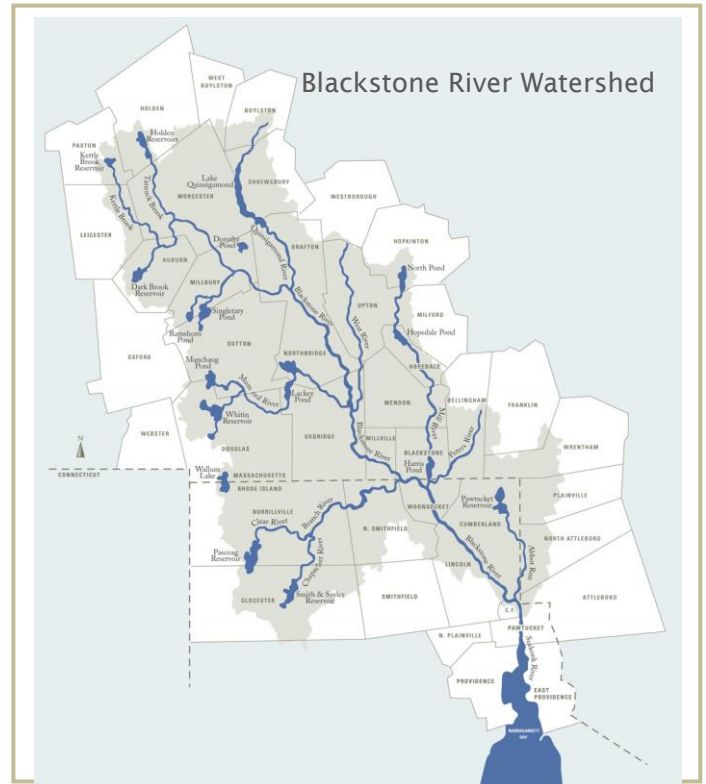
WE DRINK IT, bathe in it, flush it, swim in it and more. Water is an integral part of our every day lives. The water you use to drink, wash, and cook comes from a watershed near your home. Every community, whether it is hilly or flat, urban or rural, is part of a watershed. Ours is the Blackstone River's watershed, with many sub-watersheds for the tributaries that drain to it. Within each watershed, all water drains to the lowest point, carrying with it soil particles, oil, road salt, organic materials, pesticides, and fertilizers.

THE BLACKSTONE AND ITS TRIBUTARIES define our landscapes, yet their beauty hides the fact that beneath the surface, those streams and rivers are not entirely well. Runoff from roads, parking lots, lawns, and farms can carry oil, metals, bacteria, pesticides, and nutrients into streams, making them unhealthy places for critters like fish and aquatic insects to live. High bacterial levels can make it unsafe for humans to swim.

BUT THERE IS GOOD NEWS...we know the prescription for the Blackstone's health, and it starts with us. By each of us developing simple, water-friendly lifestyle practices right at home we can make a huge difference!

What You Can Do....

This guide is designed to help us reduce our impact on the streams and rivers in the Blackstone River watershed. To achieve this we need to develop new yard- and home-care practices that reduce our pollution, storm water volume, and water consumption. To learn how, turn the page.



If you live within the shaded area, you live in the Blackstone watershed.

Reducing pollutants: Water running off our lawns, roads, and other surfaces picks up nutrients, bacteria, and chemicals, carries them to stormdrains in the roads, and then deposits them directly into streams in the Blackstone watershed. These pollutants can cause a variety of problems for living things — including humans — that live in or interact with our streams. For example, extra nutrients from fertilizer cause too much algae to grow, which robs the water of oxygen and makes it a bad place for fish, snails, and other stream critters to live. If the stream isn't a healthy habitat for these critters, this in turn affects animals that are higher in the food chain, like mammals and birds.

Reducing storm water volume: Another major problem for the streams in the Blackstone River watershed is the sheer volume of storm water that flows into them. As the land becomes more and more developed, impervious surfaces like roads, parking lots, driveways and rooftops generate more and more runoff. Because there are fewer and fewer vegetated areas, there is less and less infiltration of rainwater.

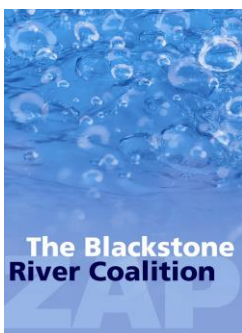
Storm water from all parts of the watershed is concentrated in the storm drain system and carried to our streams at very high speeds. When the water finally reaches the streams, it blasts adjacent stream channels, causing them to become wider and deeper. The soil eroded from stream banks during storms smothers aquatic habitat in the Blackstone River watershed. Over time, this sediment is carried downstream to Narragansett Bay, where it combines with sediment from other urban streams in the Bay. Sediment is one reason that the Bay is unhealthy.

Reducing water consumption: Water that we consume in the Blackstone watershed eventually flows back into the Blackstone watershed, either through septic systems, wastewater treatment plants, or untreated into our storm drains. Using less tap water prevents unnecessary chemical treatment and disposal from the treatment plant, and save you money on your water bill. By not overwatering your yard, you can help prevent too much water — and pollutants — from entering the streams in the watershed.

As you decide which actions to take, remember this: The actions you learn about will reduce both pollutants and the volume of storm water entering the stream from your yard.



<http://www.eastpikeland.org/index>



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This guide was developed by Mass Audubon for the BRC, with partial funding from Southold Meadow Farm, Auburn, MA. It is adapted from the Watershed Approach to Stream Health (WASH) Project. Additional printing funds have been provided by a US EPA Healthy Communities grant, and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.



Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

Terrific Trees – A Natural Pollution Solution

Lawns/
Gardens

Terrific
Trees

Planting trees in your yard reduces the volume of stormwater runoff reaching the road, the stormdrains, and the nearest waterway. Lawns are often so compacted that they generate up to 30% runoff, so replacing some lawn with trees will not only enhance your property but it will also enhance our waterways.

Car Care

Pet Waste

Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens

Household
Hazardous
Waste

Pervious
Surfaces

Stream
Buffers

WHY?



Trees tame stormwater by:

Slowing the flow – During the growing season, leaves and branches slow down rain drops as they fall. Extensive root systems take up water

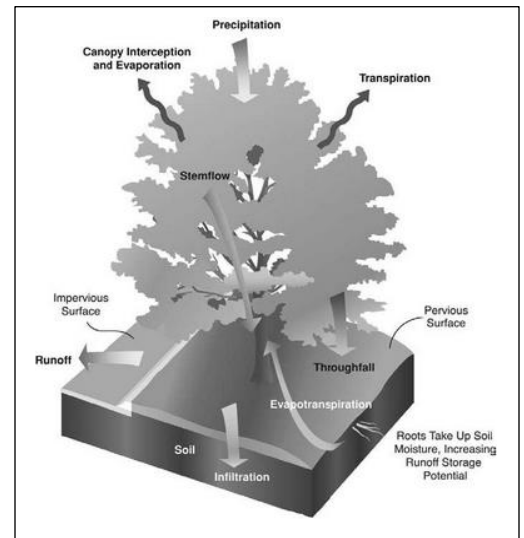
and hold soil in place, preventing erosion.

Fantastic filtration – Trees can utilize excess nutrients and break down many other pollutants found in stormwater.

A White oak tree, 12 inches in diameter at 4.5 feet, will intercept 1,245 gallons of stormwater runoff this year.

HOW?

- ◆ Trees reduce stormwater runoff by capturing and storing rainfall in the canopy and releasing water into the atmosphere through evapotranspiration.
- ◆ Leaves and bark of trees retain a huge amount of water, allowing some of it to evaporate and some to more slowly reach the ground.
- ◆ Tree roots and leaf litter create soil conditions that promote the infiltration of rainwater into the soil. This helps to replenish our groundwater supply and maintain streamflow during dry periods.
- ◆ Trees also help to slow down and temporarily store runoff, which further promotes infiltration, and decreases flooding and erosion downstream.
- ◆ Trees reduce pollutants by taking up nutrients and other pollutants from soils and water through their roots, and by transforming pollutants into less harmful substances.
- ◆ In general, trees are most effective at reducing runoff from smaller, more frequent storms.



more →

BENEFITS

In addition to these stormwater benefits, trees provide a host of other benefits such as improved air quality, reduced air temperatures in summer, reduced heating and cooling costs, increased property values, habitat for wildlife, and recreation and aesthetic value.

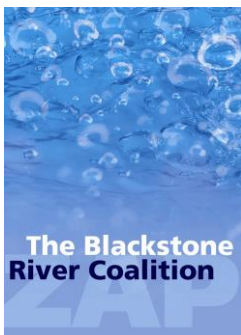
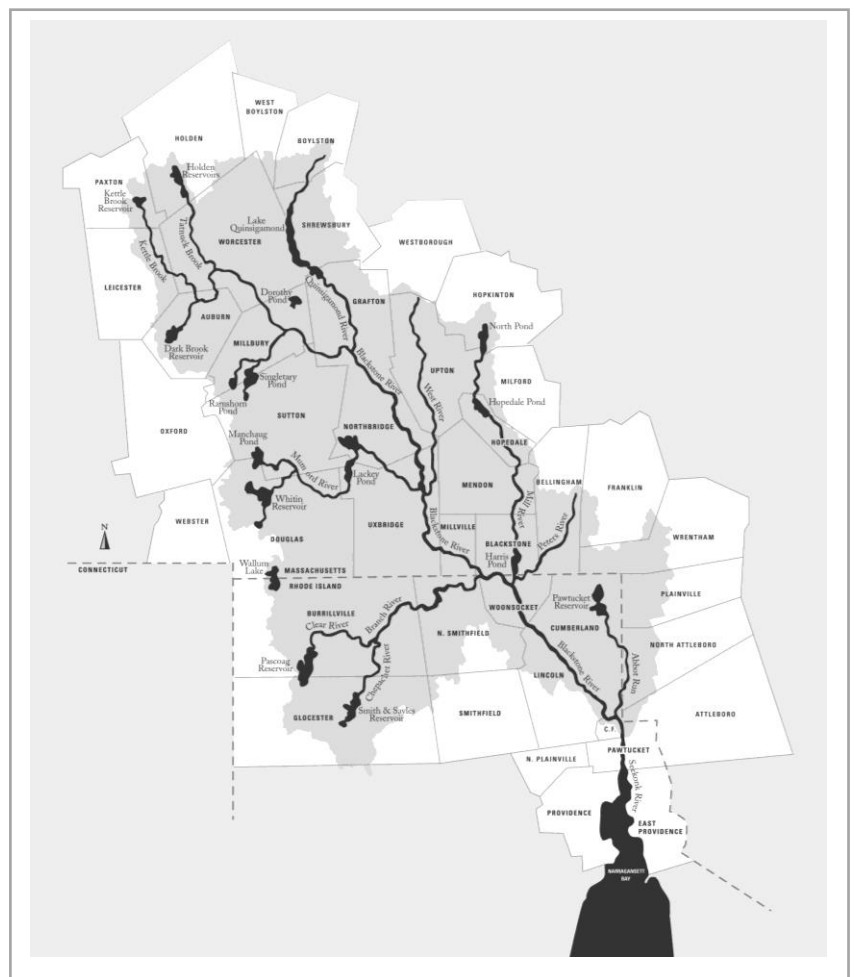
RESOURCES

How to plant trees: <https://www.arboday.org/trees/tips/>

Calculate stormwater benefit of trees: <https://www.arboday.org/calculator/>

Trees Tame Stormwater Interactive Poster <http://www.arboday.org/trees/stormwater.cfm>

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Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

Cleaner Car Care

Fixing oil and antifreeze leaks, and getting clean on the green

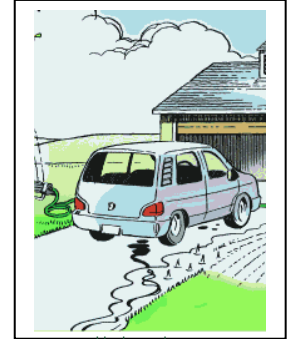
Lawns/
Gardens

WHY?

Terrific
Trees



Leaks: Oil, antifreeze and other fluids that leak from your car are washed from your driveway into the street, and then into **storm drains** that flow directly into our Blackstone watershed waterways. In the U.S., it is estimated that petroleum



Car Care

washed off the pavement every year, along with dirty oil dumped directly into storm drains, sends 15 times more oil into the ocean than the Exxon Valdez did. One pint of motor oil can contaminate 125,000 gallons of drinking water and make an oil slick about the size of two football fields.

Pet Waste

Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens

Washing: How and where you wash your vehicle makes a difference to our local environment! The soap, together with dirt and oil washed from your vehicle, can find its way to local streams, wells and groundwater through storm drains, which are not linked to a water treatment plant. Runoff of excess phosphorous from cleaning products can contribute to the decline in health of our local streams. Phosphorus acts as a nutrient or fertilizer for aquatic plants, causing excessive growth. This pollution harms water quality and aquatic life.



<http://www.lismore.nsw.gov>

Household
Hazardous
Waste

Pervious
Surfaces

Here's how you can reduce harmful oil and cleaning-product runoff from your vehicle.

HOW?

Stream
Buffers

Leaks:

- ◆ If you notice vehicle fluids on your driveway, call your local repair shop to fix it, or repair it as soon as possible. If you change your own oil, return the used motor oil to the place where you bought it for recycling – it's the law in Massachusetts. Also you can check with your Department of Public Works to see if they collect it. Never pour it down the storm drain.
- ◆ Clean up spills immediately. Use a non-toxic biodegradable chemical from your local hardware store that will safely break down oil deposits, or use kitty litter to soak up oil. Place it in your garbage can in a sealed bag. Do not hose fluids into the street where they can eventually reach local streams and lakes.
- ◆ When parked in your driveway, keep a drip pan under the leak until you repair it. Empty the collected fluids into a tightly sealed and labeled container, and recycle it.

more →

Washing:

- ◆ If you wash your vehicle at home, wash it on grass or gravel instead of the street or driveway to help filter the soapy water and grime.
- ◆ Use soap that is biodegradable. To conserve water, make sure your hose has an on-off switch or nozzle.
- ◆ If you use a bucket of soap and water, pour what is left in your bucket down the sink so it can be treated, not down the stormdrain.

RESOURCES

<https://spacreek.net/resource/tips-for-environmentally-friendly-car-care/>

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/resources/oilspi01.pdf>

<https://dem.ri.gov/programs/customertech/used-oil-recycling.php>

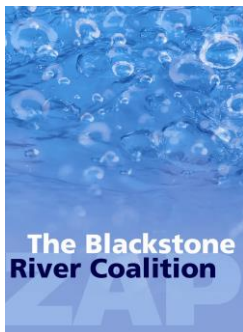
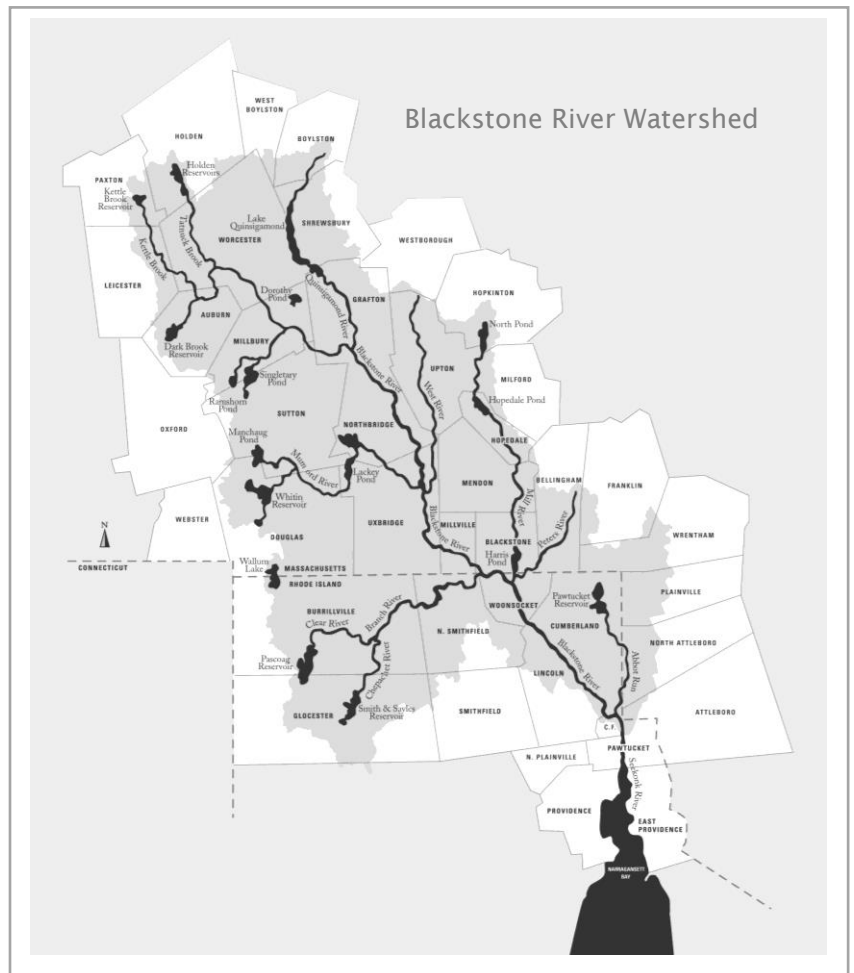
"**You Dump It, You Drink It**" poster:

<https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-05/en-poster.pdf>

BENEFITS

You reduce the impacts of oil and other petroleum products from harming aquatic life, and avoid adding nutrients that cause excessive aquatic vegetation.

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Blackstone River Coalition www.zaptheblackstone.org

 **Mass Audubon**
Protecting the Nature of Massachusetts



Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

Poop Pickup

Cleaning Up After Your Dog



Lawns/
Gardens

WHY?



Poop pollutes. Thousands of dogs live in the Blackstone watershed and their waste is a health risk when deposited on streets and lawns. It can be washed down **storm drains** and end up in our brooks, streams and rivers, and lakes and ponds. The bacteria, together with other pollutants, can make

Terrific
Trees

Car Care

the water unsafe for swimming and cause health hazards for humans and aquatic life. It may be difficult to picture how one dog depositing a small amount of animal waste here and there can result in potential water pollution, but studies have shown that the cumulative impact of waste from all the pets, livestock, and resident waterfowl within a watershed can have a significant impact on water quality. Here's how to take care of your pet's poop without polluting your neighborhood and its water quality.

Pet Waste

HOW?

Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens

- ◆ When walking your dog, bring a small trowel or "pooper-scooper" and a plastic bag.
- ◆ Make sure your pet does not pee directly on the pavement. It is less likely the next rainstorm will wash the waste into the storm drains or local tributaries.
- ◆ After your pet does its business, scoop the poop and place it in the bag. Tie it shut until you get home.
- ◆ Flush the poop down the toilet or place the bag in your garbage can.

Household
Hazardous
Waste

Pervious
Surfaces

- ◆ It's not just your dog! Feeding ducks and geese may seem harmless but, in fact, can be a nuisance to people and harmful to our water. Feeding waterfowl causes them to become dependent on humans. This, in turn, creates unnaturally high populations and problems in our parks and lakes. Waterfowl waste can pollute our water with harmful bacteria.

Stream
Buffers

RESOURCES

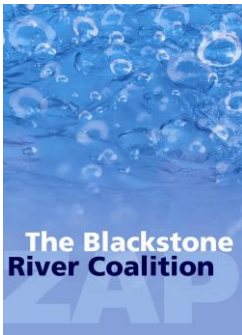
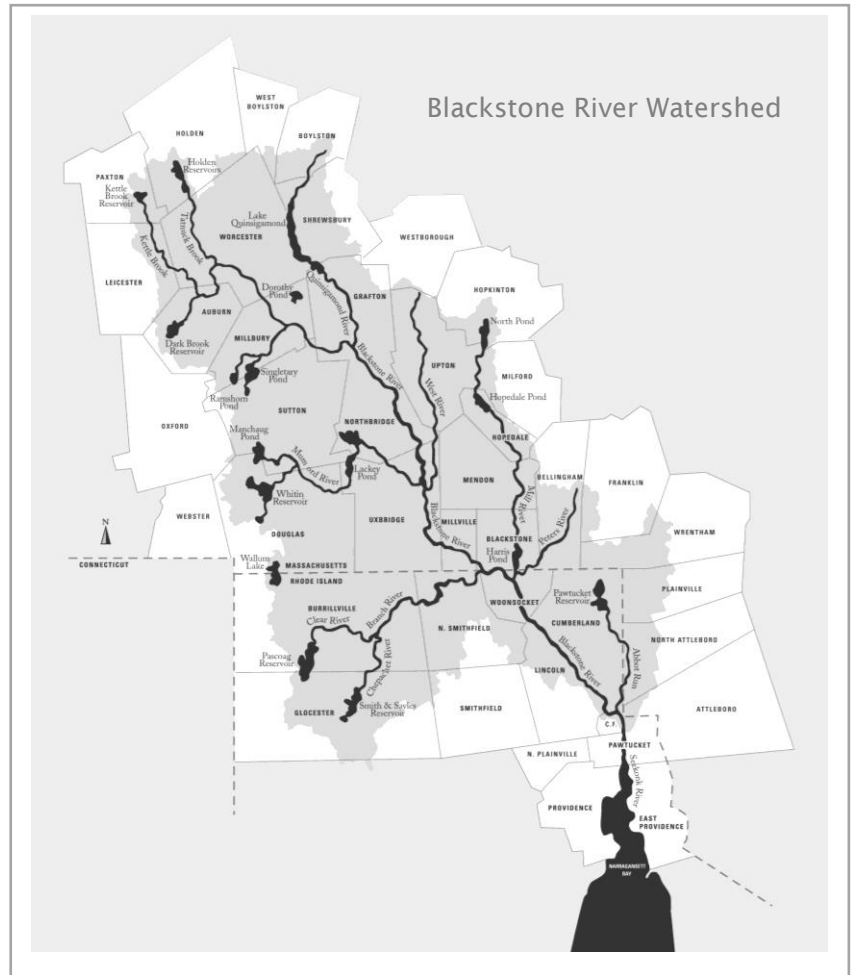
<https://cfpub.epa.gov/npstbx/files/pet%20care%20fact%20sheet.pdf>

BENEFITS

You help keep the watershed healthy, protecting fish and wildlife habitats. You also make your neighborhood more enjoyable.

more →

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Blackstone River Coalition www.zaptheblackstone.org



Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

Rooftop Runoff - Harvesting Rainwater

Lawns/
Gardens

Redirecting downspouts, collecting rainwater in rain barrels, and creating rain gardens can cut down on your water bill as well as protect water quality.

WHY?

Terrific
Trees



Water running off your roof during a rainstorm can be part of the problem — or a resource you can put to good use! On many properties in the Blackstone watershed, rooftop runoff from the gutter and downspout drains to the driveway or onto yards with compacted clay soil. In either case, it eventually flows into **storm drains** in the road and directly into our local streams, often causing flooding. Reducing storm water runoff is the first step to reviving life in urban streams.

Car Care

Pet Waste

**Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens**

What's a rain garden? A rain garden is an attractive native plant garden with a special purpose: to reduce the amount of stormwater that rushes into our streams and other waterways. It is constructed as a place to direct the stormwater that falls on your property and is landscaped with water-loving native plant species. By creating a rain garden in your yard, you can use rain the way nature intended — instead of wasting this valuable resource!



http://nemo.uconn.edu/tools/publications/rain_garden_broch.pdf

Household
Hazardous
Waste

Here's how to divert rainwater runoff away from hard surfaces and create rain gardens to infiltrate more, so that you can help support aquatic life and reduce stream bank erosion. What's more, rainwater diversion can help you save water for use in your yard, eliminate potential flooding in your basement, and reduce your water bill.

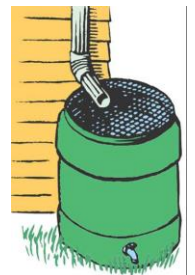
Pervious
Surfaces

HOW?

Redirect downspouts:

Stream
Buffers

- ◆ Check your gutters and roof drains and remove any leaves or other debris that may block water flow. If leaf accumulation is a recurring problem, consider installing commercial gutter shields.
- ◆ If your roof drain downspouts discharge to your driveway or too close to the house, install extensions that carry the water at least six feet away from the driveway or foundation to a vegetated area of your yard. Use additional pieces of downspout or open gutters for the extensions. Place a splash block at the end of the extension to spread out the water as it runs onto your lawn. This reduces the potential for soil erosion.
- ◆ Or you can collect runoff in a rain barrel to use for irrigation. Cut off your downspout at an appropriate distance from the ground, and place a rain barrel underneath. Place screening over it to protect it from leaf litter and mosquitoes. Attach a hose to the spigot or use a watering can.



more →

Create Rain Gardens:

- ◆ Look for low-lying areas of your yard where water tends to run or collect during a rainstorm.
- ◆ Dig out the soil 2-4 feet down, taking care not to destroy any significant roots of nearby trees.
- ◆ Mix shredded leaf mulch (available from your municipality) with the soil that you have removed. Refill the hole.
- ◆ Place a berm (small mound) along the lower edge of the area you've selected, so you can capture and retain stormwater.
- ◆ Plant the garden with water-loving native plants that can handle alternately very wet and dry conditions.

RESOURCES

Rain Garden How-To: <https://nemo.uconn.edu/raingardens/>
<https://www.epa.gov/soakuptherain/soak-rain-rain-barrels>

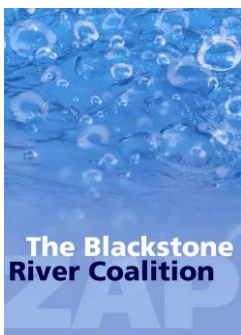
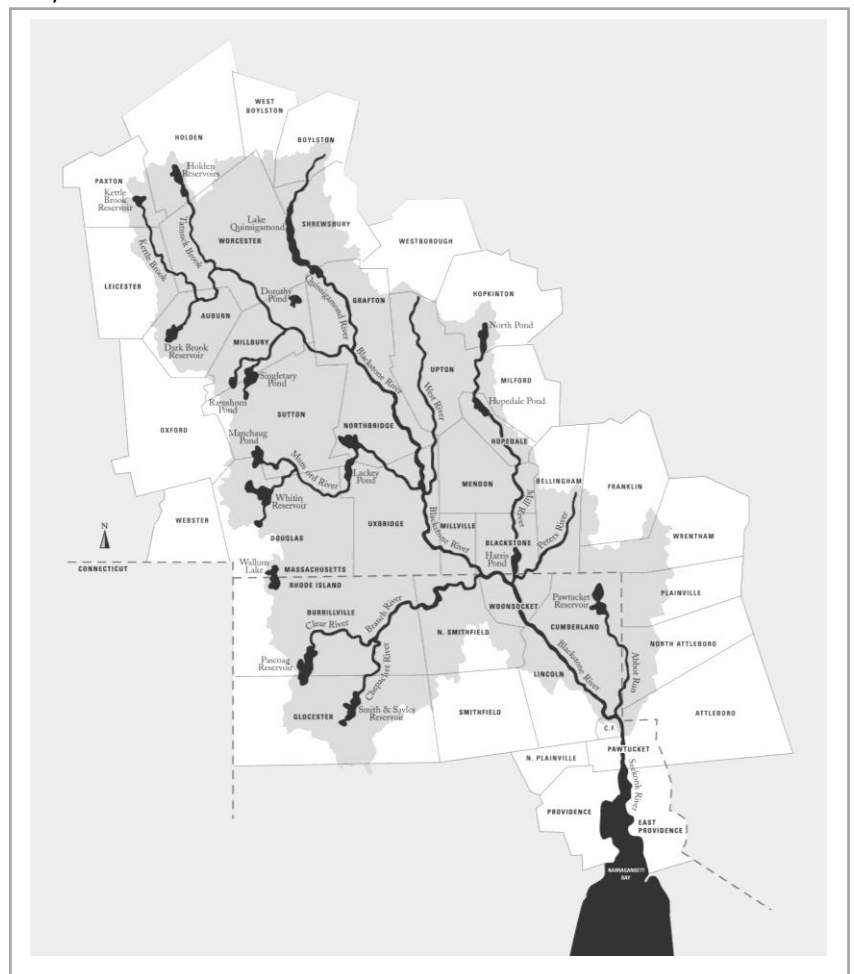
Visit Mass Audubon's demonstration rain gardens at Broad Meadow Brook Conservation Center, 414 Massasoit Road, Worcester, MA.

BENEFITS

You reduce the volume of stormwater entering our streams, while creating a source of water for your yard between rainfalls. You also save money on your water and sewer bills.

Your rain garden will help keep water in the ground – where it belongs! It will also add an attractive and interesting new element to your landscaping.

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Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

H2W – Household Hazardous Waste

Lawns/
Gardens

Carefully storing and disposing of household cleaners, chemicals, and oils



Terrific
Trees

WHY?

Car Care



To Watershed

Antifreeze, household cleaners, gasoline, pesticides, oil paints, solvents, and motor oil are just some of the common household products that can enter our **storm drains**. Help keep these out of our lakes and streams. Instead of putting these items in the trash, down the storm drain, or on the ground, take them to a local hazardous waste center or collection day.

Pet Waste

HOW?

Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens

Here are some simple steps you can take to carefully dispose of household wastes and help keep our water clean. Give them a try. A few simple changes can make a big difference!

**Household
Hazardous
Waste**

- ◆ Identify it. Be aware of household products that can harm children, pets, and the environment. The words "danger," "caution," "warning," or "toxic" indicate that you need to be careful in how you use and dispose of the product.

- ◆ Less is better. Reduce waste and save money by purchasing only the materials you need. When possible, choose less toxic alternatives. For example, try cleaning your windows with vinegar and water.

Pervious
Surfaces

- ◆ Store properly. Keep unused products in their original containers with labels intact. Select cool, dry storage areas that are away from children, pets, and wildlife.

Stream
Buffers

- ◆ Disposal is key. Never dump motor oil, chemicals, and other toxic materials down storm drains, sinks, or on the ground. Contact your local community for disposal locations, guidelines, and dates.

- ◆ Don't forget the RV. Dispose of recreational vehicle sanitary waste at a nearby drop-off location. Never put it down a storm drain or roadside ditch!

RESOURCES

<https://keepmassbeautiful.org/what-we-do/waste-reduction-recycling/household-hazardous-waste.html>

<https://web.uri.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/61/HazardousWaste.pdf>

For more information on RV dump locations and requirements:

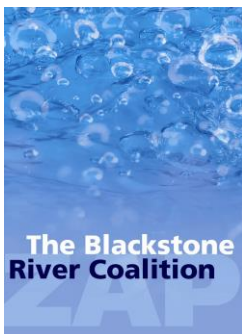
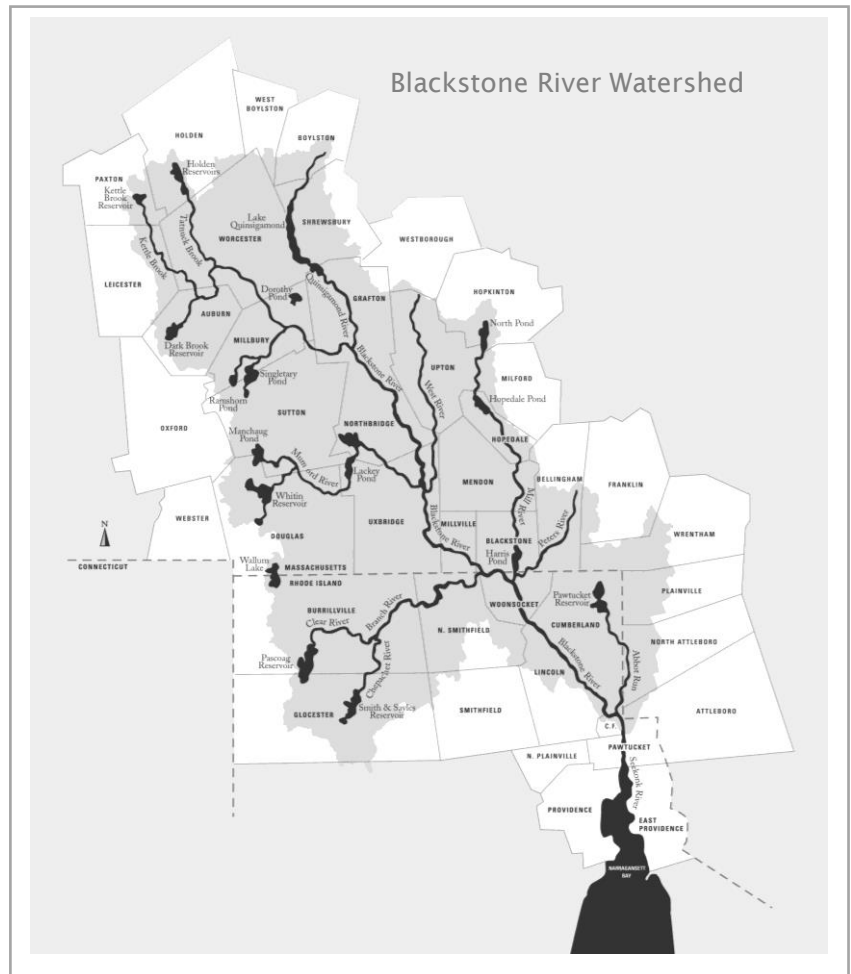
<https://www.rvdumps.com/map-of-rv-dump-stations/>

more →

BENEFITS

By keeping these toxic materials out of our waterways, you make living much easier for aquatic critters and plants.

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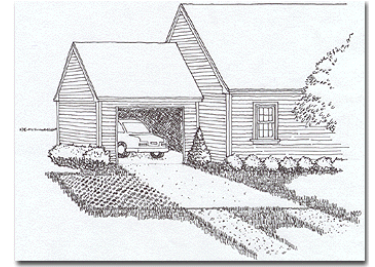
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Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

Homeowners: UNPAVE!



Lawns/
Gardens

Reducing paved surfaces

WHY?

Terrific
Trees



This is one of the most important actions you can take toward helping to improve our local streams in the Blackstone watershed. Did you ever consider how much water runs off your property during a rainstorm? Every time there's a heavy rain, hundreds—even thousands—of gallons of water fall on your roof, driveway, patio, and other paved surfaces. These surfaces are called "impervious" because it is impossible for the water to penetrate them.

Car Care

Pet Waste

Instead of seeping back into the ground, the water rushes from your property into **storm drains**, picking up chemicals, litter, oil and other pollutants along the way. From the storm drains, it flows directly into local streams, untreated. The large volume of water that flows into our streams during a rainstorm flushes life out of our waterways, erodes stream banks, recedes quickly, and leaves excessively low levels of water in the stream after a rain. Storm water running off of impervious surfaces does not infiltrate to ground water, so there is less recharge in our streams. Our streams are "flashier", with higher high water and lower low water.

Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens

Household
Hazardous
Waste

Here's how you can reduce runoff from your property and infiltrate more.

HOW?

Pervious
Surfaces

- ◆ Analyze how much of your property is covered with paved surface. Make a list of all of the impervious surfaces, including your roof, driveway, patio, and other paved areas.
- ◆ When it comes time to repave your driveway, front walk, or other pathways, choose gravel, wood mulch, or open-design pavers such as flat stones, bricks, pre-cast concrete lattice pavers, or pervious concrete. Place the new cover on well-drained soil or on a sand or gravel bed, so that rainwater can soak into the ground. (If weeds grow in the spaces between pavers, consider introducing moss as a natural way to crowd out weeds and make the area more attractive.)
- ◆ If you want to take action right away, decide where you could most easily remove impervious surface and replace it with wood mulch, gravel, soil, or alternative pavers.
 - Start with one small area or project, and expand from there.
 - Remove the paved surface or compacted soil using a pick or hire a contractor to remove the pavement for you.
 - Break up the compacted soil underneath, and add shredded leaf mulch to help the soil retain water.
 - Cover with the pervious surface of your choice, as indicated above.

Stream
Buffers

more →

- ◆ If you're thinking about building an addition on your house, consider building up — not out.

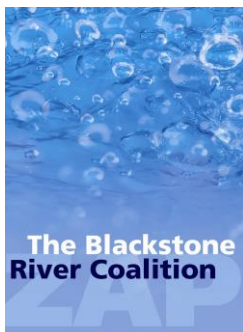
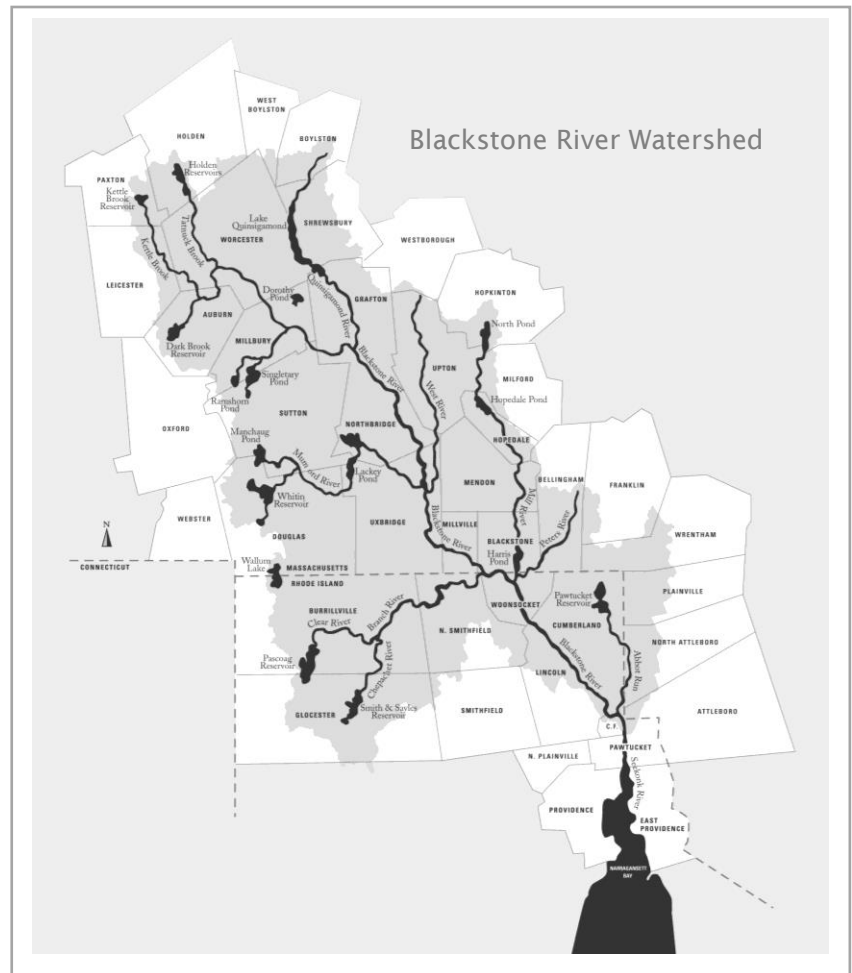
RESOURCES

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/stormwater-solutions-for-homeowners-fact-sheet-reducing-impervious-surfaces/download>

BENEFITS

By replacing hard surface with porous surface, you will allow water to be absorbed into the ground. Not only will you save thousands of gallons of rainwater from running into the storm drains and into the streams – you are helping to replenish our groundwater at a time when water is more precious than ever!

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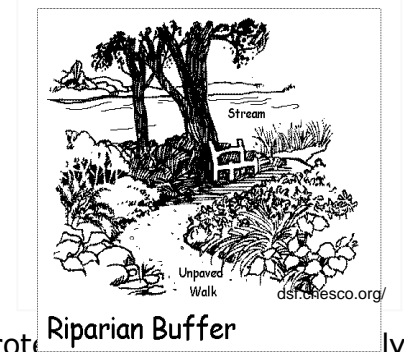


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This guide was developed by Mass Audubon for the BRC.

Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River

Life on the Edge – of a Waterway



Lawns/
Gardens

Maintaining stream buffers and tree canopies

WHY?

Terrific
Trees

A key component for improving water quality is the protection of environmentally sensitive areas of vegetation that exist near streams, lakes and ponds, and wetland areas. These buffer areas help protect water quality in local streams and the mainstem of the Blackstone.

Car Care

Vegetated buffers and tree canopies along stream banks shade waterways thus keeping temperatures down and dissolved oxygen up, provide detritus in the stream that serves as food and shelter for aquatic species, and stabilize stream banks, stream channels and floodplains from the erosion and scour of high velocity flood flows.

Pet Waste

These buffers also serve as the link between terrestrial wildlife and their source of water, food and cover. The roots absorb and "take up" nutrients and other pollutants from ground water as it migrates through the root zone. Plant stems and leaves filter pollutants and sediment from overland flow of storm water through passing through the buffer.

Rooftop
Runoff/
Rain
Gardens

Buffers prevent lawn chemicals from entering the waterway. Fertilizers washing into aquatic systems can cause algae blooms, which can ruin swimming and boating opportunities, create foul taste and odor in drinking water, and kill fish by removing oxygen from the water. Buffers also prevent sedimentation from erosion. Too much sediment can cloud the water, reducing the amount of sunlight that reaches aquatic plants, and raising water temperature thus reducing oxygen. Sediment can also clog the gills of fish or smother fish larvae.

Household
Hazardous
Waste

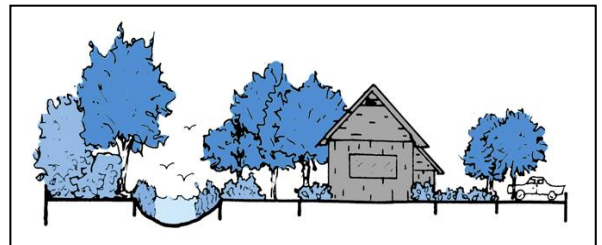
Pervious
Surfaces

It is very important to protect and restore stream buffers and tree canopy to help preserve these environmentally sensitive areas. If you are lucky enough to have a waterway or wetland on your property, you have a unique opportunity to help improve water quality in your neighborhood and the Blackstone River. Here's how to create, protect and maintain buffer areas.

Stream
Buffers

HOW?

- ◆ Don't mow down to your stream. Leave at least 10 feet in native plant buffer to filter pollutants.
- ◆ If you fertilize your lawn, stop application at least 20 feet from water's edge to minimize runoff.
- ◆ Reduce surface water runoff and erosion by using permeable paving surfaces, directing runoff to planted areas and increasing groundwater recharge.



more →

- ◆ If your stream bank has begun to erode, seek expert help to repair it.
- ◆ Compost yard waste such as grass clippings, sticks, leaves, and brush; do not dump on the river's edge or into the water, as it can add nutrients that result in excessive aquatic plant growth just like fertilizer does.

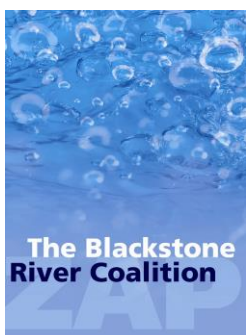
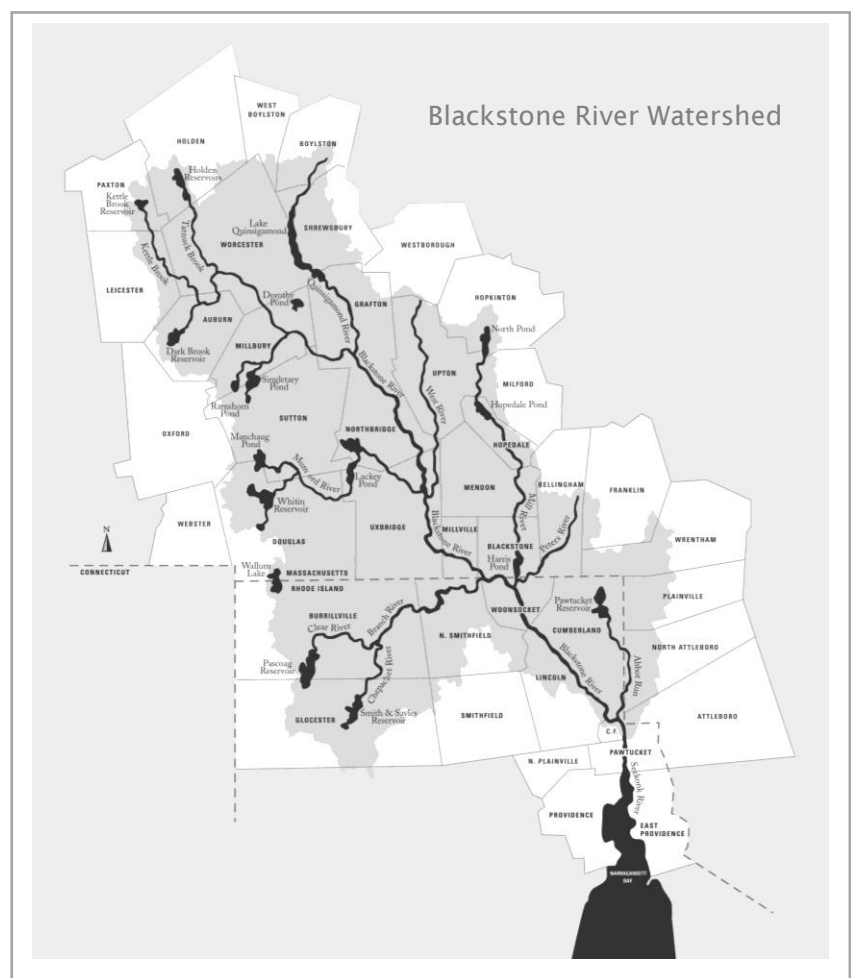
RESOURCES

<https://conservect.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Backyard-Stream-Buffers.pdf>
<https://extension.psu.edu/roadside-guide-to-clean-water-riparian-buffers>

BENEFITS

You help keep the watershed healthy, protecting fish and wildlife habitats. You also make your neighborhood more enjoyable.

If you live within the shaded area on the map, then you live in the Blackstone River watershed.



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