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MEDIA RELEASE

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AWARDED TO COMMUNITIES FOR LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT IN THE BLACKSTONE WATERSHED

WORCESTER, MA—Five communities in the Blackstone River watershed have been selected to receive technical assistance for local Low Impact Development (LID) and land use planning projects to improve water quality and stormwater management. Technical assistance is being offered through the partnership of Mass Audubon, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, Horsley Witten Group, Inc, and the Blackstone River Coalition.

The municipalities chosen following a competitive application process are: Auburn, Grafton Mendon, Millbury, and Worcester. This free, tailored technical assistance will address a separate set of needs for each community. Four of the communities have chosen to receive assistance in reviewing local land use regulations to better support LID and green infrastructure.

Mendon's Chair of the Land/Energy Use Committee, Anne Mazar explains that this technical assistance will help the town "protect the water resources and save the town money through lessening flood and stormwater runoff damage by the use of green infrastructure. The Highway Department and the Planning Board have taken many steps towards these goals, but this added expertise with mapping and bylaw changes will go beyond what the town has done through the efforts of staff and volunteers. It will be good for the environment and the town budget."

While the selected rural and suburban communities plan to protect their natural green spaces and the ecosystem services they provide through conservation design, the City of Worcester will continue progress on greening their city. Their strategy will include tree plantings, incorporation of LID into redevelopment and road reconstruction projects, and improving erosion and sedimentation control.

The fifth community, Millbury, has chosen public engagement and planning assistance to green their downtown center, which will both improve aesthetics and protect the adjoining Blackstone River. “Millbury is excited at this unique opportunity to engage its citizens, businesses, municipal staff, and elected officials actively involved in charting the future of our downtown spaces harmoniously alongside the Blackstone River,” says DPW Director Rob McNeil.

All five communities will also receive GIS maps depicting existing natural green infrastructure, water resources, and priority protection and development areas. These maps will assist communities in making informed decisions about local development and conservation.

Mass Audubon and its partners are excited to share the opportunity to improve our local communities’ health, safety, and environments. Communities using the LID and conservation design techniques promoted in this technical assistance offer receive many benefits, including:

- Reduced costs of grey infrastructure such as pipes and engineered treatment systems
- Reduced construction and maintenance costs
- Protection and improvement of water quality and maintenance of natural flows in rivers and streams
- Reduced flooding and infrastructure maintenance and improved public safety
- Protection of natural green infrastructure that provides recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and fisheries habitat
- Improved air quality and public health
- Increased property values and quality of life



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