



July 1, 2025

The Honorable Rebecca L. Rausch  
Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Environment, Chair  
24 Beacon Street, Room 215  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Christine P. Barber  
Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Environment, Chair  
24 Beacon Street, Room 167  
Boston, MA 02133

RE: H.1053/S.671, *An Act to create a Merrimack River Collaborative*

Dear Chair Rausch and Chair Barber,

On behalf of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), one of the 13 regional planning agencies in Massachusetts, I am writing to express strong support for H.1053/S.671, *An Act to create a Merrimack River Collaborative*. The passage of this legislation is necessary to preserve and restore the Merrimack River, a vital economic, ecological, and cultural asset for the Greater Lowell region, the Merrimack Valley, and all of the communities it connects.

The entire NMCOG region falls within the Merrimack River watershed. The river is a crucial resource for drinking water, stormwater discharge, recreation, and community identity. And yet, it remains threatened by impairments including bacteria, heavy metals, combined sewer overflows (CSOs), and emergent pollutants—threats that compromise public health, wildlife, water quality, and long-term regional resilience.

The Merrimack River Collaborative (MRC), currently coordinated by NMCOG, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC), and the Merrimack River Watershed Council (MRWC), shows the power of collective regional action. The MRC is emerging as a hub for collective leadership, convening technical experts, elected officials, municipal staff, and volunteers to address long-standing environmental challenges. Each partner organization has launched educational initiatives, data-sharing platforms, and on-the-ground projects, such as a regional stormwater asset inventory and a new Early Alert Tool that raises public awareness around water quality risks following CSO events.

In 2024, the MRC hosted the Third Annual Water Quality Roundtable, bringing together regional and federal partners to exchange knowledge and define collaborative priorities. With new state funding, NMCOG and MVPC are leading a regional Merrimack River Cleanup Project, coordinating efforts in five communities to reduce pollution and promote stewardship. Yet, as impactful as these efforts are, the need for formal, sustained, and legislatively supported coordination remains clear.

The Merrimack River is a shared resource. Decisions made upstream affect communities downstream. Grassroots efforts, while powerful, cannot bear the full burden of watershed-scale restoration. The creation of a permanent Merrimack River Collaborative through H.1053/S.671 will provide the legislative framework needed to secure funding, sustain coordination, and deliver results for all river-adjacent communities.

This is a moment to invest in our collective economic, environmental, and public health future. We urge you to support H.1053/S.671 and help ensure that the Merrimack River is protected for our communities today and for generations to come.

Thank you for your leadership and continued commitment to the preservation of the Commonwealth's natural resources. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or Meghan Tenhoff, Principal Planner, Sustainability, at [jraitt@nmcog.org](mailto:jraitt@nmcog.org) or [mtenhoff@nmcog.org](mailto:mtenhoff@nmcog.org) respectively.

Sincerely,



Jennifer M. Raitt  
Executive Director

Meghan Tenhoff  
Principal Planner, Sustainability