

Taunton River Coalition Advocacy Priorities

The Advocacy Subcommittee of the Taunton River Coalition has adopted six priority areas for action:

State and federal legislation

Implementation of Taunton River Wild and Scenic designation

Water resources

Municipal planning and land use regulation

Review of impacts from new and existing projects

State programs

Our legislative priorities are described on a separate page. Below are summaries of the other five priority areas:

Implementation of Taunton River Wild and Scenic designation

As a result of many years of efforts by volunteers, local and regional officials and our representatives in Congress, legislation to add the Taunton River to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System was enacted by Congress and signed into law by President Obama on March 30, 2009. This victory brings national recognition to the outstanding values of the River and a mandate supported by federal funding to accomplish the goals and objectives identified in the Taunton River Wild and Stewardship Plan. The Coalition works with the Taunton River Wild and Scenic Stewardship Council to implement the actions described in the Plan.

Water resources

In order to protect and restore water quality, natural stream flows and healthy aquatic ecosystems throughout the Taunton River watershed and estuary, the Coalition is actively involved in the following efforts:

- Promotion of conservation and sound management of water resources;
- Monitoring of water pollution and withdrawal permits and stormwater management;
- Identification of priority dam removal and fisheries restoration projects and advocacy for funding; and
- Promotion of watershed-wide wetlands protection and restoration, by identifying priority wetlands restoration sites and seeking funding to implement those projects.

Municipal Planning and Land Use Regulation

As the watershed experiences unprecedented growth, the Coalition is working with communities to adopt mechanisms that will allow new development to occur in ways that protect our irreplaceable natural resources. We encourage and assist cities and towns:

- To enact the Community Preservation Act;
- To complete Open Space/Recreation Plans; and
- To adopt innovative strategies such as open space residential zoning and transferable development rights to protect open space.

The Coalition sponsors training and educational programs and other public events to promote community outreach and organizing to accomplish these goals.

Review of Impacts to Natural Resources from New and Existing Projects

The Coalition reviews and comments on plans and permit applications for projects that have the potential for significant impacts on wetlands, fisheries, rare species and other outstanding resources in the watershed. We are currently monitoring several major projects, including the proposed New Bedford/Fall River commuter rail, the Weaver's Cove LNG terminal in Fall River and the Brayton Point Power Station in Somerset.

State programs

The Coalition monitors major state programs that significantly impact the natural resources of the Taunton River watershed and takes action where warranted. One such priority is the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program that reviews and permits activities in habitat of state-listed species.

We are also working to improve the state's mosquito control program to better protect public health while minimizing environmental impact.