Notice Alert: CSO Activation in Alewife Brook

TO: **Patrick Herron, Executive Director, Mystic River Watershed Association**
Sam Lipson, Director, Environmental Health Unit, Cambridge Dept. of Public Health
Christine Connolly Bongiorno, Director, Arlington Department of Public Health
Angela Braun, Director, Belmont Department of Public Health
Kevin Brander, Department of Environmental Protection
Todd Borci, United States Environmental Protection Agency
William Walsh-Rogalski, United States Environmental Protection Agency

FROM: **James Wilcox, Cambridge DPW**

CC: **City of Somerville - Richard Willette, DPW Director of Operations; Vithal Deshpande, Env. Coord.**
Friends of Alewife Reservation – Ellen Mass
MWRA – Ria Convery, David Parker, David Wu, Nicole Johnson, Wenley Jiang, Wendy Leo, Maret Smolow, Nadine Smoske, Mark Sullivan
Representative Denise Provost
Mystic River Watershed Association – Beth MacBlane, Kim Provo
Town of Arlington – Michael Rademacher, DPW Director
Town of Belmont – Glenn Clancy, Director Department of Community Development
City of Cambridge Department of Public Works – Owen O'Riordan, Kathy Watkins, James Wilcox, Catherine Daly Woodbury, Jeya Niranjan, Brian McLane, Rebecca Fuentes, Kate Riley, Wendy Robinson, Dan Riviello, Mike Abcunas, Catherine Mitrano

RE: **Notice Alert: CSO Activation in Alewife Brook**

DATE: September 2, 2019

In accordance with the conditions of the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Alewife Brook/Upper Mystic River Variance we are hereby notifying you that a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) occurred at CAM401B on September 2, 2019 and discharged into the Alewife Brook. The Variance approved workplan requires the Cambridge Department of Public Works (DPW) to notify local health agents, DEP, EPA and MRWA within 24 hours of when a CSO event occurs. This notification does not reflect the absence of any activation at other sites. Rather, the notice is intended to be confirmation to users of the resource that untreated sewage discharges to the Brook/River have occurred.

The water quality in Alewife Brook is often impaired due to bacterial and other pollutants from a number of sources, including stormwater runoff, CSOs and cross connections between sanitary sewers and stormwater drains. Water quality in the brook during both wet and dry weather generally fails to meet state bacteria standards for fishing and swimming. Contaminant sources originate in the watershed communities of Belmont, Arlington, Cambridge and Somerville, all of which are undertaking programs to identify and control the sources of pollution to the brook.

Portions of Cambridge and Somerville are served by combined stormwater and sanitary sewer systems, common in older cities. There are six CSO outfalls on Alewife Brook (see the attached map for locations) which discharge untreated CSO (a mixture of wastewater and stormwater) during moderate and heavy rainfall to relieve the system and prevent sewer backups into homes, businesses, and streets. In addition, bordering communities also have separate drainage pipes that collect stormwater runoff and carry it to the brook. Discharges from CSOs and from separate stormwater pipes include bacteria and other pathogens, oxygen-demanding pollutants, solids and other contaminants. Public health officials recommend avoiding contact with the brook during and for 48 hours following rain storms, as there may be increased health risks during these periods. Contact with floodwaters should also be avoided as they may contain similar contaminants and pose associated health risks. Clean up information following a flood is available on the MA Department of Environmental Protection web site at: http://www.mass.gov/dep/floodcleanup.htm For real-time water data at Fresh Pond Reservoir, you can view the United States Geological Survey National Water System website at: http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ma/nwis Please contact Catherine Daly Woodbury at 617-349-4818 or James Wilcox at 617-349-6426 if you have any questions.

CSO Outfalls along the Little River/Alewife Brook