

**LETTER To EDITOR: Cambridge waterways are at high risk**  
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**To the editor:**

Friends of Alewife Reservation continues to ask that no more city permits be given on the floodplain in the quadrangle and that the newly appointed city Alewife Committee investigate the high e-coli and coliform counts presented on the city website of 2015. The counts also show enterococci 75, e-coli, 62,000 CFU/100ml and 28,000 fecal coliform CFU/100ml at Normandy Terrace, flowing into the major Upper Basin tributary of the Mystic River watershed, a stone's throw from the new Alewife-Concord zoned residential area where developers are lining up for building permits.

All water tests are so greatly elevated from normal, warning signs around the ponds and river should state, "Don't touch or go near the water," at Blair Pond, Wellington Brook, Little River, and perhaps, Yates and Jerry's Pond, all which received a failing grade and is noted as one of the worst water bodies in the watershed. This committee formed by the Community Development Department, without trained environmentalists, is risking the future of thousands of residents downstream and around Alewife Brook, Highlands neighborhood and Columbus Avenue residents with climate change already here. City variances mean delays to compliance of federal and state conservation laws. The city has few staff to monitor and test for our safety and health, and more are needed to stop contamination from outfalls and storm water run off, now plaguing the waterways.

Our elevated phosphorus and ammonia levels in Cambridge's waterways will also bring dangerous blue-green algae contained in Spy Pond waters which flow into Belmont's Little Pond and into Little River and through our city, then through Arlington and Somerville, down Alewife Brook to the Mystic and Harbor. We citizens deserve a chance to survive being threatened with possible infection and non-reparable property damage if there were elevated water levels anytime soon, as scientists predict.

If the region, including the towns, would abide by the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), now going forward, this would not happen. We are grateful that recently the Legislative Natural Resources Committee tabled the proposal by the governor to forego direct federal jurisdiction in these conservation matters. The committee was not swayed by state Department of Environmental Protection arguments that they could manage it all.

Cambridge should not backtrack on its federal commitment of 85 percent water quality improvement, and that means as quickly as possible, not after there is more development saturation and regulations are not able to be enforced.

**- Kathleen Johnson and Ellen Mass, Friends of Alewife Reservation**