An Act Promoting Safe Recreation in Public Waterways (SD.1979/HD.3585)

Senate Sponsor: Pat Jehlen
House Sponsor: Denise Provost

Millions of residents live near the Commonwealth's many rivers. The Charles, Connecticut, Merrimack, Mystic, Concord, and other major rivers wind through our communities, providing recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. Unfortunately, **citizens have no way to know when man-made pollutant discharges render these rivers unsafe for boating and swimming**.

Combined sewer overflows (CSOs) in the Mystic River.

The Problem

- When it rains, stormwater floods our Commonwealth's aging sewer systems. This mix of stormwater and wastewater can discharge into rivers and public waterways. These Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) often total millions of gallons of raw sewage per event.
- There are **181 active CSO outfalls** throughout the Commonwealth, which collectively discharged **2.8 billion gallons of sewage** into rivers and streams in 2011.
- Exposure to water contaminated by untreated sewage discharges can cause inflammation of the intestines; respiratory, eye and ear infections; skin rashes; hepatitis, and other diseases.

The Solution

This bill would institute a **statewide sewage discharge notification system** so that Massachusetts residents will know when CSO discharges make their rivers unsafe for recreation. This bill would institute practices already followed by some municipalities:

1. All CSO permittees would be required to provide a **public notification alert** within one hour of a CSO discharge.
2. All CSO outfall operators must install a **discharge flow-monitoring meter**.
3. The Department of Environmental Protection would be required to **centralize CSO discharge data** on their website.
4. **Clear signage** must be placed at CSO outfalls and affected public access points.

For more information contact:

Dan Smith, Office of Sen. Jehlen, Daniel.Smith@masenate.gov (617) 722-1578

Jordan Neerhof, Office of Rep. Provost, Jordan.Neerhof@mahouse.gov (617) 722-2263

Gabby Queenan, Mass Rivers, gabbyqueenan@massriversalliance.org (857) 445-0208