

An Act Relative to Streamflow Standards (SD.391/HD.2739)

Senate Sponsor: Jamie Eldridge

House Sponsor: Frank Smizik

Healthy rivers and reliable water supplies are essential for our quality of life and economy, and to provide resiliency in the face of climate change. **Effective water management is essential to ensure that our streams and rivers do not experience unnaturally low flows.** This is particularly important in the face of changing weather patterns that come with climate change.

The Problem

Despite an annual 44 inches of precipitation a year in Massachusetts, **1/5 of our streams suffer from unnaturally low flows – or even dry up – during dry summers.** This is preventable, and can be avoided by better environmental protection and more effective water management.

The 2014 Water Management Act regulatory changes (known as the Sustainable Water Management Initiative, or “SWMI”) were intended to address this problem. While the scientific basis for the new regulations was sound, the policy changes developed as a result were disappointingly weak, and thus far have failed to fix the state’s stream flow problems.



Weir River in Hingham, MA during the summer 2016 drought.

The Solution

This bill would **require that MassDEP adopt new regulations to maintain streamflow and water levels** to protect aquatic life. This bill would:

- Continue to allow water suppliers to meet the fresh water needs of our communities.
- Develop standards to ensure adequate water flow and water levels for fish and other species' survival.
- Protect water resources for recreation and tourism, which generate millions of dollars of revenues each year.
- Make the environmental review process more predictable for all parties.

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