



Fact Sheet

Flood Protection Projects

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

BUILDING STRONG®

Massachusetts

Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area

The Charles River Natural Valley Storage areas lie throughout 16 eastern Massachusetts communities in the middle and upper areas of the Charles River.

The Charles River extends inland from Boston Harbor and meanders for 80 miles to Hopkinton, a straight distance of about 30 miles. Thousands of acres of undeveloped wetlands, which normally appear dry, lie along the river and form a natural reservoir that store floodwaters in times of excess precipitation. These wetlands make up huge volumes of natural storage that soak up water like sponges. Potential development on these wetland areas threatened to eliminate the storage area of the natural reservoir. If development had been left unchecked, floodwaters that would normally settle in the natural water storage area would rush downstream, causing flood damage to existing development in the lower reaches of the river. The natural valley storage areas reduce flood levels by retaining his excess water.

A 1972 study of the Charles River watershed showed a need to protect the natural valley storage areas from further development. The study recommended that the federal government purchase and preserve these lands as a viable means of flood control. The Corps purchased the first acres in May 1977 and made its most recent acquisition in September 1983. Resolutions to acquire remaining lands are continuing. To date, the Corps has purchased land in 17 different areas at a cost of \$9 million.

The Charles River Natural Valley Storage areas total 8,101 acres. These lands are located in Millis, Medfield, Norfolk, Franklin, Holliston, Needham, Sherborn, Bellingham, Dedham, Dover, Medway, Newton, Wrentham, Walpole, Natick, and Boston (Note: Although there are no storage lands in Cambridge, Waltham, Watertown, Wellesley, and Weston, the Charles River Natural Valley Storage areas protect land and property in these communities also). The watershed of the Charles River covers 307 square miles.

In addition to its primary purpose of flood damage reduction, project lands are used for recreation and fish and wild-life management. Hiking, canoeing, snowmobiling, fishing, hunting, and cross country skiing are some of the more popular activities. Of the 8,101 total acres, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife manages 2,640 acres affecting nine parcels.

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