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Clean Charles River Initiative - 2006 Report Card

2006 = B+

In April 2006, the lower Charles River for the second consecutive year attained its highest-ever grade from EPA, as efforts to restore the river to ecological health continue to progress.

The Charles River Initiative, begun in 1995, is an effort between EPA and local stakeholders to improve ecological conditions in the lower Charles River. The continued work is paying off as the river shows signs of significantly improved water quality and ecological health.

"The next generation of Bostonians will hardly believe that the song, 'Love that Dirty Water,' was once inspired by the Charles River. Reducing combined sewer overflows by 99.5 percent since this project began will bring tremendous benefits to the 20,000 people who enjoy the Charles and its shorelines on hot summer days in Boston."

- Robert Varney, EPA's New England Regional Administrator, as he lauded efforts to make the river fishable and swimmable

EPA has graded the health of the Charles River as a "B+" for 2005 – only the second time the river's conditions have merited a grade that high.

The grade is based on the number of days the river meets boating and swimming standards during the previous calendar year. For 2005, the Charles met boating standards 97 percent of the time, and swimming standards 50 percent of the time according to data collected by the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) between Watertown Dam and Boston Harbor.

The Charles has improved dramatically from the initiation of EPA's Charles program in 1995, when the river received a D for meeting boating standards 39 percent of the time and swimming standards just 19 percent of the time.

In March, 2006 EPA and the U.S. Dept. of Justice announced a major settlement with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority to dramatically reduce "combined sewer overflows" to the Charles River.



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watershed, which has resulted in lower water levels in aquifers, streams and the river itself. By setting up a trading program, the watershed association plans to create a market to increase flows in the Charles, particularly between April and December, thus decreasing concentrations of pollutants in the river and providing greater habitat and resilience to droughts. For more details, read the [press release](#).

In May of 2003, the Charles River was selected by Administrator Whitman as one of 20 watersheds to receive funding under EPA's recently launched Watershed Initiative. The CWRA will receive \$400,000 to pursue a variety of projects to improve water quality through this grant.

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