

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Michael Lonetto [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 18, 2026 12:51 PM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Cc:** Kristin Anderson; Eugene Benson; Eppa Rixey; Ann McDonald; David White; David Stoff; George Laite  
**Subject:** Public comment on combined sewer overflows to Somerville City Council  
**Attachments:** SavetheAlewifeBrook\_PublicComment\_20260618.pdf

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
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Dear Councilors and City Clerk,

I am submitting the attached public testimony on behalf of Save the Alewife Brook as an attached PDF. The text of the testimony is also included for convenience below. The Community Plan referenced in the comment can be found here: <https://savethealewifebrook.org/2026/03/01/community-cso-plan/>

We hope that this testimony can be included for the 25-Jun-2026 Council meeting which we plan to attend.

Please contact me if you have any questions or if correction is needed.

Best wishes,

Michael Lonetto  
Ward 7  
[REDACTED] Somerville, MA  
[REDACTED]

Text of the letter:

Dear Somerville City Council,

Save the Alewife Brook asks the Council to stand against the ongoing sewage pollution at Alewife Brook and to call on the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority to fund a real, lasting solution that is resilient to climate change.

Alewife Brook is not Somerville's alone. It forms the boundary between Somerville, Cambridge, and Arlington, and its waters flow downstream to affect neighbors in Medford and East Somerville. Along its banks sits Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation state parkland that offers

recreation to residents of Environmental Justice neighborhoods, including residents of publicly subsidized affordable housing in all three municipalities. The parkland paths are also part of an alternative transportation corridor, linking Somerville to the Minuteman Bikeway and the Alewife Red Line T station. This is a shared public resource in a densely populated area that thousands of people depend on.

Despite its importance to multiple communities, raw sewage is being discharged into the Brook, which floods regularly. Raw sewage flooding is a public health hazard. In 2023, the Brook flooded over its bank five times, sending sewage flood water into the Alewife Greenway Path. After these storms, children were seen riding bikes through raw sewage, joggers ran through it and parents pushed baby strollers through untreated sewage flood water.

Because the MWRA relies on Alewife Combined Sewer Overflows to add capacity to its undersized sewer system, the problem is regional. The remedy is expensive and requires regional funding from the MWRA. The MWRA was created by the Legislature specifically to enable and fund exactly this kind of work, and it has the capacity to pay for projects that end Alewife Brook sewage pollution and to budget for the associated debt service without crushing households with shocking increases to their sewer bills.

A new plan has been proposed by MWRA to address CSOs. Unfortunately, the MWRA's plan at Alewife Brook falls far short. The Alewife plan is 99.9% undersized storage tanks and only 0.1% sewer separation. When the sewage tanks fill during annual storms or in back-to-back storms, 100% of the remaining sewage is dumped straight into the Brook. Undersized sewage tanks on public parkland do not scale with the increasing rainfall that climate change is bringing. The combined sewer system was designed for yesterday's storms, not tomorrow's larger ones, and the MWRA's plan is not resilient to climate change: it would result in 14.21 million gallons of sewage pollution in a single five-year storm event. The MWRA is currently using the Brook as an open sewer, and that must stop. Alewife Brook should be an amenity, not a public health hazard.

There is a smarter path. Sewer separation removes stormwater from the sewer pipes so the sewage does not go into the waterways. Sewer separation offers a chance to restore baseflow to the Alewife, a critical need for a climate-resilient brook. Sewer separation increases both local and regional sewer system capacity.

There exists another plan. The Alewife Brook Community CSO Elimination Plan is an alternative to MWRA's draft plan which leans heavily on sewer separation, calling for 100 acres of sewer separation in Somerville. Last week, Save the Alewife Brook and the Mystic River Watershed Association met with the Alewife CSO project planners about the Community Plan. The Planners provided some excellent feedback which will be incorporated in an updated version of the Community Plan. The Community Plan is achievable, and it would provide CSO control up to a 25-year storm in the year 2050 at a reasonable cost to MWRA - without shocking rate increases to households.

Three independent sources of authority support the Community Plan over the MWRA's draft plan. First, the Clean Water Act requires an evaluation of the full range of CSO control alternatives, and the Community Plan falls squarely within that range. Second, Massachusetts' Biodiversity Goals call for significantly reducing or eliminating CSOs through sewer separation and green infrastructure, which the Community Plan achieves and the MWRA's Alewife Plan does not. Third, MassDEP guidance directs that CSOs be eliminated through sewer separation wherever feasible - a standard the Community Plan meets and the MWRA's Alewife Plan does not.

The Community Plan received overwhelmingly positive responses when presented at a public forum in Cambridge attended by 171 community members on January 11, 2026.

We respectfully urge the Council to go on record that the MWRA must fund an end to sewage pollution at Alewife Brook through sewer separation and large green stormwater infrastructure projects. This approach is the smart, healthy, climate-resilient, long-term solution our communities deserve.

Thank you for your support.

SAVE THE ALEWIFE BROOK

Michael Lonetto (Ward 7), Kristin Anderson, George Laite, David White, Ann McDonald, Eppa Rixey, David Stoff

**About Save the Alewife Brook:**

Save the Alewife Brook is an inclusive and growing grassroots environmental and community health advocacy group with thousands of supporters in Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, Belmont, Medford, and beyond. The group is focused on addressing untreated sewage pollution and flooding problems associated with Alewife Brook. Save the Alewife Brook hosts and participates in Community Events, including our annual Earth Day Cleanup, regular community meetings, and the HONK! Parade. We send out regular newsletters to a mailing list of thousands of supporters, including 1291 supporters from the city of Somerville. Save the Alewife Brook has been meeting monthly with the Mystic River Watershed Association and the Charles River Watershed Association and have formed, together, a Coalition to End Sewage Pollution, which represents hundreds of thousands of people in the Greater Boston area.

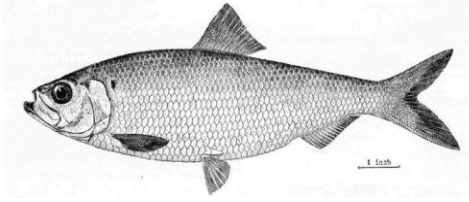
Sincerely,

Michael Lonetto

Ward 7

[REDACTED], Somerville, MA  
[REDACTED]

# Save the Alewife Brook



Environmental Health is Community Health

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*Michael Lonetto (Ward 7), Kristin Anderson, George Laite,  
David White, Ann McDonald, Eppa Rixey, David Stoff*

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