

Regional Climate Collaborative for the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord (SuAsCo) Rivers Watershed

495/MetroWest Partnership Meeting | September 29, 2026

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MVP
Municipal Vulnerability
Preparedness





LAND

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"We acknowledge that the land we gather on today is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Nipmuc and Massachusetts tribes. We pay our respects to the Indigenous peoples of this region—past, present, and future—and honor their enduring relationship to this land and its waterways."

"Acknowledgment is the first steps to tribal healing."

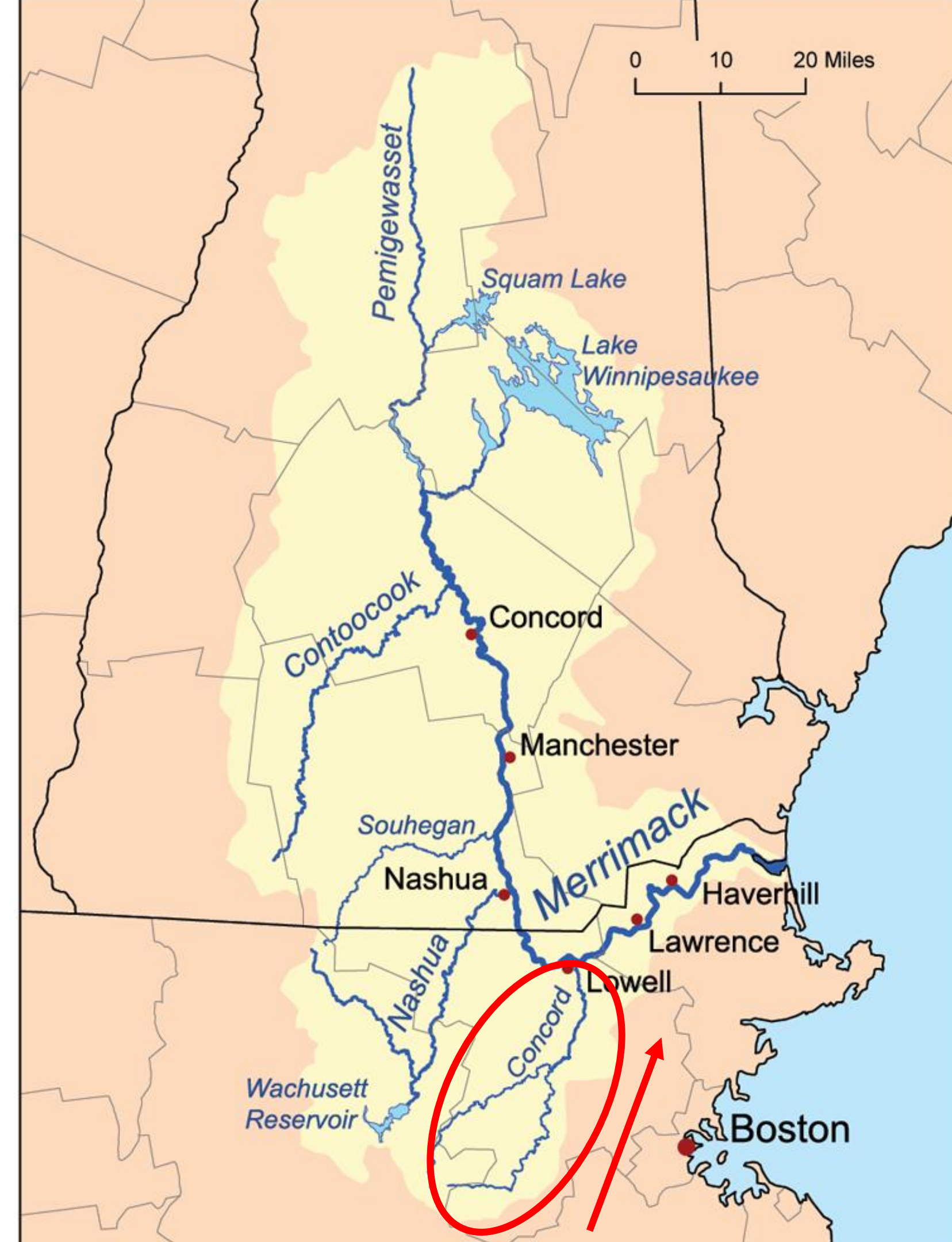
Overview

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- About the SuAsCo Watershed
- Project Overview & Timeline
- Year 1 Review
- Climate Vulnerability
Assessment
- Next Steps

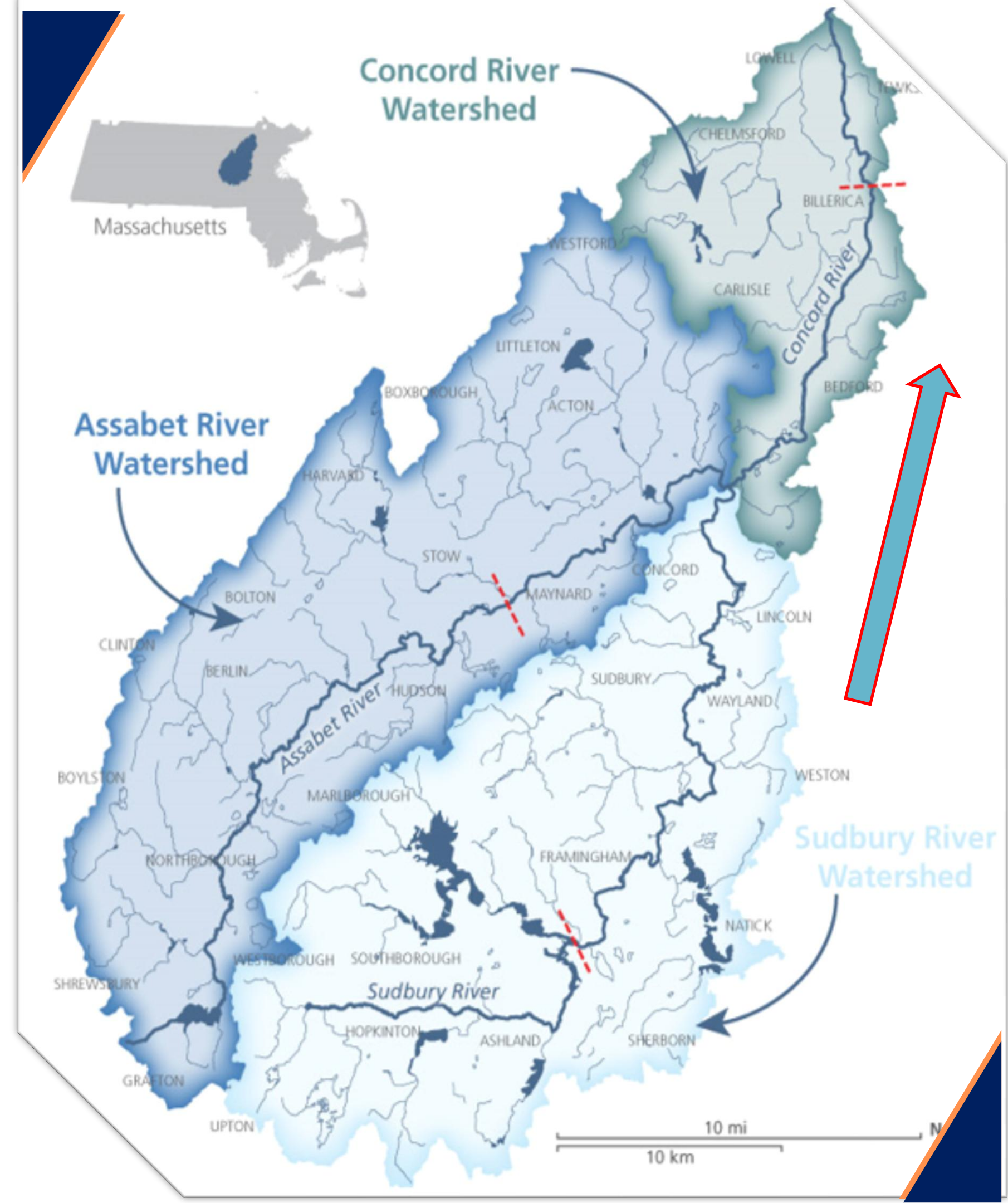
THE MERRIMACK WATERSHED

- 5,010 square miles divided between New Hampshire (54%) and Massachusetts (46%)
- 117 miles of river, starting in Franklin, NH, and going out to Gulf of Maine in Newburyport, MA
- Over 2.6 million residents in the watershed, and roughly 200 communities
- Drinking water source for over 600,000 people in both states



THE SuAsCo WATERSHED

- 399 square miles across 36 Massachusetts municipalities
- 83.7 miles of river, 36 miles of hiking trails
- Over 732,000 residents
- The Concord River flows north to the Merrimack River in Lowell, which enters the Atlantic Ocean in Newburyport, MA
- >40% of the land within the SuAsCo watershed is publicly accessible, offering recreational opportunities such as hiking, boating, and birdwatching



CLIMATE CHANGE & THE WATERSHED

Climate change will impact the watershed and its municipalities.

Flooding will increase risk to critical infrastructure such as roads, natural resources will be lost, and stormwater will be challenging to manage

Drought will impact water supply, aquatic habitats, and biodiversity, and will increase wildfires, land degradation, and water shortages



ABOUT THE SuAsCo CLIMATE COLLABORATIVE

This is a two-year project to:

- Establish a framework for regional coordination and collaboration
- Build regional capacity around climate resilience and water resources management across the communities of the SuAsCo Rivers watershed



REGIONAL SCALE ACTIONS

Enhancing Regional Coordination - Establishing a regional climate collaborative fosters collaboration among municipalities, organizations, and stakeholders, ensuring a more unified and strategic approach to climate adaptation.

Identifying and Protecting Critical Infrastructure - Conducting a vulnerability assessment helps prioritize infrastructure improvements, reducing the risk of failures due to extreme weather and other climate-related challenges.

Data-Driven Decision-Making - Developing a robust data analysis and modeling framework provides communities with the information needed to make informed decisions, allocate resources effectively, and implement targeted climate resilience policies and solutions.

Proactive Adaptation - Addressing vulnerabilities before they become crises helps communities minimize disruptions, protect public health and safety, and reduce long-term costs associated with climate impacts.

Equity and Inclusion - A regional approach ensures that solutions are designed with Environmental Justice (EJ) communities and vulnerable populations in mind, promoting fair access to climate adaptation resources and support.

PROJECT PARTNERS

A collaboration between:

- Town of Concord
- MAPC
- OARS, the watershed organization for the SuAsCo Rivers



With participation from:

- Ten partners serving on the Steering Committee (munis, CBO, youth)
- Community-based organizations (local and regional)
- Environmental Justice (EJ) members and organizations
- All residents in the watershed

Project Timeline

FY26

FY27

Task 1: Project Kick-off, Management, and Report

- Kick off meeting with Project Team and EEA MVP Coordinator
- Bi-weekly Project Team meetings

Task 3: Develop a Scope of Work for A Vulnerability Assessment of the Watershed's Critical Infrastructure & Assets

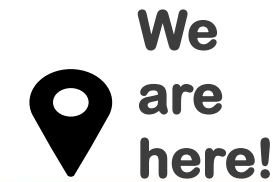
- Gather feedback/conduct background information on the options and feasibility of watershed-scale data analyses
- Develop and release a Request for Proposal
- Review and select service provider

Task 5: Project Management and Reporting

- Participate in bi-weekly Project Team meetings to check in on progress, status, and action items
- Support with drafting the final case study for the project

Task 7: Develop the SuAsCo Climate Collaborative's Framework & Workplan

- Draft and Finalize the Collaborative's Near-term Action Plan
- Develop Implementation Roadmaps for Priority Actions



September 2025 – June 2026

July 2026 – June 2027

Task 2: Establish the SuAsCo Climate Collaborative

- Identify Stakeholders of SuAsCo Watershed
- Convene the collaborative's steering committee meeting 1 and 2
- Host community meetings 1 and 2

Task 4: Develop the SuAsCo Climate Collaborative's Framework & Workplan

- Review and compile planning and implementation efforts across municipalities to date
- Draft and finalize the Collaborative's organizational framework

Task 6: Establish the SuAsCo Climate Collaborative

- Convene the Collaborative's Steering Committee Meeting 3 -6
- Host Community Meeting 3 - 4

Task 8: Develop a Scope of Work for Identified Data Analysis Needs

ENGAGEMENT SO FAR

Municipal

- Acton
- Bedford
- Billerica
- Boxborough
- Carlisle
- Concord
- Harvard
- Holliston
- Hopkinton
- Hudson
- Lincoln
- Littleton
- Marlborough
- Maynard
- Natick
- Sherborn
- Shrewsbury
- Sudbury
- Tewksbury
- Wayland
- Westborough
- Weston
- NMCOG
- CMRPC

Non-Municipal

- Energize Acton
- Green Acton Water Committee
- Chelmsford Conservation Commission
- Concord Climate Action Committee
- Former Framingham Climate Action Team
- Framingham Sustainability Committee
- Energize Framingham
- Harvard Climate Initiative Committee
- Green Hudson
- Hudson Land Trust
- Lincoln Conservation Commission
- Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust
- Maynard Sustainability Committee & Tree Corps
- Green Maynard
- Ashland Residents for Equity & Action
- Maynard Assabet River Coalition
- Wayland Climate Committee
- Weston Forest and Trail Committee MetroWest Climate Solutions
- Sudbury Valley Trustees MetroWest Conservation Alliance
- SuAsCo Wild & Scenic River Stewardship Council
- The Better Future Project
- CREW (Communities Responding to Extreme Weather)
- Acton/Boxborough Resource Force Club
- Middlesex School – Concord
- Framingham H.S. Environmental Club

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ENGAGEMENT

There was overwhelming support and demand for regional coordination and synthesis which is a main function of the collaborative.

Flooding Is the Dominant, Unifying Climate Concern as it was repeatedly cited as a public safety and watershed-wide issue, in addition to being a long-term infrastructure challenge

Aging Infrastructure + Climate Change = Compounding Risk as aging municipal systems become increasingly vulnerable to our current and future climate conditions, especially culverts and road-stream crossings, stormwater and drainage systems, water and wastewater infrastructure located in flood-prone areas

Funding Constraints Are a Primary Barrier to Action due to competing priorities, rising costs, heavy reliance on grants, and lack of local funding streams

Strong Demand for Watershed-Scale Data and Tools to support municipalities with decision-making, grant competitiveness, and public communication

Vulnerable Populations Are Not Being Reached Effectively so creative and equitable engagement approaches need to be prioritized. Priority populations include environmental justice communities, seniors and people with mobility challenges, low-income households, immigrant and ESL communities, rural residents and those on private wells

SuAsCo CLIMATE COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK (draft)

- **General participation & membership**
 - *Municipalities will be voting members of the Collaborative*
 - *Creating working groups for municipal staff and CBO representatives*
 - *Continuing to actively engage youth and community members*
 - *Continuing to engage with legislators*
- **Roles and Responsibilities**
 - *OARS to serve as administrator and facilitator of the Collaborative; lead and coordinate funding pursuits; provide technical assistance to municipalities, etc.*
 - *A Steering Committee to provide guidance*
 - *Participating municipalities to vote on Collaborative's collective plans and decisions*
- In the near term, municipal involvement should be non-financial, and the Collaborative should explore mechanisms to provide technical assistance and grant pursuit support for municipalities without further straining municipal staff capacity and resources.



YEAR 1 – Review

- ❖ Deliverable highlights:
 - Stakeholder Mapping
 - Summary Memo – Collaborative activities to date
 - Project Inventory (student assistance)
 - Organizational Framework – living Governance Framework
 - Request for Information (RFI) & Request for Proposals (RFP)
- ❖ Engagement highlights:
 - Two well attended Community Meetings
 - Four Focus Groups Meeting (2 CBO, 2 Municipality)
 - 1:1 outreach meetings w/ Youth Groups, CBOs, Munis, and other regional Climate Collaboratives
 - Municipalities involved (25), CBOs (20)
 - Climate Collaborative Webpage (OARS website)

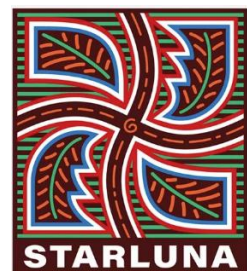
PREPARING FOR WATERSHED VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT (YEAR 2)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- GIS-based analysis for watershed-scale climate vulnerability assessment using available local, regional, and state datasets
 - *No new data to be developed at this stage*
- Prioritize IDing critical infrastructure and assets that have regional impacts
- Consider community engagement to ground-truth CVA findings and inform Collaborative's priorities (e.g., near- and long-term actions)
- Develop metrics to track implementation progress of the Collaborative's identified priorities/solutions
 - *Should align with ResilientMass metrics (and any other relevant state's metrics)*



BSC GROUP 



SUDBURY-ASSABET-CONCORD (SuAsCo) Watershed

Climate Vulnerability Assessment of Critical Infrastructure & Assets

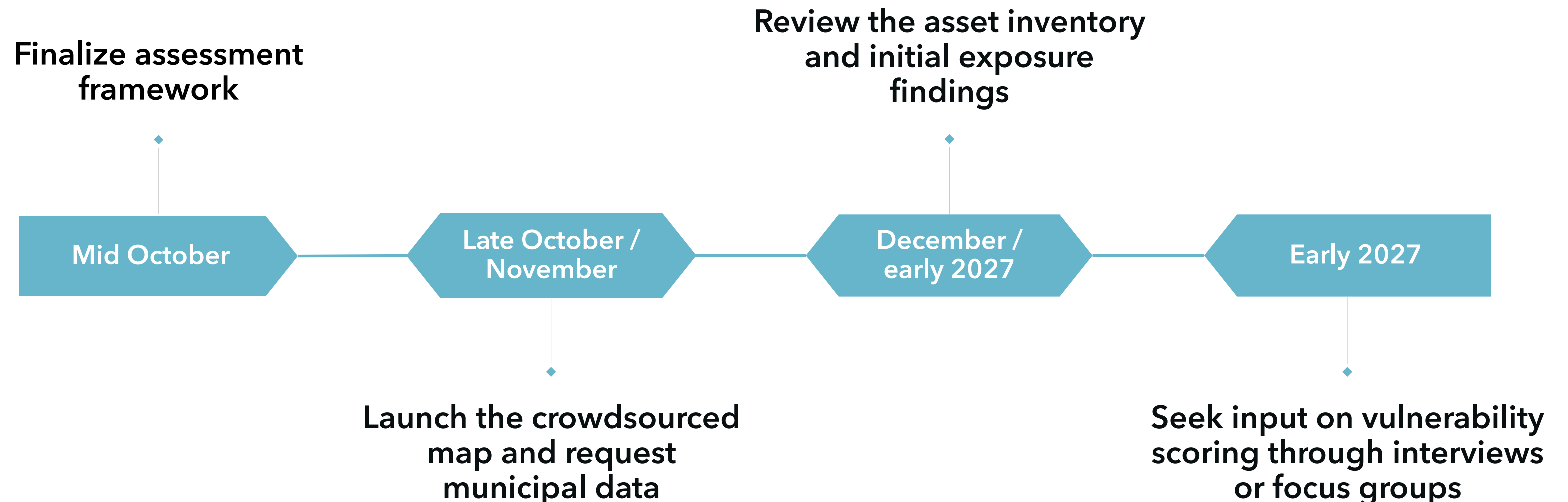
Thursday, September 24, 2026

CLIMATE VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT

BSC is developing framework for hazards, assets, vulnerability scoring, and equity.

The analysis will contain natural, built, and social assets across the watershed.

Data results will be available on the OARS – SuAsCo Climate Collaborative webpage.



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Upcoming Community Meetings

- ✓ Will keep you posted

Questions?

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Thank you

