In Livable Cities is Preservation of the Wild: Head of the Charles to Hell's Half Acre

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The leaf is to the tree...as the site is to the watershed... here...is the real "Head of the Charles"...

An appropriate twenty-first century corollary to Thoreau's aphorism, "In wildness is the preservation of the world" should be: In livable cities is preservation of the wild. Unless cities are made desirable, more livable places in which to live, the trend toward land-consuming and headwatersdestroying suburbanization and urban sprawl will continue. To be truly livable, however, the city's built environment must be fully integrated with a vibrant urban greenfrastructure: streams, wetlands, rivers, forests and an interconnected system of recreational trails. The Boston region has worked to achieve such integration beginning with Charles Eliot and Sylvester Baxter who, in 1893, advocated for the creation of an *Emerald Metropolis*, a vision based first and foremost on protecting the region's most distinctive natural features, "the rock hills, the stream banks, and the bay and the sea shores."





...Sanford Mill and Medway dam...

The primary focus of Sites in Sight was to produce a photodocumentary of a site of our chosing, and to first let the landscape speak for itself through poetics, significant detail, and light. Later, our task was to create, through photography and use of our personal journal observations, a site essay. My site, one reach of the lower Charles River, covers about two river miles between the Arsenal and Larz Anderson bridges. It was impossible, however, to describe my reach absent a broader spatial and historical context. Therefore, the essay includes both a brief historical perspective and pictorial journey from the literal "head of the Charles" to the Back Bay Fens.

...and downstream... ...class I rapids and canoeable at high water...

Head of the Charles to Hell's Half Acre also includes my initial, admittedly limited, perceptions of the lower Charles as a recreational, aesthetic, and ecological resource. As with the Willamette River Greenway in my hometown of Portland, Oregon, popular myth about the extent and completeness of the greenway overshadows the reality. Similarly, it's my outsider's perspective that much work remains before the lower Charles River attains its full potential as an urban greenspace that equally serves the needs of people and nature, one that realizes Charles Eliot's and Sylvester Baxter's vision.





...near Medfield...and a new dam...



...non-structural flood management yields multiple benefits... ...yet, upstream development...



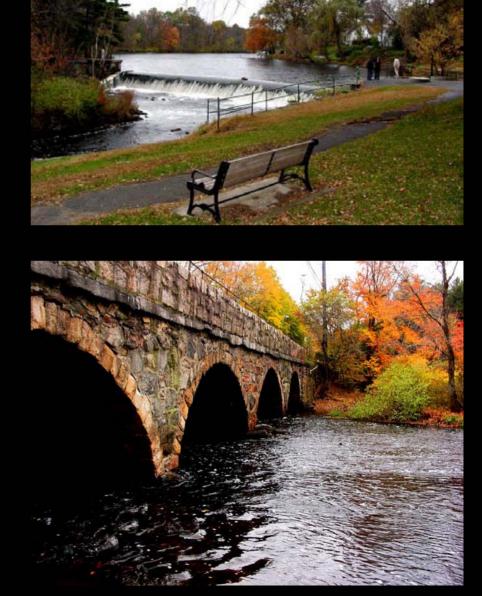


...vegetation removal... roads...





...and development all contribute cumulatively to decreased future watershed health.



Below Old South Natick dam one of ninety bridges over the Charles...and more than twenty dams and weirs...





... Broadmoor Sanctuary...





... Watertown weir... and footbridge...





...Arsenal Bridge... view downstream from canoe rental dock, Herter Park ...





...downstream from Larz Anderson Bridge... The Esplanade ...





... The Fens ... The built ... and naturalistic...