

# COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW UPDATE\*

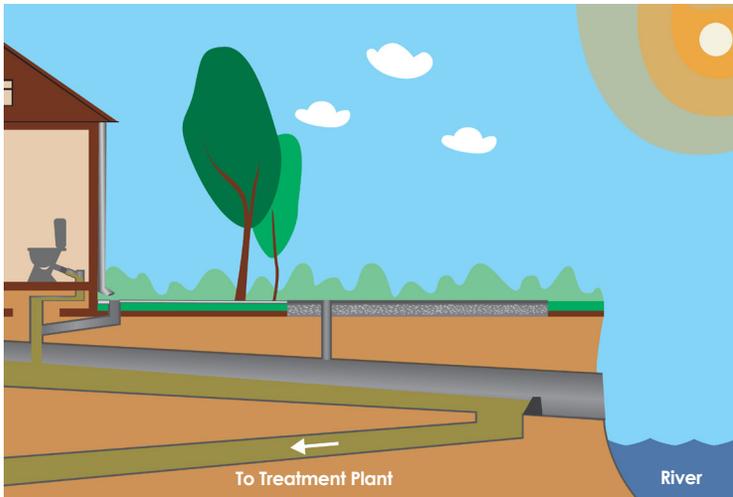
New England communities have spent over **\$4.7 billion** on controlling water pollution from combined sewer overflows over the past few decades. What does this mean and why should you care?



## Why Are We Discussing Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs)?

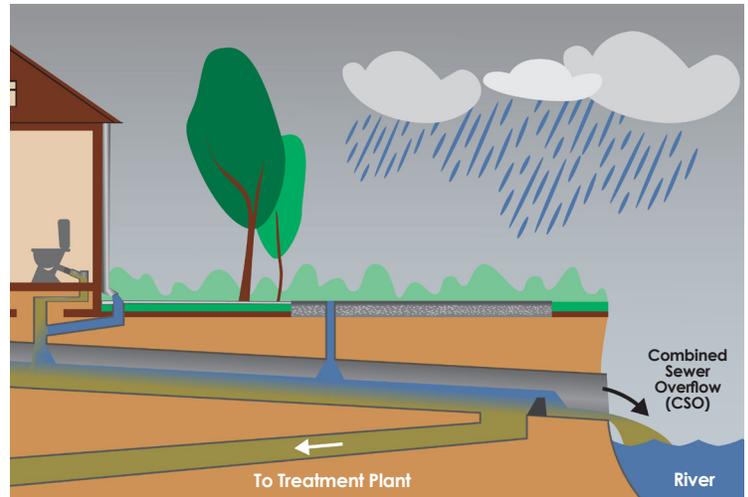
A combined sewer is a large underground network of pipes that collect both wastewater from sinks and toilets, and stormwater. A CSO occurs when the system overflows during large storms, sending flow with limited or no treatment into a local waterbody. This type of system is being eliminated by separating sewage pipes, optimizing the use of existing pipes to store and convey wastewater, and increasing treatment capacity, all of which result in cleaner water and beaches.

### Dry-Weather Flow



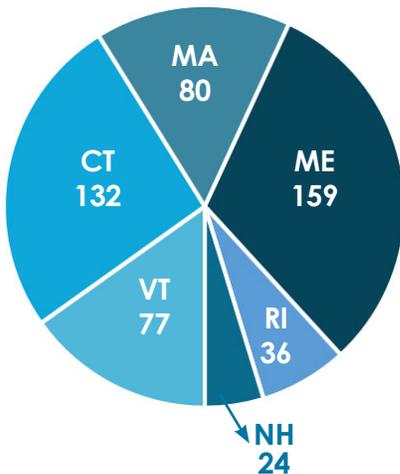
In a combined sewer, sewage from sinks and toilets flows to the treatment plant during normal (dry) conditions.

### Wet-Weather Flow



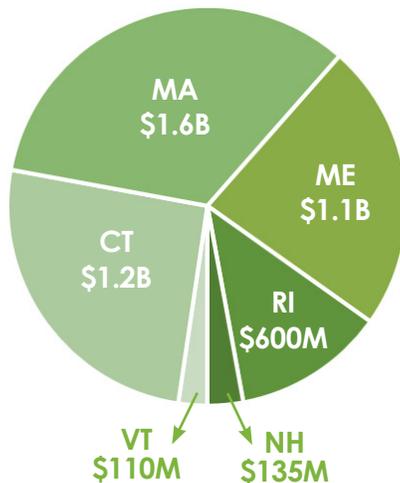
During heavy rains, CSO outfalls act as relief points to alleviate surface flooding and system backups by releasing excess sewage and stormwater to local waterbodies.

### CSO Outfalls Eliminated in Each State



New England has closed more than **500 combined sewer outfalls**.

### Total Money Spent on CSO Controls

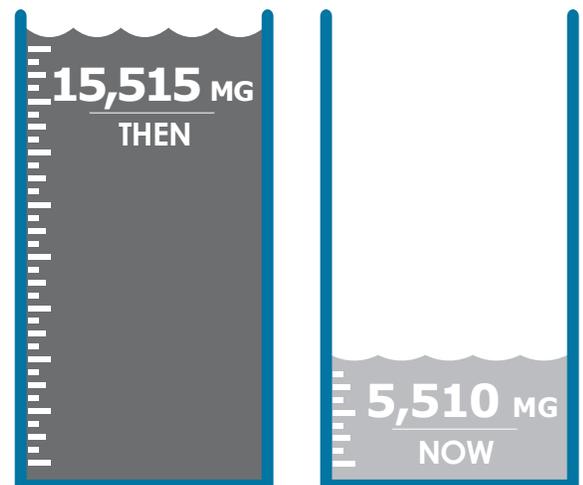


New England has spent over **\$4.7 billion** on controlling CSOs.

M = million | B = billion

### Reducing & Treating Overflows

There has been a significant reduction in the volume of CSOs since the 1990s, measured in millions of gallons (MG) of discharge to waterbodies. In addition to closing CSO outfalls and reducing the volume of discharges, many communities are treating remaining discharges to eliminate disease-causing bacteria.



\*Summary facts assembled based on readily available data from public documents, owners, and agencies. September 2020

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## How CSO Reduction Helps You

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (US EPA) 1994 CSO Control Policy established a consistent approach for controlling CSOs through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. These are the agency's goals:

- A maximum of 4-6 overflows in an average year
- Eliminating or treating an average of 85% of CSOs
- Eliminating or removing pollutants that degrade water quality

The more than **\$4.7 billion** spent to date on CSO improvement programs in New England has significantly improved water quality as reflected by reduced closure of beaches, and more fishing and shellfishing, and recreational opportunities.

For more information, visit [epa.gov](http://epa.gov).



## Challenges CSO Improvement Programs Face Today

Many CSO programs have achieved significant improvements to water quality. However, maintaining and replacing aging and outdated infrastructure is expensive, and improving buried infrastructure is often undervalued. Therefore, funds can easily get diverted without public support. EPA's recent increased public notification requirements can also divert both operational and financial resources away from active CSO control measures to a more immediate focus on reporting tools for accurate readings.

The **New England Water Environment Association's (NEWEA) CSO/Wet Weather Issues Committee**, comprising professionals in the water environment industry, promotes and advocates for improving water quality through sharing best practices and cost-effective solutions with communities across New England and beyond. Learn more at: [www.newea.org/about-us/committees/csowet-weather-issues-committee](http://www.newea.org/about-us/committees/csowet-weather-issues-committee).

## What Can You Do?

Help protect your local waterbodies by caring for your stormwater and sewer infrastructure.



Bag or compost leaves, lawn & garden clippings



Pick up after pets



Clean leaves from catch basin grates & debris from sidewalks



Support funding for local infrastructure



Flush only human waste & toilet paper



Install a rain barrel to collect stormwater for use locally



Plant a rain garden to absorb and treat stormwater & reduce runoff

NEWEA appreciates the efforts of Kleinfelder to put this document together.

