



TOWN HALL  
25 GREEN STREET

# TOWN OF IPSWICH

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## IPSWICH, MASSACHUSETTS 01938

CONSERVATION COMMISSION  
CONSERVATION AGENT

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February 16, 2017

Dear Ipswich resident:

My name is Alicia Geilen and I am the Conservation Agent for the Town of Ipswich. I write to inform you of a project that the Town is engaged in to improve the health and resiliency of the Ipswich River between the Ipswich Mills dam and the Town Wharf.

In the summer of 2016, the Town and its partner, the Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA), were awarded a Coastal Resiliency Grant from the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) to support the "Ipswich River Resiliency and Coastal Bank Stabilization Project." The goal of the project is to assess areas that are vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise, and evaluate the use of "nature-based" stabilization solutions at these sites, such as revegetation, to create what are called "living shorelines," rather than the more traditional armoring of the banks with boulders or concrete. This one-mile stretch of the river was chosen because erosion of the coastal river bank (also called coastal bank) currently threatens critical infrastructure such as roadways and utilities. The project will ultimately recommend improvements to combat the erosion and provide long-term stabilization of the coastal bank in these areas, using those nature-based solutions where possible.

The project team, which I lead, includes Public Works Operations Manager Frank Ventimiglia, Open Space Administrator Beth O'Connor, and Water & Sewer Director Vicki Halmen. The team is supported by Wayne Castonguay and Kristen Grubbs from IRWA, and environmental consulting firms Horsley-Witten Group and Coneco Engineers.

The work is now well underway. The consultants' coastal geologists and engineers have identified and inspected areas of coastal bank erosion and determined that the damage is due to several factors, including flooding, stormwater drainage, and human impacts such as launching/storing small boats on coastal bank, and walking over coastal bank and wetlands to access the water. These Areas of Concern are shown on a map on the reverse side of this page. As part of this current CZM grant, the team will advance Areas 1a and 4 to the permitting stage by the end of June, integrating living shoreline stabilization techniques to the extent feasible. The other Areas of Concern will hopefully be advanced under future grants.

As this project continues, the Town's Planning and Conservation Offices will partner with IRWA to provide additional public education. Planned activities include: preparing and distributing an educational pamphlet on how citizens can protect coastal bank from damage by foot traffic and boat launching; posting three signs along the river on the importance of protecting coastal bank, and the impacts of climate change and sea level rise; and hosting two public presentations this spring. One presentation will be for students at Ipswich High School, and one will be for the general public. In the meantime, you can obtain more information about the project on the Parker – Ipswich – Essex Rivers Partnership (PIE–Rivers) website at <http://www.pie-rivers.org/ipswichriverbankproject>. This website is updated periodically by Kristen

Grubbs of IRWA, who serves as the team's Public Outreach Coordinator. The first consultants' reports have already been posted, with more reports posted as they are completed.

As an additional component of the project, the team is working with consultants and the Ipswich Waterways Advisory Committee to assess the feasibility of constructing a new public access area for launching non-motorized boats within this stretch of the river. This will not only improve residents' ability to access the water, but also reduce damage to fragile coastal bank and other wetland resource areas. We look forward to your input on public access at the above-referenced public hearing.

I hope that you, as a resident or business near the river, will lend your support to this important endeavor, which will produce a detailed plan for river improvements in Ipswich. Kristen and I welcome any questions, and will do our best to answer them as quickly and fully as possible. Kristen can be reached at [kgrubbs@ipswichriver.org](mailto:kgrubbs@ipswichriver.org) or 978-412-8200.

Sincerely,



Ipswich Conservation Administrator  
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**Map of CZM Resiliency Grant Project Area**

