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Contact: Peter Coffin
508-753-6087 (w) or 508-478-0619 (h)

Deirdre Menoyo, Attorney
978-443-5009

MEDIA RELEASE
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POOR FARM BROOK PERMIT APPEALED

Last week, the Blackstone River Coalition, the Blackstone River Watershed Association, the Blackstone Headwaters Coalition and twelve citizens joined in filing an administrative appeal of the water withdrawal permit recently issued to the Town of Shrewsbury by the MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The permit authorizes water withdrawals of almost half a million additional gallons a day (mgd) , in addition to the 3.9 mgd authorized in 1210. Even the current level of pumping is more than Poor Farm Brook, a designated cold-water fishery can sustain. The appellants claim "...the provisions in the modified permit fail to preserve Poor Farm Brook and downstream water resources."

The local watershed organizations have come together to protect the Blackstone River and its tributaries. They filed this appeal because:

1. The Town has not shown the need for more water. It relied on outdated population and water demand projections not supported by the most recent census numbers.
2. The Town has not done a good job managing its water. The town has one of the highest rates of unaccounted for water in the state with the Town unable to account for a whopping 27% of the water it pumps.
3. And most important for our mission of a "Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone" is the need to find the right balance between "reasonable" use of the water and protection of aquatic resources. The areas from which Shrewsbury withdraws its water are classified as severely altered by the state. This section of Poor Farm Brook is impaired for Aquatic Life Assessment caused by low flow alterations. Further

permitted withdrawals will make this bad situation worse.

Peter Coffin, Coordinator of the Blackstone River Coalition, called on DEP to make Shrewsbury come into compliance with the Town's 2010 permit, account for the million gallons a day it loses, and obtain the data DEP says it needs to determine both how Poor Farm Brook is affected and whether Shrewsbury really needs more water -- before allowing additional withdrawals.

In issuing previous permits to Shrewsbury, DEP acknowledged the impacts to the brook from wells sharing the same aquifer. In an appeal by Shrewsbury of its 2005 withdrawal permit, Administrative Magistrate Natalie S. Monroe found that "Shrewsbury's wells withdraw water directly from Lake Quinsigamond. The wells also capture groundwater that otherwise would flow into Lake Quinsigamond. Moreover, Lake Quinsigamond is the primary source of flow into the Quinsigamond River. Thus withdrawals from Shrewsbury's wells affect stream flow in the Quinsigamond River." (Recommended Final Decision, *In the Matter of Town of Shrewsbury*, Dkt. No. DEP-05-1475, November 23, 2007).

In its previous permits, DEP required Shrewsbury to perform groundwater level monitoring to evaluate the potential impacts that pumping of the Town's Home Farm Wells have on water levels near Poor Farm Brook. While DEP now finds that "a more thorough groundwater and surface water monitoring plan . . . includ[ing] analysis of the data," is necessary, it should have required this data before authorizing increased withdrawals.

Rather than ask for more water, Shrewsbury should first do all it can to bring down its high unaccounted for water, fix leaky pipes and faulty meters, and implement water conservation requirements, such as full cost pricing before DEP authorizes withdrawing more water withdrawals from a stream already running dry.

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