

## PUBLIC INFORMATION

### CITY OF CHELSEA COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS

#### What is a CSO?

Combined sewers are sewers that are designed to collect both wastewater and stormwater runoff in the same pipe. Approximately 70% of Chelsea is serviced by combined sewers, and the remaining 30% is serviced by separate sanitary sewers and storm sewers. Most of the time, Chelsea's combined sewers transport all of the wastewater and stormwater to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority's (MWRA's) Deer Island Treatment Plant, where it is treated and then discharged to the Atlantic Ocean. However, during a rain storm, runoff over hard surfaces rushes quickly into sewers and can cause a dramatic increase of water flowing into and through the combined sewers. When this happens, the total amount of this combined wastewater and stormwater flow can exceed the capacity of the sewer pipes. For this reason, combined sewer systems such as Chelsea's are designed with special overflow structures that can release the excess wet-weather flow directly to a nearby water body, to prevent it from backing up into buildings or out of manholes. These overflows, called Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), contain not only stormwater but also untreated wastewater and debris so are a public health and water pollution concern for Chelsea, as well as the approximately 770 other U.S. cities with combined sewer systems.

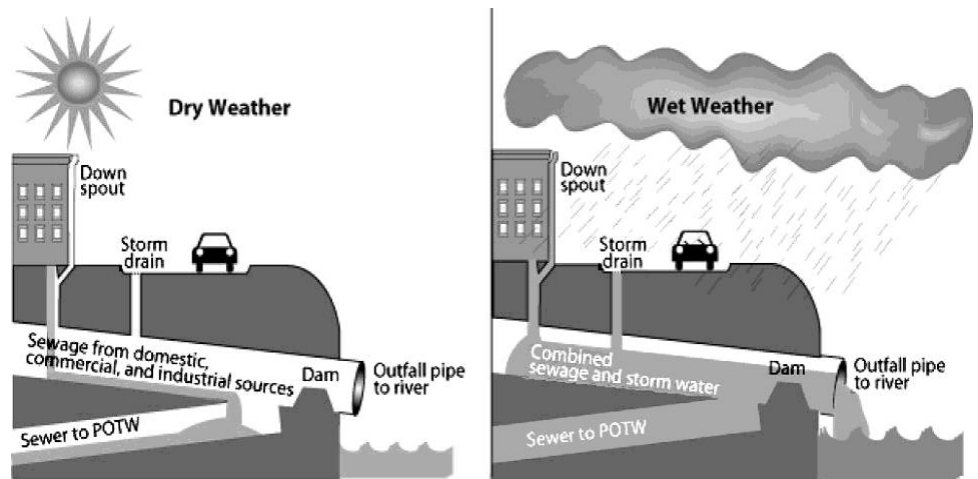


Figure from EPA.gov

#### Why Don't We Just Eliminate the CSOs?

Although CSOs discharge pollutants to local waterways, they are necessary to prevent these discharges from, instead, going into homes and businesses. Chelsea is in the process of separating all its combined sewers into separate sanitary and storm sewers; however, given that roughly 70% of the city's sewers are combined, this process will take many years and cost a substantial amount of money. Although the investment in sewer separation is substantial, it will allow the Chelsea to eliminate all of its CSOs and prevent further discharges to local rivers. It will also reduce the costs that the City (and its taxpayers) pays to the MWRA to transport and treat the current combined stormwater and sewer flows.

#### Aren't Untreated Discharges to Waterbodies Illegal?

Under the federal Clean Water Act, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates CSO discharges through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. In conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), the EPA issued the City of Chelsea, MA CSO Permit No. MA101877 on April 11, 2003. Chelsea CSO permit expires every five years and was most recently reissued November 26, 2013. In accordance with this permit, the City is authorized to discharge during wet-weather from CSOs located in Chelsea.

#### What About Dry-Weather Discharges?

Dry weather discharges from CSOs are not permitted. If a dry weather discharge were to occur, the City of Chelsea would need to immediately determine the cause of the discharge, take corrective action to stop the discharge, and report the incident to the EPA and the MADEP. It is important to note that the outfall pipes for CSOs may be shared with those for separate storm drains, and are in Chelsea. For this reason, outfalls labeled as CSOs may be seen discharging even when they are not acting as CSOs. Since dry-weather discharges could indicate a problem in the sewer system, the City of Chelsea asks that you report any discharges from CSO outfalls observed during *dry-weather* so that they can be investigated. Please contact the Chelsea Water & Sewer Department at 617-466-4310.

## How Many CSOs are there in Chelsea and Where Are They?

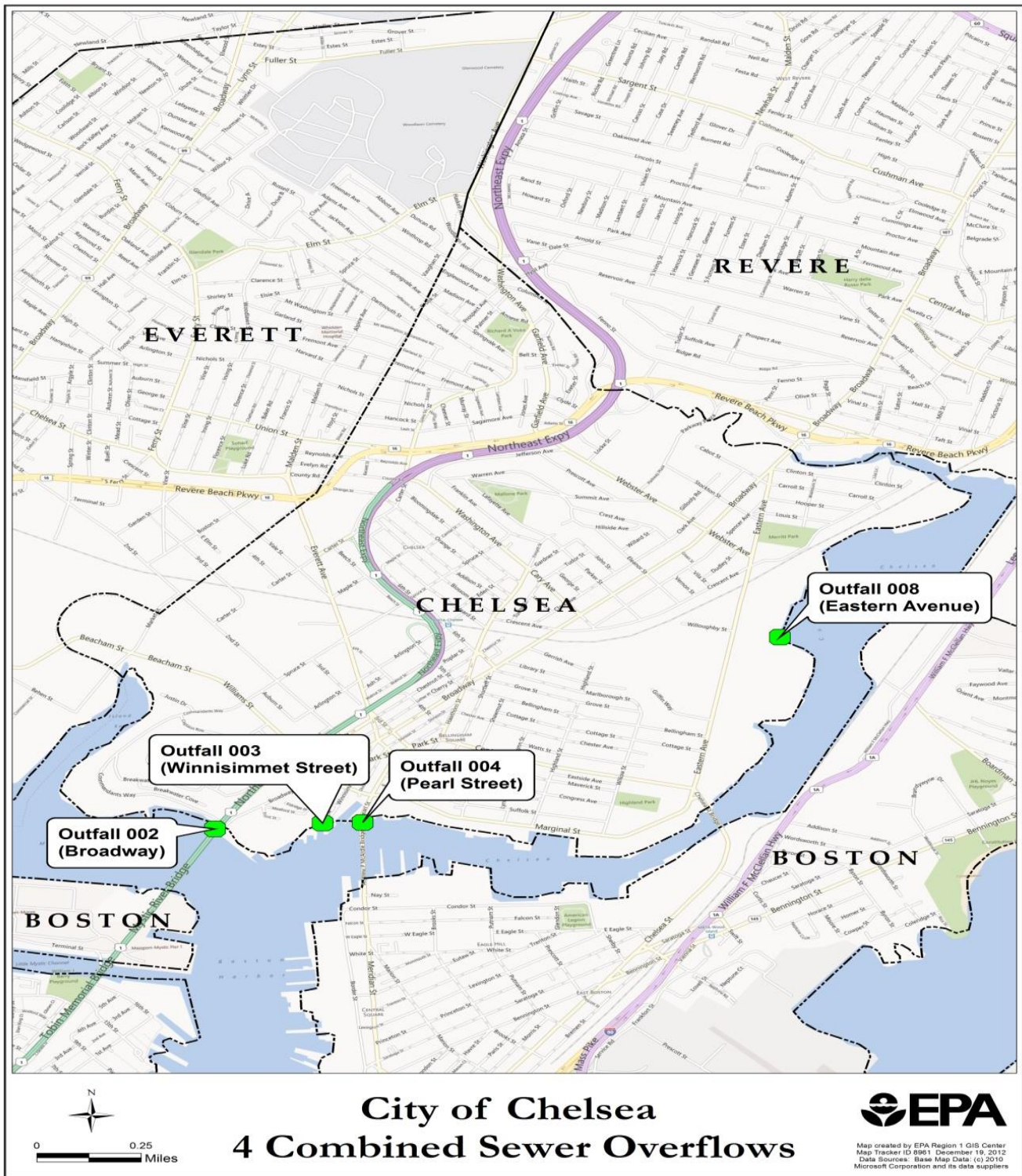
Under its NPDES Permit, Chelsea is authorized to discharge from four CSOs located in Chelsea (see Figure 1); however, one of these CSOs (CHE002) was actually eliminated by the City on December 4, 2014. The EPA is in the process of modifying the City's NPDES permit to reflect this change. It should be noted that, although the CSO was eliminated, the outfall pipe is still being used to discharge stormwater from the City's drainage system.

Each of the three remaining CSO locations is indicated by a sign, placed in a location visible from the street, with information provided in both English and Spanish. These CSOs are as follows:

		<p><b>CSO CHE003</b></p> <p>CHE003 is located at the southerly end of Winnisimmet Street at the shipyard. This CSO discharges to the Chelsea River.</p> <p>CHE003 has only discharged five times since the City began CSO monitoring in 2003. As such, the City is currently evaluating the potential for eliminating this CSO.</p>
		<p><b>CSO CHE004</b></p> <p>CHE004 is located at the southerly end of Pearl Street under the McArdle Bridge. This CSO discharges to the Chelsea River.</p> <p>CHE004 discharges during extreme storm events. Data regarding CSO discharges is published in Chelsea's CSO Annual Report, the latest publishing of which is available on the City's website.</p>
		<p><b>CSO CHE008</b></p> <p>CHE008 is located off Eastern Avenue at the Gulf Bulk Oil Storage Terminal. This CSO discharges to the Chelsea River.</p> <p>CHE008 discharges during large storm events. Data regarding CSO discharges is published in Chelsea's CSO Annual Report, the latest publishing of which is available on the City's website.</p>



Figure 1 – Chelsea Permitted CSO Locations



**Where Do I Get More Information About CSOs?**

Detailed information about Chelsea’s CSOs and CSO Control Program can be found in the City’s annual report to the EPA (due by April 30<sup>th</sup> each year), the latest copy of which can be viewed or downloaded from this webpage. Additional questions may be directed to the Chelsea Water & Sewer Department at 617-466-4310. You may also find general information about CSOs on the EPA website (epa.gov).