

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs in its *Nashua River Watershed 2003 Water Quality Assessment Report (Report No: 81-AC-4, DWM Control No: CN107.5)* describes the Nashua River Watershed as,

“The Nashua River is a tributary of the Merrimack River, one of several New England rivers draining to the Atlantic Ocean. The Nashua River's 530 square-mile total drainage area lies primarily within Worcester and Middlesex counties in Massachusetts, and a small area of Hillsborough County, New Hampshire. The Nashua River watershed is located in north central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Although the Nashua River flows northeast to the Merrimack River, its major tributaries flow in a southeast direction. The area drained by the major tributaries lies to the west of the Nashua River. In Massachusetts, the Nashua River watershed is bordered by the Millers River and Chicopee River watersheds on the west, the Blackstone River watershed on the south, and the Merrimack River and Concord River watershed on the east. The communities of Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Bolton, Boylston, Clinton, Dunstable, Fitchburg, Gardner, Groton, Harvard, Holden, Lancaster, Leominster, Lunenburg, Paxton, Pepperell, Princeton, Rutland, Shirley, Sterling, Townsend, West Boylston, and Westminster lie wholly or in part within the basin boundaries in Massachusetts. The Nashua River Basin has a land-use pattern typical of rural areas in Massachusetts and New Hampshire; concentrated settlements and strip development with much of the basin underdeveloped and containing large areas of privately-owned open spaces (Kimball 1998). Paper production has been the prominent industry in Fitchburg and Leominster in the Nashua River Basin since the early 19th century. Although these cities continue to be the population and economic centers, the industrial community now includes plastics, fabricated metal products, machinery, and chemical manufacturing. The Nashua River begins at the outlet of Lancaster Millpond in Clinton and flows in a northerly direction to its confluence with the North Nashua River in Lancaster. This portion of the river is commonly referred to as the “South Branch” Nashua River. The North Nashua River, from its headwaters in Fitchburg at the confluence of the Whitman River and Flag Brook, flows in a southeasterly direction for a distance of approximately 19 miles. The North Nashua River has an elevation drop of 360 feet. Downstream from the confluence with the North Nashua River, the mainstem falls another 110 feet along its remaining 37-mile northeasterly course to its confluence with the Merrimack River in Nashua, New Hampshire. Two major tributaries, the Squannacook and Nissitissit rivers, join the mainstem Nashua River in Massachusetts. This (narrative) only covers portion of the Nashua River Watershed within Massachusetts. There are approximately 667 river miles in the Massachusetts portion of the Nashua River Watershed