

Media Release

Charles River wins 2011 Thiess International Riverprize!

For immediate Release

27 SEPTEMBER 2011

International RiverFoundation awarded the Charles River Watershed Association, USA, the 2011 Thiess International Riverprize, for excellence in river management.

The award was presented at the Riverprize Gala Dinner, Brisbane, Australia. The \$350,000 Thiess International Riverprize is divided between the winner and finalists, and is the most prestigious river prize in the world.

Under the direction of the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA), the Charles River has made a remarkable recovery from the 1950s when sewage and paint were discharged into the river. The Charles River now boasts better river health after the implementation of sustainable river management including innovative stormwater management and water-sensitive urban development.

Robert Zimmerman CRWA's Executive Director thanked everyone involved in the operation on the Charles River and congratulated the finalists and all the other rivers that had applied for the Riverprize.

"We are all doing great work and as we face unsure times about climate change over the next 100 years the decisions and changes we make today can ensure the future is not so bad for our kids," Mr Zimmerman said.

International RiverFoundation CEO, Matthew Reddy, said the close competition between the finalists was a good sign.

"There was a lot of competitive tension, but in the end there can only be one winner of the world's largest environmental prize," Mr Reddy said.

The Charles River was chosen because of its innovative and visionary sustainable program for river management. The Charles River Watershed Association has developed their water programme to include; urban design, sustainable infrastructure and eliminating barriers between water supply, wastewater and stormwater management.

The CRWA now has the opportunity to develop a twinning programme with another waterway, to spread their award winning knowledge and encourage others. The twinning programme will receive support from the International RiverFoundation to ensure its sustainability.

Melbourne Water were Highly Commended for their work around the Yarra River. This is only the second time a high commendation has been awarded in the history of the award.

"The competition this year was extremely tight and as a result the judges have had a tough time deciding on a winner for the award, all the finalists are to be congratulated on their efforts," acknowledged Mr Reddy.

Each year, the Thies International Riverprize is presented along with the National Riverprize, at the International Riversymposium.

Visit the International RiverFoundation website for further details www.riverfoundation.org.au

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Image: Matthew Reddy (far left) with Charles River Watershed Association representatives including Robert Zimmerman (far right) | Credit: International RiverFoundation

International Riverprize: Awarded annually by the International RiverFoundation, Riverprize is the world's most prestigious environmental award, giving recognition, reward and support to those who have developed and implemented outstanding, visionary and sustainable programs in river management.

About the winner:

Charles River, Massachusetts, USA

In 1965, when the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) was founded, the river commonly ran in colours, depending on the paint being manufactured. Swimming had been banned since the early 1950s, and should have been banned decades earlier. Sewage overflows were common and outfalls discharged industrial waste.

Today the river is being revived and CRWA's work has evolved toward urban design, sustainable infrastructure and eliminating barriers between water supply, wastewater and stormwater management.

Key achievements include:

- Creation of the Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area
- Implementation of Massachusetts Water Resources Authority Long-Term Combined Sewer Overflows Control Plan
- Invention of SmartStorm®, a rainwater harvesting system, coupled with creating a stronger regulatory climate for rainwater recycling
- Fish ladder repair and replacement and Bleachery Dam Fish Passage Improvement Project
- American shad restoration program
- Charles River Nutrient TMDL studies
- Blue Cities™ Initiative for water-sensitive urban development demonstration projects
- Issuance of 13 Charles watershed conservation-oriented public water supply permits with mitigation offset feasibility requirements
- New draft municipal stormwater permits and EPA's pilot exercise of RDA to control private property runoff in three upstream towns
- Boston's Complete Streets Guidelines with goals for "greening" City streets and achieving stormwater targets

Images are available on request.

For further information on the Thies International Riverprize and the Charles River Watershed Association please contact:

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