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Preliminary work on Muddy River restoration to begin by month's end

Posted by Matt Rocheleau March 16, 2011 05:05 PM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Preliminary work will begin by month's end on a project to address flooding issues from the Muddy River, which runs from the Charles River to Jamaica Pond.

Utilities buried in the area of Brookline Avenue between Park Drive and the Fenway will soon be temporarily relocated to an area of adjacent parkland across from Landmark Center. That work will allow for first-phase construction on the Muddy River Restoration Project to begin, according to the state conservation department.

The estimated \$80-million river restoration project is a joint federal, state and local effort primarily intended to stop the waterway's recurring flood problems. It includes plans to "daylight," or re-open, a several-hundred-foot portion of the Muddy River that has run underneath a grassy open stretch between Park Drive and the Fenway for decades.

Electric, gas, communication and sewer utility relocation is required for work to later install a 24-by-10-foot culvert under Brookline Avenue, officials said. Utility relocation is expected to begin around the end of March and be complete by the end of June, said state conservation spokeswoman Wendy Fox.

Moving the underground pipes, cables, wires and associated equipment has been "planned for minimal disruption," Fox said in an e-mail.

"Each utility will be issued a permit to work in the road and in the park," she wrote. "These permits address work hours and traffic management requirements, including pedestrian accommodations or detours. The utilities are responsible for abiding by the traffic management agreements in the permits and for continuity of service."

Private utilities involved in the relocation will pay for their own relocation costs. Those companies are: NSTAR, National Grid, Verizon, Verizon Business, Comcast, and the Forest City Network (FCN), she said. Boston Water and Sewer will be relocated later during phase one of the Muddy River project.

Once the culvert under Brookline Avenue is installed, utility companies will

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abandon the temporary location and return their equipment to designated areas around Brookline Avenue.

State and city officials will hold a public meeting on the utility relocation Wednesday evening from 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the 11th floor of the Massachusetts College of Art and Design Tower Building at 621 Huntington Ave.

The Muddy River, one of several waterways in Frederick Law Olmsted's Emerald Necklace, has flooded on multiple occasions. In 1996, rainwater surged into Kenmore Station, closing underground parts of the Green Line for months and causing severe water damage in area basements, according to [past Globe reports](#). The river's restoration project would prevent such floods in all but the worst storms, prior reports said.

The Muddy River project area is around three-and-a-half miles long. After underground portions of the river are re-exposed, large culverts will be installed during the first phase, said U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project manager Michael Keegan. A second-phase will follow to dredge the river along with Willow, Ward's, and Leverett ponds, he said. Other project components include eradicating invasive plants from wetlands and restoring natural plants along the river's shoreline, along with aquatic habitats to the river and its ponds.

The river restoration work will cost around \$80-million, according to preliminary estimates from Keegan. Federal funding will cover 65 percent of the project's final price tag, he said. The state has authorized to pay \$24 million for its share, according to Fox. Brookline and Boston have agreed to pick up the remaining tab not covered by state and federal dollars.

Whether or not to restore the old, closed [Carlton Street footbridge](#) in Brookline as part of the Muddy River project had become a topic of debate. Fox said that Brookline is committed to restoring the bridge as part of the project.

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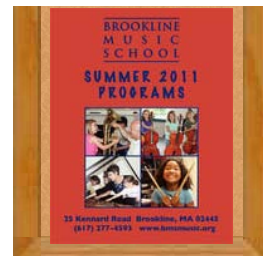
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