

**Footsteps Towards
Abatement: Rhode
Island and its
Combined Sewer
Overflows**

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"The challenge to those who face the task of recommending and implementing effective and affordable CSO control programs is formidable."

-Manual of Practice for combined sewer overflows

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Abstract

Combined sewer overflows present a significant problem to water quality in the state of Rhode Island. The Clean Water Act mandates that they be abated, but the estimated cost of abatement is over half a billion dollars. CSOs need to be abated in the cities of Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls. For the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls, though, the funding mechanisms are not broad enough to enable the abatement projects to be financed. This paper explores the issues related to CSOs and gives a discussion of abatement technologies for CSO with specific recommendations for certain technologies. These technologies include the construction of a storage facility at the North Diversion Structure of the Blackstone Valley District Commission and the pursuit of deep rock tunnels to store wastewater during wet weather. Deep rock tunnels provide what appears to be a relatively simple and inexpensive answer to a very complicated and expensive problem.

The paper also recommends that a merger between the Narragansett Bay Commission, the largest sewer commission in the state, and the Blackstone Valley District Commission, the sewer commission that is responsible for the CSOs in Central Falls and Pawtucket, take place. This merger is currently an issue in the state legislature.