

WESTFIELD RIVER NOTES

VOL. 4, ISSUE 2

MARCH/APRIL 2007

Dear Friends,

Spring is in the air and there are a flood of activities which allow you to put on your walkin' shoes and explore the Westfield River Watershed!

First up is the 13th Annual Westfield River Symposium, "**Water, Woods & Warming,**" **Saturday, March 31st** at Westfield State College – a great opportunity to learn about what's happening in the watershed.

Throughout the Spring and early summer, volunteers will be **WALKIN' THE WATERSHED – *Stream Teams in Action 2007***. Stream Teams will use their observational skills to document scenic, historical, geological, recreational and natural features found along the Wild & Scenic Westfield River. The Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee' has designated **June 2nd & 3rd** as ***Walkin' The Watershed Weekend*** and volunteers who submit their data by the end of June will be entered into the ***Riffle, Rapid, Run Draw!***

We also invite you to celebrate the restoration of Bronson and Yokum Brooks – two important coldwater habitat tributaries to the Westfield River. **The Bronson Brook Restoration Celebration and Kickoff** is tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, May 3rd** and will celebrate the new fish-friendly bottomless arch culvert and kickoff the second phase of the restoration project. On **Friday, May 11th**, join the Town of Becket, students and restoration partners in the celebration of the completion of the **Yokum Brook Restoration Project**. The event will be held at the Becket-Washington Elementary School (12 Maple St, Becket) from 1-3pm.

For more details and a list of other events look under the ***Upcoming Events*** section.

Hope to see you on the river!

~Robert Thompson, Chair
Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee

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2007 Westfield River Symposium

Water, Woods, and Warming

Saturday, March 31, 2007

Westfield State College - Scanlon Banquet Hall

SCHEDULE:

8:00- 8:45 Registration, View Exhibits, Free Coffee and Continental Breakfast provided

8:45-9:00 Welcome

9:00-9:45 Keynote Address *An Update on Global Warming* by Ray Bradley

10:00-10:45 Concurrent Sessions I:

- **Biology, Status, and Conservation of American Eels:** Alex Haro (S.O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center)
- **Natural Forests and Champion Trees of the Westfield River Watershed:** Gary Beluzo (Holyoke Community College)
- **A glimpse of *The Watershed Waltz*** (a puppet show!): Meredyth Babcock and JoAnne Spies (Marmalade Productions)

11:00-11:45 Concurrent Sessions II:

- **Water Resource Management in Westfield - Drinking Water to Wastewater:** Charles Darling & David Billips (City of Westfield, Water Resources Dept.)
- **ACORN: A Cooperative Resource Network:** Paul Catanzaro (UMass Extension)
- **Kid's (and Adult's) Salmon/Biology/Geology Tour:** Tom Condon (Powder Mill Middle School), Dave Lovejoy and Mike Young (both of WSC)

12:00-12:45 Concurrent Sessions II:

- **River Restoration in the Westfield River Watershed:** Carrie Banks and Tim Purinton (MA Riverways)
- **Sustainable Forest Management in Massachusetts:** James DiMaio (Chief Forester, MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation)
- **Screening of "An Inconvenient Truth"** (will last til about 1:30)

2:00- ? Field Trips

- **Tour of the Westfield Wastewater Treatment Plant:** Dave Billips, Superintendent (City of Westfield, Water Resources Dept.)
- **Visit to Site of Recent Harvest in Chester-Blandford State Forest:** Tom Ryan (MA Dept of Conservation and Recreation Service Forester)



The 13th Annual Westfield River Symposium will begin to address the very important environmental issue of "How does Global Warming Impact the Westfield River Watershed?" Keynote speaker Ray Bradley, a paleoclimatologist with the UMASS Department of Geosciences will provide an "Update on Global Warming." Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth" will also be screened. This year's program includes some **kid-friendly events**, notably a preview of Marmalade Productions' "The Watershed Waltz" puppet show!

Sponsored by:

Westfield River Watershed
Association
Westfield River Environmental
Center at WSC
Westfield State College

WALKIN' THE WATERSHED – *Stream Teams in Action 2007*



IMAGE DONATED BY HILLTOWN LOCAL ARTIST
MICHAEL WOLSKI (www.MICHAELWOLSKI.com)

FREE TRAINING SEMINARS

April 21st, Chester Railroad Station, 10-Noon

May 16th, Notchview Reservation, Windsor, 6:30-8:30 pm

May 21st, Stanton Hall, Huntington, 6:30-8:30 pm

We supply the training, topographic maps, survey datasheets.
You supply your observation skills and the willingness to walk the watershed!
Together we improve the future of the Westfield River one bend at a time.

WALKIN' THE WATERSHED WEEKEND JUNE 2 & 3

Return your data by the end of JUNE and get your name into the
RIFFLE, RAPID, RUN DRAW!!

You've hung up your walkin' shoes? Don't fret; there are many ways to **HELP** the Stream Teams flow.
Just call Meredyth Babcock Wild & Scenic Stream Team Coordinator at 413 623-2070 or
WalkintheWatershed@hotmail.com.

*Sponsored by the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee,
National Park Service, & Massachusetts Riverways Program*

HOME SCHOOL PROJECT TURNS INTO SUMMER VENTURE FOR PUPPETEER MOTHER

I am Meredyth Babcock, a home school mother and professional puppeteer. My three children, Cavanaugh 11, Emerson 9, and Dalyan 7 were interested in water so we set out to explore the water outside our door. In January, most of the water is frozen so snowflakes became our obsession.

Thinking about spring thaw I had this crazy idea that we should spend the spring walking the watershed. I never dreamed that my interest in having my children walk their own watershed to gain a greater understanding of the water cycle and watershed dynamics was already underway on a much larger scale.

In fact we soon discovered that our own Westfield River had Stream Teams doing the very thing that I wanted to do with my children, and that the river had recently been distinguished by receiving Wild & Scenic Status. Further investigation showed that 78 miles along the three branches of the Westfield River have been honored with this distinction.

When I learned that Teams of concerned and devoted citizens were taking a few hours of their time to walk a section of the watershed and report back to the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Committee, I knew that I had stumbled on something wonderful and exciting happening in my own community.



Stream Team Volunteer surveying the West Branch in Chester

I was impressed that ordinary people were volunteering to be on Stream Teams and taking it upon themselves to conduct visual surveys while enjoying a walk along the river. They had attended training sessions last year and were helping by documenting the extraordinary geological, historical and natural features that exist in the Hill Towns, as well as any problems they might see. These surveys give the Wild & Scenic Committee the knowledge they need to preserve and enhance the Westfield River.

I called Carrie Banks because I heard that she was offering free training sessions this spring. When we talked I discovered that the Wild & Scenic Committee was in the process of hiring someone to organize the Stream Teams in this exciting community project. I'm thrilled to now be working with the Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee. I hope everyone will take this opportunity to explore the river. Feel free to contact me (413-623-2070 or WalkintheWatershed@hotmail.com) if you have questions, suggestions or eager walking feet.

Sincerely,

Meredyth Babcock
Westfield River Wild & Scenic Stream Team Coordinator

WILD & SCENIC QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

We often field a variety of questions about the river, resources and region. We decided to highlight some of these questions and the responses we have with our readers.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE TO CERTIFY A VERNAL POOL?

ANSWER:

There is a formal certification process through the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program (www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhosp/nhosp.htm). In order to certify a vernal pool, you must complete three steps: 1) you must complete and sign an **Observation Form**, 2) provide **Maps** that precisely locate the vernal pool, and 3) provide **Evidence** for the presence of the vernal pool itself and its use by the indicator species. The tricky part is finding and correctly identifying the indicator species.

There are a couple of resources which can help you with the certification process. The best resources include:

1) Vernal Pool Association (www.vernalpool.org) – a non-profit group that educates others about vernal pool ecology, the local environment, bio-diversity, and the protection of our resources.. They have a specific webpage dedicated to the certification process (www.vernalpool.org/macert_1.htm).

2) A Field Guide to the Animals of Vernal Pools (2001)

by Leo Kenney and Matthew Burne

This 8" X 5 1/2" full color field guide provides an excellent reference to the specialized creatures that depend upon vernal pools. Beautiful photographs and descriptive text are combined to aid in the identification and study of amphibians, reptiles and many invertebrates. This guide is available to borrow through most libraries or to purchase online (www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhosp/nhpubs.htm).

3) The best way to learn how to identify the indicator species and about vernal pool ecology is to jump right in and explore a vernal pool. We recommend checking out the Highland Communities Initiative's

Signs of Spring: A Vernal Pool Walk

***April 21 | Dry Hill Reservation, New Marlborough | 9:30 a.m. | Registration required
(contact highlands@ttor.org)***

It's spring, and many critters have already hit the pool! Join ecologist Julie Richburg to learn how important vernal pools are, as well as how to identify the pools and their inhabitants.

UPCOMING EVENTS

WESTFIELD RIVER WILD & SCENIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING:

Thursday April 12th, 2007 from **6:30-8:30pm** at a location to be determined.

Our monthly meetings are held, on a rotating basis, in one of the Wild & Scenic Communities. All our meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome. Meeting agendas are available a week before the scheduled meeting date. Contact (413) 268-3129 or river_banks@hotmail.com for more details.

RESTORATION EVENTS:

HOLD THE DATE!

Bronson Brook Restoration Celebration and Kick-off tentatively scheduled for **Thursday, May 3rd**. Stay tuned for more details.

Ballou Dam Removal Dedication, Friday, May 11th, 1-3pm, Becket-Washington Elementary School (Maple St, Becket). Join the Town of Becket, students and restoration partners in the celebration of the completion of the Yokum Brook Restoration Project. The event will include a special dedication ceremony for the Ballou Dam Removal and release of the Atlantic Salmon Fry by restoration partners and elementary students. All are welcome to join in the celebration. RSVP Tim Purinton, Riverways Restoration Planner, (617) 626-1542 or Tim.Purinton@state.ma.us.

WESTFIELD RIVER WILDWATER RACES

April 21st, Novice Race, Registration 8:00 am at State DPW yard, Huntington, Race begins 10:00 am.

April 22nd, Expert Race, Registration 9:30 am at Knightville Dam, Huntington, Race begins 11:00 am.

Whitewater Race Clinics: April 1st, 7th and 14th. For more information, contact Jeff Defeo (413) 354-9684.

EVENTS SPONSORED BY WESTFIELD RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION:

13th Annual Westfield River Symposium: This year's symposium will be held on **Saturday, March 31** in the Scanlon Banquet Hall at Westfield State College - note the change in location from previous years! This year's theme is "Water, Woods, and Warming", with a variety of talks on related topics, including: American eels, Westfield's water supply, sustainable forestry, the MassACORN project, and a preview of "The Watershed Waltz" - a puppet show being produced by WRWA that we hope will be performed in many area elementary schools over the next year. The keynote address will be "An Update on Global Warming" by Dr. Ray Bradley of the UMass Dept. of Geosciences. We'll also be showing "An Inconvenient Truth" early in the afternoon. See article above for more information on the program.

Salmon Fry Stocking: Stocking of salmon fry in the Westfield River and its tributaries will take place in April and May, with official "WRWA days" on **Saturday, April 14** (in Granville and Westfield), and **Saturday, April 28** (along the Middle Branch above the Littleville Dam. Additional information, and more fry stocking dates at other locations are available at the Westfield River Fry Stocking page (<http://www.westfieldriver.org/events/salmonsched07.html>).

WRWA Annual Dinner Meeting: This year's Annual Meeting (and dinner) will be held on **Thursday, May 10** - save the date!

2nd Annual Fly-Fishing Clinic: We'll hold our second annual clinic for kids (and their parents?) to learn the basics of fly-fishing on **Saturday, May 12**. Contact Bill Rose (413-786-0195 or brose@curtisuniversal.com) for more information.

Fishway Open House: WRWA will host an open house at the fish ladder in West Springfield on **Sunday, June 3** - this is a once-a-year opportunity to tour the facility that allows upstream passage of fish past the West Springfield dam and, if we're lucky, see an adult Atlantic salmon that's been trapped on its way upstream!

River Cleanup: Our annual fall river cleanup, held in conjunction with the Connecticut River Watershed Council's "Source to Sea" cleanup will be held on the morning of **Saturday, September 29** - Save the date! More information will be posted on the website as it becomes available.

EVENTS SPONSORED BY THE HIGHLAND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE:

To register for HCI-sponsored events or for more information about any of the events listed, contact HCI at 413/268-8219 or email highlands@ttor.org

"Can Local Sustainability Avert the Consequences of a Global Economy?": A talk by Chris Martensen *Monday, March 5 / Conway Elementary School, Route 116, Conway / 7 p.m. / Free and open to all / Conway School of Landscape Design Speaker Series*

Planning Board Roundtable Discussion

Wednesday, March 7 / Worthington Historical Society / 7 p.m. / Free and open to all / Join local planning board members in sharing your experiences about recent projects, successes, and challenges.

Advanced Techniques for Planning and Zoning: The annual conference of the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative / *Saturday, March 17 / Holy Cross College, Worcester / visit www.umass.edu/cptc for a conference program and registration. Contact HCI if you're interested in participating in a carpool.*

The Massachusetts Land Conservation Conference / *Saturday, March 24 / Bancroft School, Worcester / visit www.massland.org for more information. Contact HCI if you're interested in participating in a carpool.*

Signs of Spring: A Vernal Pool Walk

April 21 / Dry Hill Reservation, New Marlborough / 9:30 a.m. / Registration required. It's spring, and many critters have already hit the pool! Join ecologist Julie Richburg to learn how important vernal pools are, as well as how to identify the pools and their inhabitants.

Western Mass Community Preservation Act Conference

April 28 / UMass-Amherst (location tbd) / 9:30 a.m. /

Making Woods Wildlife Friendly

May 12 / Notchview Reservation, New Marlborough / 10 a.m. / Registration required. Cutting trees to benefit wildlife? Strange, but true! Learn how we manage the Notchview forest for wildlife, and how timber-harvesting could attract more creatures to your own property.

Your Land, Your Choices Event: New Changes & Opportunities in Chapter 61

May 22/ (Pending Confirmation) Buckland Town Hall, Buckland / 7 p.m. / Free and Open to All.

HCI's *My place is the Highlands* Story Contest

We want to hear your stories about your place in the Highlands. Why do you enjoy living in the Highlands? What people or places inspire you? Why is your community special? Tell us your story, in 250 words or less, and if we print it in the HCI newsletter, on the HCI website, or other HCI materials, we'll send you a handy Trustees of Reservations backpack. Send your submissions to highlands@ttor.org or to PO Box 253, Haydenville MA 01039.

We would love to hear about your events and activities in the Westfield River Watershed. Contact Westfield_River_Notes@hotmail.com to list your events.

Membership of the Committee

Town of Becket Bill Toomey, Mercedes Gallagher alternate (Treasurer)

Town of Chester Robert Thompson (Chair), Dave Pierce alternate

Town of Chesterfield Matt Barron, Denise Cormier alternate

Town of Cummington Ben Forbes, Judy Moore alternate

Town of Huntington Jeff Penn (Vice-Chair), Karen Vowerk alternate

Town of Middlefield Carl Lafreniere, John Richardson alternate

Town of Savoy VACANT

Town of Washington VACANT

Town of Windsor Jim Caffrey (Secretary), Deborah Balmuth alternate

Town of Worthington Helen Sharron Pollard, Jim Dodge alternate

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Joan Kimball, Jennifer Howard alternate

National Park Service Liz Lacy, Jamie Fosburgh alternate

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Chris Curtis, Anne Capra alternate

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Melissa Jette, Gale LaBelle alternate

Trustees of Reservations Jocelyn Forbush, Wendy Sweetser alternate

Westfield River Watershed Association Tom Condon

Please feel free to pass this along to other friends of the Westfield River. To subscribe to Westfield RiverNotes send an email to Westfield_RiverNotes@hotmail.com.