

Watershed

The President's Message

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It's a bit early for resolutions, but our next newsletter doesn't come out until February, so it's now or never! I'll offer a couple of WRWA-related resolutions, and hope that you'll adopt at least one. For starters, we live in a remarkable area - with fairly large forest blocks, numerous scenic streams, and some pleasingly hilly topography - all nestled within the generally densely populated Northeast.

So my first suggestion is that you make a resolution to take advantage of these scenic surroundings. Take a hike to Sanderson Brook Falls in the Chester State Forest, or along the East Branch of the Westfield River below Chesterfield Gorge, or out to the Keystone Arch Bridges near the Chester-Middlefield town line, or up to the views from Mt. Tekoa on the outskirts of Westfield. Paddle a canoe on Littleville Lake on the Middle Branch of the Westfield River, or sign up for the Westfield River Races in mid-April. Try cross country skiing at the Maple Corner Farm in Granville, Notchview Reservation in Windsor, or Bucksteep Manor in Washington.

My second suggestion is that you resolve to add another WRWA activity to your list of things to do during the year. We can always use help for the River Symposium, scheduled for March 31, 2007. In addition, there are opportunities for volunteers to be involved with stocking salmon fry in April and May, assisting with the fry releases associated with the Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program or helping to organize and run the fly-fishing clinic in May or June, and joining efforts to clean up the river in late September or October. If recreation, rather than service, sounds more appealing, then join us for one of Tom and Nancy Condon's outdoor events, or for the Annual Dinner in May, or the canoe cruise in June.

Whether or not you act on any of those ideas (which constitute a thinly veiled overview of the kinds of things we've been doing over the past several years), we hope you'll renew your membership when those forms are mailed out in January or early February. If you've got friends or relatives that share your interests in our local environment, be sure to tell them about WRWA as well. We rely on

membership dues to support all of our core activities, with some additional funding coming from small grants. For example, we've recently applied for a grant to support the production of a puppet show that would teach elementary school-age children the basics of "watersheds", and have already committed some of our general funds as a match for any grant monies received. If successful, you'll be hearing more about that project in the next newsletter.

As always you can find more information about current and future activities by visiting our website at www.westfieldriver.org. In the meantime,

Best wishes for the holidays,
Mike Young

SAVE THE DATE

13th Annual River Symposium

The thirteenth annual Westfield River Symposium will be held at Westfield State College on **March 31, 2007**. This year's event will take place in the Scanlon Banquet Hall, which has a much larger and more inviting area for the exhibitors along with a large auditorium that can be partitioned into three separate rooms. The Symposium Committee will meet for the first time in late November, with most of the planning to be done in January and February. Please contact Mike Young (myoung@wsc.ma.edu, 572-5741) if you have suggestions for themes, session speakers, exhibitors, field trips, or a keynote speaker.

Annual River Cleanup

By Mark Damon

The annual Westfield River cleanup was held on September 30th this year and covered sites in Westfield, West Springfield, Russell, and Huntington. Most of us met at the Westfield Gas and Electric substation on Meadow Street and divided up into groups covering the first three towns, and collected quite an assortment of items, including over 80 bags of trash, tires, a mattress, a pile of lumber, an oil tank, a freezer, a vacuum cleaner, an assortment of furniture, and even a swimming pool (not exactly intact). The second group covered the Huntington sites and came up with another trailer load of trash. All told, there were about forty volunteers who gave their time and effort to help make our river a bit cleaner, nicer, and healthier. Thanks go out to all involved.

Robinson State Park Update

By Mike Young

Since the August newsletter was published, the plans for logging in Robinson State Park have been put on hold for at least a year. This change was effected by the Friends of Robinson State Park (FORP), a group of concerned citizens, many of whom live close to the park. The delay in implementation of the DCR logging will allow for further study of some of the issues raised by the group, and possibly some modification of the original plan. WRWA supported the delay by writing a letter to DCR Commissioner Stephen Burrington in early October - at about the same time that a similar request was made by two local state senators.

First, a little background. There are several stands of red pine in the park, most obviously a substantial stand at the main park entrance. Some of those pines are infected with shoestring fungus, and many of the others are likely to become infected over time. That reality appears to have been the impetus for the DCR to consider forest management activities in the park. They decided to combine the removal of the red pines with additional activities intended to diversify the age structure of the park's woodlands, thereby increasing the overall health of the forest and improving its resistance to disease and other hazards (like wind). Most of the targeted areas, which totaled about 130 acres (roughly one-sixth of the park), are in the extreme eastern portion of the park, and would be accessible via the same routes that would be used to gain access to some of the interior stands of red pine.

WRWA Board members visited the park on at least two occasions, once in the company of Tom Ryan, the service forester with responsibility for supervising the cut, and a month later with several members of FORP. We were impressed by both visits, and by the sincerity and competence of everyone involved. While we recognize the value of the proposed management activities, we do believe that the FORP raised some issues that require additional evaluation. Most importantly, it appears that (1) the Natural Heritage listing of endangered species in the park may have been incomplete, so that the foresters were working without full knowledge of potentially impacted species, and (2) that an adequate plan for dealing with the possible onslaught of invasive species following the cut had not been formulated. There also appear to be some likely vernal pools, for which certification has not been sought by DCR, within the regions where harvesting would take place. In addition, it appears that the cutting of trees right up to the steep slopes abutting the Westfield River would likely increase the potential for significant erosion along those banks. Even though the marking of trees for cutting has been described as "light" by several knowledgeable foresters, there is also no question that the cut will have a substantial aesthetic impact on this urban park. A broader discussion of the role of forest management in these kinds of situations, and the role of public input into such management decisions, appears to be warranted. The delay will allow these issues to be investigated more thoroughly.

Westfield River Fish Ladder - 2006

By Henry Warchol

This year the fishway was monitored from April 3 to July 6 by three seasonal employees. These persons were hired by Caleb Slater of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. They also counted the American eel's (elvers) –a catadromous fish. The anadromous (sea run fish that spawn in fresh water) stop migrating about the end of April and monitoring stops but the fish ladder still has water flowing to allow the native fish to use it unimpeded. Volunteers counted the elvers from July to September. The eel's travel up their specially made eel ladder, they drop into a trap, are netted, counted and dumped upstream to continue their migration. Thanks to volunteer's Leon Pothier, Ken Taylor, Stan Gula, Ted Ziskowski and Bill Rose.

The fish ladder's water is closed off on November 15th so that ice build-up will not damage the wooden baffles of the fish ladder. Westfield's 2006 fish count totals from April 3-2006 to July 6-2006:

Shad	1,533
Sea Lamprey	1,276
Atlantic Salmon	34
White Sucker	3,447
Smallmouth Bass	188
Brown Trout	39
Rainbow Trout	10
Tiger Trout	69
Brook Trout	7
American eel's	2,538 (April to September)

Winter Outings

By Tom Condon

Robinson State Park Hike, Agawam

Date and Time: Saturday January 13, 2007, 10am to 1pm

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon

Registration: Please call 413-564-0895 to register, so if bad weather forces cancellation we can contact you.

Meeting Place: Robinson State Park Main Entrance, North Street, Agawam

Join us to explore this gem of a state park along the Westfield River. We'll explore various trails at a leisurely pace looking for and discussing how plants and animals prepare for the harsh winters of New England. We'll also delve into the controversy surrounding the cutting of timber from this land. How will such a harvest change this area and affect the character and natural history of the park?

We'll hope for a light snow the day before and clear, sunny skies on the day of our hike, but of course, we live

in New England and as Mark Twain once said, "if you don't like the weather, just wait a minute; it will change." So, come prepared for all types of weather, wear good boots, and bring a lunch.

Maple Corners Cross-country Skiing, Granville

Date and Time: Sunday, February 11

10am – 2pm

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon

Registration: Please call 413-564-0895 to register, so if bad weather forces cancellation we can contact you.

Meeting Place: Maple Corner Farm, Granville. Located on Beech Hill Road off Route 23.

Join us for some cross-country skiing on the extensive trail system at Maple Corner Farm. Bring your own skis or rent them there. This trip is for all ability levels. Ski as a group or split off and ski the trails of your choice and ability level. The group will explore the trails for signs of animals and discuss winter survival strategies used by plants. Bring a lunch or buy something to eat at the farm's snack bar. Treacherous travel conditions or a lack of snow cancels. A \$10 trail pass and \$10 equipment rental apply.

Owl Prowl at Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge,

Longmeadow

Date and Time: Sunday, February 25

6pm – 8pm

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon

Registration: Please call 413-564-0895 to register, so if bad weather forces cancellation we can contact you.

Meeting Place: Fannie Stebbins Wildlife Refuge at the south end of West Road, Longmeadow

Join us as we quietly explore the fields and forests of this extensive refuge along the Connecticut River. We'll teach you how to call the local winter resident owls and discuss owl vocabulary. It is important to dress warmly for this activity since much of it will involve sitting or standing quietly as we search for owls. You may wish to bring a lightweight chair or insulated pad to sit upon during the trip and perhaps a thermos of hot chocolate or soup. Flashlights are helpful. Red plastic to cover our flashlights and protect our night vision will be provided.



Foray to Mount Washington State Forest, Mount

Washington

Date and Time: Sunday, March 18

8am – 5pm

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon

Registration: Please call 413-564-0895 to register, so if bad weather forces cancellation we can contact you.

Meeting Place: Westfield State Commuter Parking Lot, Western Ave., Westfield. Carpooling will be necessary.

With spring just around the corner, join us as we tour two of the most dramatic features in the southwestern corner of Massachusetts. We will start by taking a short hike to see Bash Bish Falls along the border with New York. This spectacular fall drops through several gorges before plummeting over an 80-foot ledge to the brook below. Upon return to our cars, we will continue our travel to the trailhead where our hike up Mount Everett will begin.

Our hike will take us past Guilder Pond as we ascend to just over 2600 feet and the summit of Mount Everett. This vantage point offers outstanding views of the tri-state area. Bring a lunch, plenty of water, sturdy hiking boots, and dress for the weather. Plan to join us for a casual dinner in Great Barrington on the trip back to the Pioneer Valley.

"A Place of Many Windings"

By Mike Young

Mike Donovan, who began working for the Country Journal as a commercial photographer and moved on to write for them, grew up in the village of Woronoco and decided to preserve its story. The result is a 300-page book published in 2004: "A Place of Many Windings: The Rise and Fall of a New England Mill Town". On October 19, Mike summarized some of the stories in the book for a small audience at the Westfield Athenaeum. He noted that the initial meetings for the formation of WRWA were held in Memorial Hall in Woronoco in the early 1950s - so our organization shares some history with the village!

Much of the town's history revolved around the paper mills that were built there, beginning with the first mill in the 1870s when the town was known as Salmon Falls. A bridge was built across the river in the late 1880s to give the mill access to the railroad on the north side. The original owners of the mill had already sold out at that point, and the town was renamed Fairfield around 1890, honoring the then-owner of the Woronoco Paper Company. The village's name was changed to Woronoco by Horace Augustus Moses, who became president of the company in the early 1900s, after it had become Strathmore Paper. Most mill workers lived in company housing at that time and village life centered on sports, with baseball and basketball being community favorites. It was Moses who built Memorial Hall to acknowledge the eight Woronoco boys who had died in the First World War. The structure was later expanded to become the Strathmore Community Building (but was demolished in the 1980s). The village's peak came around the time of World War II, but following the war mill workers increasingly lived away from the town and the sense of community declined. By the early 1960s

Hammermill acquired the mills and divested itself of the mill housing, hastening the decline. The mills were finally closed in the 1990s and the village seems nearly deserted today.

The book is a very readable account of the town's history, with lots of personal anecdotes and a recounting of many major events, including a number of floods. The first few chapters provide information on the early history of the area, including the "legends" of Falley's Armory, the Counterfeiter's Cave, and the English Grass Cave. Copies can be obtained by sending \$15 to Moose Meadow Books, P.O. Box 211, Huntington, MA 01050.

Low Impact Development

By Matt DelMonte

Low Impact Development (LID) is a smart growth term that you may have heard about while discussing land use planning and site design. LID incorporates small, cost-effective landscape features that simultaneously conserve and protect natural systems while reducing infrastructure costs. LID allows land to be developed in a manner which mitigates potential environmental impacts. LID practices are especially suited for urbanized and developing suburban landscapes such as those in the lower watershed. Benefits of LID include reduced impervious area, increase in green (open) space, protection of trees and vegetation, reduced infrastructure costs and increased water quality.

Very few developers use LID technologies in their projects, however most would see benefits. Because LID practices attempt to mimic pre-development storm water controls (natural processes), they are generally more cost effective and lower in maintenance than conventional, structural controls. In addition, they reduce infrastructure while responding to environmental regulation such as NPDES Phase II. It is important to note that not all situations are suitable for LID. Considerations such as slope, soil permeability and depth of water table can restrict the use if LID technology.

LID tools include bioretention areas, grass swales, rain barrels, permeable pavements, roof top gardens and disconnecting rooftop gutter spouts. The use of LID is relatively new and still not prevalent. A great deal of information is available from Prince George's County, Maryland, which pioneered the use of LID. You can learn more about local LID, including success stories in the Ipswich River Watershed, by visiting the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) website at <http://www.mass.gov/envir/lid/>.

If you would like to get this Newsletter (and the other benefits of membership in the WRWA), please join the Westfield River Watershed Association. Membership applications are available on our website (www.westfieldriver.org) or by calling Carl Grobe at 572-5304.

WRWA Board of Director meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month at the Geology Museum (3rd floor, Wilson Hall) of Westfield State College. All WRWA members are welcome. Contact Mike Young at 568-8498 for further information.

Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2006-2007.

Officers:

President	Mike Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
Vice President	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
Second Vice President	Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	01030	786-0195
Treasurer	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
Secretary	Dave Lovejoy	P.O. Box 219	Blandford	01008	572-5307

Directors:

	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467
	Carl Grobe	314 Russell Road	Westfield	01085	572-5304
	Joan Pearsons	59 Van Horn Street	W. Springfield	01089	736-5208
	Kathy Meyer	87 Old Farm Road	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	Eileen Rannenber	95 Regency Park Drive	Agawam	01001	786-5902
	Tom Condon	80 General Knox Road	Russell	01071	564-0895
	Bob Thompson	10 Lyon Hill Road	Chester	01011	354-9636
	Bill Toomey	19 Main Street	Chester	01011	354-7780
	Mirela Newman	GARP Department	WSC	01086	572-5307
	Joyce Platt	Log House Box 124	Russell	01071	862-3247
	Larry Meyers-McElwee	11 Laurel Terrace	Westfield	01085	568-8234

Honorary Director:

	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050	
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