

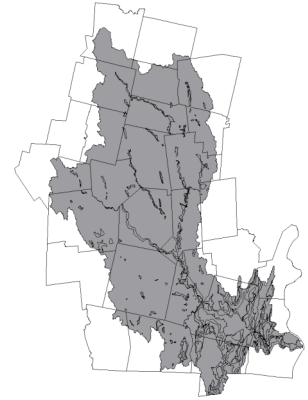
The **SUMMER 2006**
Watershed News

Westfield River Watershed Association (WRWA) ~ P.O. Box 1764 ~ Westfield, MA 01086-1764 ~ www.westfieldriver.org

The President's Message

Dear Westfield River Watershed members and supporters,

This issue of the newsletter, as always, recaps some of the things that have happened over the past few months and also previews events that are coming up. Our organization has been very active over the last two years, thanks to the dedicated leadership of Kathy Meyer, our outgoing president. Among other things Kathy has successfully obtained grant funding for several watershed projects and for the purchase of a new laptop and projector for WRWA, has spent countless hours organizing and attending WRWA events, has spearheaded weekly summer cleanups of some of the popular turnouts along Route 20, has initiated a monthly WRWA column in the Southwoods magazine, and has continued to do an excellent job as WRWA publicist. She was also instrumental in producing and distributing our enormously popular half-hour video "Five Feet and Rising: The Floods of '55" last year at the time of the 50th anniversary of that disaster. Thanks, Kathy, for all your hard work and for your ongoing efforts as a member of the Board of Directors.



Beginning in May and continuing throughout the summer, the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee and the National Park Service have conducted meetings in each of the ten communities that are home to designated "Wild & Scenic" stretches of the Westfield River. Those meetings were intended to provide community members with an opportunity to identify natural, scenic, recreational, historical, and geological resources along those river segments that are noteworthy and may be in need of stewardship. The data collected will be used to develop a database of features available to resource managers as they construct a new Wild & Scenic Stewardship Plan that will help to guide efforts along those river corridors. As a follow-up to those community meetings, we're helping to organize stream teams that will walk many of the "wild & scenic" stretches, making notes of significant features, plotting their exact locations, and also watching out for potential threats to those features. That work has begun during the summer, but will continue into the fall and likely into next summer as well. If there's a stretch of river that you know and would like to survey, or if you'd just like to get out and see some nice country on a pleasant fall afternoon, contact Bill Jolly ("Jollys@mindspring.com" or 413-296-4254) to get more information or to sign up!

You'll find information about other summer and fall watershed events throughout this newsletter, with additional information provided on our website (www.westfieldriver.org) as it becomes available.

Best wishes for fall,

Mike Young
WRWA President

WATERSHED ACTION PLAN
COMPLETE!

SEE PAGE 2

RECAP OF FISHWAY
OPEN HOUSE

SEE PAGE 4

Logging in Robinson State Park

By Mark Damon

Robinson State Park is located on the south bank of the Westfield River, stretching from Westfield into Agawam, with most of the park in Agawam. It is a popular recreation area and has been the site of several WRWA events in recent years. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) currently plans to allow logging in a significant portion of the park to remove red pine (*Pinus resinosa*) infested with shoestring fungus (*Armillaria* sp.). In addition to the pine, other trees would be removed, largely (but not exclusively) in the process of gaining access to the pine.

The Friends of Robinson State Park, based in Feeding Hills, recently contacted WRWA to make us aware of their opposition to the logging plan. Their position rests on a few key points: 1) Robinson State Park has an unusual diversity of tree species, due to its location at the intersection of forest types, its wide variation in elevation, and its varied topography (hills and valleys). Logging may change the environment enough to eliminate some tree species, even those not directly targeted by the logging, as well as other plants, animals, and other species dependent on them. 2) At least two areas for which logging is planned overlooking the Westfield River appear to be at risk for substantial erosion, because of significant slope, sandy soil, or both. 3) If the red pine - itself a (probably intentionally) introduced species - is removed, other introduced species, such as Russian olive (*Elaeagnus angustifolius*), black locust (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), and Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*) may spread through the park, to the detriment of native species. 4) There may be American Indian sites and artifacts within the park, which may be damaged by logging operations. 5) Earlier logging operations in Chicopee Memorial Park and Chester State Forest left debris on hiking trails, interfering with recreational use of those areas.

As of this writing (8/3/06), WRWA has not had contact with the Massachusetts DCR regarding their plans for the logging or for

addressing these concerns. We will be trying to contact them and may be discussing a position on this in an upcoming board of directors meeting. Also as of this writing, a contract with a logging company has not been signed but is likely to be signed soon, to the best of this writer's knowledge. Logging is scheduled to begin, if a contract is signed, in late fall or winter.

Watershed Action Plan

By Anne Capra, PVPC

The Westfield River Five Year Watershed Action Plan (WAP) was completed in June of 2006 and is due to be released in August. The plan discusses the current condition of the watershed, identifying goals, objectives and recommended actions for each of the five subwatersheds in the categories of: water quantity and stream flow; water quality; habitat and fish passage; land use, open space and growth; and, recreation. The WAP culminates in the recommendation of the following six priority projects: 1) Implement Growth Management Strategies, 2) Water Quality Monitoring Program, 3) Stormwater Pollution Reduction Program, 4) Fish Restoration and Migration Barrier Removal, 5) Public Education and Outreach-Sense of Place Campaign and, 6) Analysis of Buildout on Water Resources in the Barnes Aquifer. The WAP can be viewed at www.pvpc.org.

Fall Outings

November on October Mountain

Date and Time: Saturday, November 18;
9:00 - 4:00

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (413-564-0895)

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

Meeting Place: Westfield State College
Commuter Parking Lot, off Western Avenue
in Westfield.

Heavy Rain Cancels

Join us for a hike along the gently rolling hills of October Mountain State Forest. After running a car shuttle, we will start hiking off County Road (gravel) in Beckett (5 miles from Route 8). We will then hike the Appalachian Trail to the picturesque Finerty Pond. If a bit of fall color still survives, this pond is a real delight. The trail is relatively gentle through this section of forest. We will then begin a gradual ascent of both Beckett (2,180 ft.) and Walling (2,222ft.) mountains. Although the summits are forested, the open woods in the area makes for a very pleasant fall hike as the newly fallen leaves pad our steps - which sure beats raking them! The total distance of the hike is 5.5 miles. Bring a lunch, plenty of water, raingear if needed and good hiking boots.

Nighttime at Noble View

Date and Time: Saturday, December 2;
7:00 - 9:00pm

Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon (413-564-0895)

Registration: Please call to register.

Meeting Place: Noble View Parking Area,
South Quarter Road, Russell.

Heavy rain or heavy snow cancels; light snow would be a delight.

Sunset is about 4:30pm; winter is just about upon us. Join us for a pleasant leisurely nighttime walk along the road to the Appalachian Mountain Club's Noble View cabin. Along the way, learn how to call for owls. They will not be nesting until next month, but it is worth a try. We will be alert for other nighttime creatures like porcupine or flying squirrels. Our destination will be the stunning view down into Westfield, where we'll enjoy a little star-gazing (if the weather permits) and some hot chocolate and goodies at the picnic table. Bring along a mug and flashlight. Dress for the weather. Although this hike is free, a donation to help preserve this beautiful piece of AMC property is an option.

Hike to the Keystone Arch Bridges

Dave Pierce, of the Friends of the Keystone Arches, will lead an approximately 5-mile hike to the bridges on Sunday, September 17. Dave is very knowledgeable about these sites and will provide lots of information on

the history of the bridges and on renovations that we hope will be carried out soon. Meet at the new Chester Elementary School about a mile north of the center of Chester off Middlefield Road at 10:00 a.m. Bring a lunch and water, and expect to spend 3-4 hours learning about these fascinating local treasures. A \$10/person donation is requested to help support the work of the Friends of the Keystone Arches. Contact Mike Young (562-8498) for more information.

A Place of Many Windings - The Story of a New England Mill Town

Mike Donovan, author of a recent book with nearly the same name, will talk about the history of the village of Woronoco, the mills, and the influences of both on the Westfield River. His talk will be in the Rand Museum of the Westfield Athenaeum at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 19 and is free and open to the public. Contact Mike Young (562-8498) for more information.

Reception Celebrates Opening of Watershed Painting Exhibit

By Kathy Meyer

About 60 people attended a reception the Westfield River Watershed Association (WRWA) hosted for the public to meet the Hilltown Plein Air Painters on Thursday, July 6 at the Westfield Athenaeum. The reception celebrated the opening of an exhibition of paintings from the Westfield River Watershed created by these area artists. In addition to giving members of the public an opportunity to talk with the artists, reporters from four area newspapers attended and wrote articles that generated publicity for the exhibit and the Westfield River Watershed.

For the last three years seven local artists who call themselves the Hilltown Plein Air Painters met once a week, packed up cars with easels and canvases, and headed out to paint a beautiful place in the Westfield River Watershed. They shared the results of their efforts in the exhibition that ran during the month of July. The seven Plein Air Painters include: Carolyn Avery of Southwick, Natalie Birrell of Huntington, Carol Chandler of

Huntington, Karin Cook of Worthington, Alma LaFrance of Huntington, Mary Montague of Westhampton, and Ann Kusiak of Northampton.

Since the Plein Air Painters organized the exhibit around the Westfield River Watershed by including a map with dots indicating the locations where the paintings were created, this helped people relate the beauty of each painting with the watershed. If a picture is worth a thousand words, this exhibit said hundreds of thousands of wonderful things about our watershed.

2006 Westfield River Cleanup

By Mark Damon

This fall's Westfield River Cleanup will be held on Saturday, September 30th. We'll meet at the Westfield Gas and Electric substation on Meadow Street (next to the Great Bridge) at 9:00 and be at it until about 1:00. Gloves and bags will be provided, but we'll need a lot of volunteers. Last year's cleanup was a great success with eight major sites visited and about 90 bags of trash, 18 tires, and 30 other large items (bicycles, rugs, shopping carts, etc.) picked from the river banks by over 40 volunteers. Let's make this year's cleanup even better!

WRWA Annual Fishway Open House

By Henry Warchol

The annual WRWA open house at the fish ladder in West Springfield was very successful this year. Those who made it possible deserve many thanks. A & D Hydro, the new owners of the dam and fish ladder, Caleb Slater, Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife director for the Atlantic salmon restoration project for Massachusetts, Southworth Paper Co. for allowing us to use their property and access the facility. And thanks to WRWA's volunteers, Bill Rose, Kathy Meyer, Ron Lucassen, Ken Taylor and Mike Young. Over 100 recorded visitors were able to view the transfer of two salmon that came up the fish ladder that day' and many other fish passing the viewing window. Elvers (3 to 5 inch American eels) were also on display in the

eelway trap at the eelway ladder. Thanks for the construction of the eelway go to Mike Parker, former Basin Team Leader who was instrumental in obtaining the funds for its construction.

Salmon are 6 to 8 inch smolt when they leave the river for the ocean and return two years later as 32 to 36 inch adults. These and all other Atlantic salmon are trapped and placed in a chilled holding tank and then transferred to a fish hatchery. Greater numbers are reached at the fish hatchery by eliminating predators that would consume a percentage of their eggs. They are stripped of their eggs and fertilized in the fall. They hatch the following spring as fry. Caleb Slater sets the schedule dates of distributing the fry and the Fish and Wildlife staff and volunteers distribute them into the upper tributaries of the river. (The WRWA sponsors two fry stocking events each year.) All other fish that come up the fish ladder are just counted and allowed to proceed up river. The greatest number of salmon that came up the Westfield River was 47 in 1998. (The fish ladder opened in 1996). The all-time low of 5 was registered in 2002, 2003-6, 2004-12, 2005-27, and 34 in 2006. The big question is why are salmon disappearing in the ocean. The number of smolt that are leaving the Connecticut River estuary for the ocean that were recorded were quite numerous, but the percentages that were expected to survive the rigors of the Atlantic waters are not returning in the numbers expected.

VALLEY OF PARADISE PHOTO CONTEST

The WRWASAC invites you to submit photos of the National Wild & Scenic Westfield River & the remarkable scenic, cultural, historic, recreational and natural resources of the Westfield River Valley. Photos will be exhibited in locations throughout the watershed. Submission of photos releases images for future use in WRWSAC publication. Prizes to be announced. Submit photos by September 15, 2006. For more information, please call the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee at (413) 268-3129 or visit www.westfieldriver.org

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 Kathy Meyer at 568-4252.

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 562-8498 for further information.

**Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2006-2007.
Feel free to communicate with any of us!**

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	578-4252
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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