

The

Winter 2011

WatershedNews

The President's Message

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!! I trust everybody had a wonderful holiday season. The Board held a planning meeting on January 22nd. It was productive and interesting, and everybody got involved with new ideas, planning activities for the coming year and volunteering to be on committees. A lively discussion was held to determine the theme for this year and we finally agreed on "JUMP IN". The board members are "jumping in" to make it an exciting time in the watershed.

We are here to listen to your concerns and questions. Please contact any board member, because that's what we are here for. We can't be everywhere, so our members are the eyes and ears of the WRWA.

This year "JUMP IN" and get involved by supporting or volunteering to help out at the activities and spreading the word about what the WRWA is doing in the community. If possible give us your e-mail so that we may keep you up to date with concerns and activities. Within this newsletter are some great articles on upcoming activities. Always keep in mind that our members are our most important asset. READY, SET, "JUMP IN!"

Bill Rose

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17th Annual Symposium: "The Foodshed in Our Watershed"

By Brian Conz

This April the WRWA will dedicate its annual symposium to the theme of sustainable food and farming in the watershed. As the term watershed refers to an area drained by a given river system, so the term 'foodshed' suggests the existence of a region supplying food to its inhabitants. On April 2nd we will take stock of the current state of 'The Foodshed in Our Watershed' with attention to the environmental, social and economic benefits that accrue from thriving local and regional food systems. It is our hope that by bringing together watershed citizens and food/agriculture enthusiasts we may help breathe life into our local economies, promote pride and connection in our communities and expand our environmental consciousness.

Planning for the symposium has progressed markedly and we have an engaging group of presenters lining up. Sessions will feature key organizations such as Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), the Northeast Organic Farmers Association (NOFA), and Master Gardener Pernel Gerver. We will cover topics such as farm-to-plate connections through farmers' markets and community supported agriculture programs, as well as community and private gardening. A local farm will host a field trip to share their farming wisdom with participants and highlight their contributions to the local economy and environmental well-being.

Our keynote address will be given by Margaret Christie of CISA. Margaret has been involved in rebuilding the Western Mass food-system for over 20 years as an activist, a professional and a farmer. She served as CISA's Executive Director in the late 1990s and was instrumental in

launching the 'Local Hero' program which has helped to raise awareness of the importance and vitality of Western Mass agricultural production among citizens. Margaret will provide us with an overview of past and current efforts to strengthen the bonds between farmers and eaters in our region and give us some insights into the future of the task.

Westfield's Columbia Greenway Rail Trail Project

By Dan Call

To refresh your memory you will notice that this is a continuation from a previous newsletter article that you may remember reading some time back. Since that time a number of new milestones have been achieved getting us all closer to our goal of actually building the 3.2 miles of the Columbia Greenway rail trail. Once completed this rail trail will meander through downtown Westfield, finally intersecting with the Riverside Trail along the top of the levee system on the south side of the Westfield River. However, before we move on to those positive things that have transpired over the past year, let me first tell you that during this coming spring the town of Southwick will be celebrating with a formal Dedication and Grand Opening of Southwick's (phase two) portion of its rail trail - the section ending at the Southwick / Westfield town line. Invitations will be forwarded to surrounding communities inviting any and all to attend. This occasion will recognize the opening of an additional 3 miles traveling north and terminating at Southwick's town line. This completes the 6 plus miles from the MA / CT state line going north through Southwick toward the City of Westfield. At this point the rail trail will be at Westfield's most southern doorstep.

Through 2010 and up to the present, there have been many local supporters who have been helping to move Westfield's Columbia

Greenway project forward. First, early in this past year, the mayor submitted a bond order in the amount of \$775,000 and this request was formally approved by the city council. Next, an agreement was reached between the Mayor, City Council and the G&E to use annual leasing fees from the natural gas distribution line between Westfield and Southwick to help offset any costs associated with seasonal rail trail maintenance. Last, and most recent, was the final approval by both the mayor and city council on January 20th, 2011 for acceptance of \$287,920 to the engineering department for design and upgrade relative to the Columbia Greenway's most southern section. This money was originally appropriated by Congressman John Olver as a special earmark for both the Southwick / Westfield rail trail projects.

Anyone interested in getting involved in supporting this community project please indicate your interest to the Friends of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail Organization. For more information concerning this group's activities, please take the time to contact either Don Podolski (Chairman) or Jeff LaValley (Vice.Chairman) at the address below:

Friends of the Columbia
Greenway Rail Trail
P.O. Box 595
Westfield, MA 01086-0595

(email: columbiagreenway@gmail.com)

WRWA Advocacy

By Mike Young

WRWA has joined the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, a non-profit group that was incorporated in 2007 and hired two full-time staff members in the summer of 2009. Their mission is "to protect and restore rivers across the Commonwealth" and to

"strengthen, connect, and empower individuals and organizations working to protect rivers in our state." One advantage of this connection is that the Rivers Alliance has the resources to monitor carefully state and federal permitting and other actions that will have impacts on the watershed, and they do a great job of disseminating that information to encourage input from their members directly to the agencies involved. As a result, we've submitted input on two important issues during the past several months, and anticipate more of this kind of activity in the future.

In mid-November Bill Rose submitted a letter to the Massachusetts Executive Office for Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) advocating modification of proposed rules for determining the safe yield for the Commonwealth's rivers. Under the proposed rules, limitations on withdrawals are to be based on annualized flow values, discounting the near-certainty of substantially lower flows during the late summer and early fall – a period that saw dramatically low flows during the summer of 2010. WRWA lobbied for the establishment of realistic safe yield values that would provide for protection of the ecological integrity of the river during even the lowest flows – by limiting water withdrawals during such times, if necessary. WRWA also weighed in during the public comment period for establishing budget priorities for EOEEA during fiscal year 2012, stressing our support for increased funding for the Division of Ecological Restoration (formerly the Riverways program, which has completed several notable projects within the watershed), and restoration of at least some of the cuts that have been made to the Watershed Planning Program in recent years.

The Rivers Alliance encourages both individual and organizational memberships. You can find out more about their group by visiting their website at <http://massriversalliance.org/>.

Worrisome Weeds

By Julie Richburg

Do weeds add stress to your life? Know that many of our region's native trees, plants and animals share your pain. When unwanted plants become "invasive," they bring their own version of stress to the denizens of our local woodlands and waterways, sapping their vigor and reducing the chances they will be able to weather the inherent hardships and future challenges of life in New England. Don't worry, your spider plant won't kill the beautiful sugar maple in your yard – but a Norway maple, with its shady leaves and astronomic germination rate, might threaten the old tree's offspring. Add in a carpet of invasive garlic mustard, with its soil-altering chemicals, and New England's iconic tree already has a battle on its hands. Now, consider global climate change predictions likening the future of Massachusetts to that of present-day South Carolina, and it is very possible that our beloved sugar maple may pack its bags for less stressful climes in Canada, taking with it the color of New England's fall landscape. Such scenarios are dire, but sadly common for many native species. Invasive plants are not problematic simply because they are foreign. Their threats stem from an unlucky roll of the dice taken by humans, who imported certain species that did not have natural predators or competition in their new, adopted homes.

A newly formed group, the Westfield River Watershed Invasive Species Partnership (WISP) is working to get the word out about which species are most deleterious to the watershed and the native plants and animals that live here. WISP partners have led workshops on invasive species identification, produced educational materials, and mapped species locations. This year WISP will be hosting workshops for local DPW's, Conservation Commissions, landowners, and the public to learn about both invasive plants and pests

already here and those on the way. Julie Richburg, an ecologist for The Trustees of Reservations and a member of WISP, implores that while humans are responsible for introducing many invasive species, "only people, working alone and in concert, can reverse the problem that we helped create. This isn't a case where nature can take care of itself." But before you get too discouraged, remember that much of the Westfield River Watershed stands a fighting chance to stop the spread of invasives. Many local infestations exist in relatively circumscribed areas and manageable colonies, amplifying the potential impact of one aware, dedicated landowner, neighborhood or town. To learn more about WISP contact Julie at jrichburg@ttor.org or wrwisp@gmail.com.

WRWA Provides Support for On-Going Water Quality Monitoring

By Robert Thompson

In 2005 the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs released their Five Year Action Plan for the Westfield River. One of the Plan's recommendations was the development and implementation of a water quality monitoring program within the watershed. Under a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection FY 08 604b grant through a partnership between the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Westfield State University Westfield River Environmental Center monthly water quality tests were performed at twenty one locations. The locations were in Windsor, Huntington, Russell, Westfield and West Springfield and the dates were from April to November 2009. Samples were taken by trained volunteers with chemical and biological testing occurring at Westfield State University. Field tests were temperature (air and water) and pH.

Laboratory tests were total suspended solids, alkalinity and twelve sites were also identified for monthly sampling for *E. coli* using the IDEXX Colilert system. Eleven of the twelve (92%) had *E. coli* values one or more times in excess of primary contact standards (235 MPN/100mls, single sample). Of the eleven sites with single sample *E. coli* exceedances, seven (64%) also exceeded the geometric mean (126MPN/100mls) for primary contact during prime recreational season. The results of these tests can be viewed at the Westfield State University Environmental Center web site, or by accessing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Storet web site. Primary financial support for the project was provided by the Massachusetts DEP FY 08 604b grant, but also significant additional support came through the United States Environmental Protection Equipment Loan Grant. The equipment purchased has a value of \$5,420. This equipment is in place at Westfield State University and can be used for future testing rounds.

Because of the bacteria monitoring results, the necessary equipment and volunteers in place, and viable Quality Assurance Project Plans for monitoring and bacteria source tracking it was recommended that the 2009 monitoring be continued and source tracking activities initiated. To this end a second MassDEP 604b grand proposal was submitted. This request was rejected due to lack of available funds. Because of this the Environmental Center, working with the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee, has proposed a source tracking project for the Westfield River Watershed. The exact sampling sites and sampling dates have not been set. There will be meetings with local groups and the State DEP to establish the best protocol. Supporting funds from the Westfield River Watershed Association and the Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee and sampling support from enthusiastic volunteers will allow this project to move forward. Also, it is important to realize that without the

untiring efforts WSU's Dr. David Doe these programs would not exist. You can also look forward to a water quality study based on macro-invertebrate sampling starting in late summer of 2011. If anyone is interested in being part on any or all of these projects please contact Bob Thompson at the WSU Environmental Center (413-572-8255).



Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program (ASERP)

By Mike Young

The chillers will be running again this spring at schools throughout the watershed, with nine schools maintaining a total of twelve 30-gallon aquarium tanks for raising salmon fry. WRWA has purchased and loaned out the equipment to be used at most of the schools, and provides some support for teachers implementing the program. The participating schools, organized by town, are: Agawam (Agawam High School - 2 tanks, purchased with their own grant funds), Cummington (Berkshire Trail Elementary), Huntington (Gateway Middle), Southwick (Powder Mill Middle - 2 tanks), Westfield (Abner Gibbs Elementary, North Middle, South Middle- 2 tanks, and St. Mary's Elementary), and West Springfield (Fausey Elementary). Many of the teachers attended the ASERP Orientation workshop in mid-January, which was again held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Northeast Regional Office in Hadley, MA. Eggs will be delivered between late February and mid-March, and most schools will release their fry in May. If you're interested in volunteering to help out on the release days, contact Mike Young at 572-5741 or via email to myoung@wsc.ma.edu.

Community Preservation Act Update

By Kathy Meyer

When the Community Preservation Act (CPA) was signed into law in 2000, those concerned with preserving Open Space applauded its passing. The CPA allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund to raise money through a surcharge of up to 3% of the real estate tax levy on real property. Funds can be used for open space protection, historic preservation and the provision of affordable housing. The following seven communities in the Westfield River Watershed have passed the CPA: Westfield, West Springfield, Agawam, Southwick, Granville, Becket and Goshen. Each WRWA newsletter issue will look at how CPA money has been used, starting with Westfield.

Westfield passed the CPA in 2002. Since that time CPA revenues were \$3,634,082. Here's a breakdown of how the funds were spent (including pending projects):

Revenue Use	Amount (\$, in 1000s)	% of Total Funds Collected
Open Space	459	12
Historic	257	7
Housing	205	5
Recreation	840	22
Unspent	2,101	54

Westfield is now looking to use the unspent funds (or part of them) to renovate its City Hall, a historic building.

Demo Day 2011

By George Reichert

Mark your calendar now to partake in a fun-filled day! **Saturday, May 14**, beginning at 10 AM, you will have the opportunity to "test drive" more than sixty different styles of Kayaks and Canoes at Hampton Ponds State Park in Westfield. Bring your friends, bring your family, and give it a try. Instructors will be on hand and demonstrations of skills will take place throughout the day. There will even be a raffle for a Kayak and gear. Hungry? Snacks, drinks and hot dogs will be plentiful. Even if you don't get in one of those great little boats you will enjoy watching those giving it a try. So plan on it...



Salmon Fry Stocking - 2011

By Bill Rose

The WRWA will again sponsor two salmon stocking mornings in April. This year's dates have not yet been finalized, but will likely be two of April 9th, 16th, and 30th. Check our website (westfieldriver.org) for additional information as it becomes available. The salmon fry stocking is an excellent event for scout groups, a school activity or a family outing. The first date usually involves stocking along Dickinson and Munn Brooks in Granville and Southwick (and includes some stream segments that are particularly appropriate for younger children), while the second date has us stocking along the Middle Branch above the Littleville Lake. We hope to see you there!

***Do You Know Someone
Who Has Helped
Our Watershed?***

The Westfield River Watershed Association is seeking nominations for the

WAITE AWARD

This annual award recognizes and honors an individual who has contributed to the betterment or preservation of the Westfield River Watershed. This year's award will be presented at the WRWA Annual meeting on May 19th. We are accepting nominations through April 15th. Nominees do not need to be members of WRWA. We are looking for grassroots people who have helped our local environment in some way. Self-nominations are welcome.

Waite Award Nomination Form

Name of Person Nominated: _____

Reasons for Nomination: (attach additional sheets if needed)

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Your Phone: _____

Return by April 15 to: Westfield River Watershed Association
Waite Award Nominations
P.O. Box 1764
Westfield, MA. 01086-1764

WESTFIELD RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

2011 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

New _____ or Renewal _____ ? (Note: Memberships run Jan.-Dec. Memberships submitted on Oct. 1 or later will be credited to the next calendar year.)

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(We send email updates re: events to our members, so it's very helpful to have your email.)

NEWSLETTER: I would like to receive the WRWA newsletter by (check one):

Email link _____ (saves on postage and printing) or Snail Mail hard copy _____

GET INVOLVED: Please fill out this next section, even if you've filled it out in previous years. I would like someone from WRWA to contact me about becoming actively involved in the following areas:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> River Cleanup | <input type="checkbox"/> Fishway Monitoring |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality Studies | <input type="checkbox"/> Salmon Stocking and Restoration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Open Space Preservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Membership Development |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter, Public relations | <input type="checkbox"/> Serve as Board Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Event staffing | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please offer details/ideas): |

Please make check payable to "Westfield River Watershed Association, Inc." **and Send to:** WRWA Memberships, P.O. Box 1764, Westfield, MA 01086

Membership Categories (check one):

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$20) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$30) | <input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$10) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member (\$300 and up) | <input type="checkbox"/> Business (\$50-100) | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporation (\$100-500) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Government (\$100-300) | | |

Additional Support: If you would like to make an additional contribution to support the activities of the Westfield River Watershed Association, please note the additional amount here: \$_____. (Note: WRWA is a 501-c-3 charitable organization. Membership dues and additional donations are tax deductible.)

Thank you for your support of the Westfield River Watershed Association.

www.westfieldriver.org

DUES REMINDER!

Thank you to all who have sent in their 2011 dues. We truly appreciate your support, which enables our organization to help protect the watershed, educate students and other residents, and introduce people to all the watershed has to offer. Memberships are by the calendar year (January through December), and a copy of the renewal form is included on the previous page if you've not yet renewed for this year.

Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2010-2011.

Officers:					
President:	Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	01030	786-0195
First Vice President:	Sheryl Becker	101 Regency Park Dr.	Agawam	01101	821-0818
Second Vice President:	Heather Comee	10 Maple Street	Southwick	01077	427-5089
Secretary:	Mike Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
Treasurer:	Fran Siska	47 Salvatore Drive	Westfield	01085	562-4998
Directors:					
	Cory Andros	139 N. Blandford Rd.	Blandford	01008	231-4330
	Brian Conz	53 Balfour Drive	Springfield	01118	572-8084
	Diane Crowell	28 Russell St.	West Springfield	01089	734-8188
	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
	Allan Guagliardo	72 Colony Circle	Westfield	01085	568-4770
	Kathy Meyer	39 Rachael Terrace	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	George Reichert	75 Blair Road	Blandford	01008	848-2074
	John Shuttleworth	63 Warwick St.	Longmeadow	01106	567-3648
	Phillip Sousa	29 Yankee Circle	Westfield	01085	568-3982
	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467
Honorary Directors:					
	Dan Call	777 College Highway	Southwick	01077	569-9677
	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050	

For more information on WRWA's activities, check our website at
www.westfieldriver.org