

# The *FALL 2007* WatershedNew

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## The President's Message

Yogi Berra once characterized a ballpark in which shadows began crossing the field in the middle innings by saying "It gets late early out here.". This is the time of year with short days, when it gets late early. Between that, the cool weather, the first snow, and sumptuous holiday meals, the temptation is to stay in, but that's missing one of the best times to get out and enjoy our watershed.

It's also one of the best times to teach kids - or maybe relearn or learn for the first time ourselves - some things about the natural world. Variable day length derives from the Earth's tilt and its annual orbit of the sun -right now, the northern hemisphere is pointed away from the sun; in six months, we'll be pointed at the sun, and we'll experience the longer, warmer days as we approach the summer solstice. All around us, many animals and plants have migrated or gone dormant for the winter; only a few stay active on the meager resources available now.

Many of WRWA's programs have a significant educational component, even those that aren't explicitly about education. In September, our annual river cleanup attracted a variety of people from a wide age range - elementary school, high school, college, and many of us from ages we'll call somewhat beyond college. In cleaning the river and its tributaries, we all got to know the waterways and their ecosystem a little bit better and gained a greater appreciation of the threats to them and importance of safeguarding them.

Some of our activities are more plainly related to education. The ASERP (Atlantic salmon egg rearing and release) program, ably led by Mike Young, has been providing a great experience for kids in area schools for years and we plan to add at least one more school to it this year. Our youth committee chair, Bill Rose, continues to run the fly-fishing clinic and storm-drain stenciling program. Henry Warchol has helped with supplies for the latter and has coordinated the open house at the fish ladder in West Springfield for several years. In 2007, WRWA began partially sponsoring productions of the Watershed Waltz, a puppet show by Meredyth Babcock designed to teach children what a watershed is and how our behaviors affect it. We're currently considering a proposal to tie this to an Adopt-A-Stream program to get older kids involved in field work along the Westfield. Of course, we'll have our annual symposium coming in the spring and we hope to have some guest speakers at other times during the year - watch the website for information on both.

This issue of the newsletter contains some articles on educational/recreational activities in the watershed - notably an article on a new display at the Pilgrim Candle building, a list of hikes in the area, and an article on the Columbia Greenway (the proposed bike path). Other contributions include a review of some proposed new burning regulations, an update on Russell Biomass, and a summary of the river cleanup.

As always, we welcome and encourage your comments and involvement in everything we do. Contact information is provided in this newsletter; we can also be contacted via our website, [www.westfieldriver.org](http://www.westfieldriver.org).

Mark Damon

*We are all saddened to learn of the death of longtime WRWA member Nancy Eric of Huntington. She was a very active member of our organization in the past and will be missed.*

### **Celebrating the Westfield River!**

By Kathy Meyer

WRWA partnered with the Pilgrim Candle Marketplace in Westfield in the creation of an exciting new Westfield River exhibit. "The Great River Bridge Project has very much brought the river to the attention of our entire community," notes Jackie Koller, owner of the Little Black Dog Gallery at The Pilgrim Candle Marketplace. The Pilgrim Candle Marketplace, located at 18-30 Union Avenue, is at the base of the new Great River Bridge and its upstairs houses offices of the contractors working on the new bridge. This proximity inspired merchants at the Pilgrim Candle Marketplace to renovate unused space and develop it into a large exhibit highlighting the history of the area, celebrating the Westfield River in all its wild and scenic glory, and depicting the Great River Bridge Project in its various stages of construction.

The display is divided into the Past, Present and Future. The Past features historic photos and drawings of the river and Westfield. The Present includes a large poster on the Westfield River highlighting its Wild and Scenic features. The Future includes architectural drawings and models of the Great River Bridge.

WRWA funded the printing of the Present poster, which is a reprint of a display posted in a kiosk on Route 20 in Huntington. Several years ago WRWA received funding for this display from the MA Riverways Program and developed this informational exhibit in cooperation with the Jacobs Ladder Scenic Byway group, the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Committee and the

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. When Jackie Koller contacted WRWA this summer about cooperation on the proposed exhibit, it became apparent that "recycling" the display in the kiosk was a perfect fit. In addition to this display, the exhibit also has a photo album of the Westfield River today, WRWA brochures and river maps and WRWA's DVD "Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55" for sale.

Merchants from the Pilgrim Marketplace, WRWA members, Santa Claus and the local media unveiled the exhibit on Saturday, November 24. Future plans include a lecture series and other events related to the river. The exhibit is open to the public free of charge during The Pilgrim Candle Marketplace's business hours of M-F 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and weekends from noon to 5:00 p.m. Come and see it!



### **Looking for the Perfect Christmas Gift?**

"Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55" DVDs are available for sale at The Little Black Dog Gallery, 30 Union St., Westfield  
\$9.95

### **The Russell Electric Generating Plant Proposal**

By Henry Warchol

The Russell Biomass LLC (Limited Liability Company) who plan to build an electric generating plant, using wood as the primary fuel, is applying for all the permits needed to construct this very large project.

The estimated water withdrawal from the Westfield River is to be 885 thousand GPD (Gallons Per Day) with 85% of that water -

752,250 GPD to be totally removed from the Westfield River. It is to be evaporated to cool the steam turbine water that is used to propel the electric generator. This huge amount of water withdrawal is considered to be insignificant as stated by the proponent in the formula 7Q10 flow (the lowest consecutive seven day flow that is likely to occur in a ten year period).

The engineering study for the plan lists rights to use 600,000 GPD from the Indian River Power Supply Co. Deed dated July 23, 1999 and the 885,000 GPD as documented in the quitclaim Deed of Deerfield Holding Corporation on January 31, 2000 to Russell Biomass LLC.

The Massachusetts Water Management Act of 1986 requires authorized permission to withdraw water in excess of 100,000 GPD. This Act also includes cities that use water for domestic use. However, no recorded references in past deeds could be found in the previous transcripts of the engineer's study that would grant permission for water withdrawal in excess of 100,000 GPD. The aforementioned deeds (dated July 23, 1999 and January 31, 2000) do not appear to provide the sufficient water transfer data to allow for water transfers in excess of 100,000 GPD. Therefore, it appears that authorized permission was not obtained as required by the Water Management Act of 1986.

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/water/drinking/wmafact.pdf>. The former Westfield River Paper Company in Russell (that closed in 1994) returned about ninety percent of the water they used to make paper back to the river. The company could not have used more than 1,500 GPD to make paper. "The Southworth Company, their paper making plant in West Springfield, has a DEP (Department of Environmental Protection) authorized permit of 1,500 GPD that was sufficient to make its paper".

Not mentioned in the study were Cobble Mountain and Borden Brook Dams that are Springfield's water supply. West Springfield's Aquifer water supply located

on Powdermill Brook in Southwick are Basin Transfers, meaning that the water is completely removed from the Westfield River watershed basin. The Littleville Dam on the middle branch of the Westfield River is a flood control dam and is also Springfield's stand-by surplus water supply that too will be another water depleting Basin Transfer.

The Westfield River watershed has poor retention ability (after a rain event, the water quickly passes down river). Rapid water depletion of the river also increases from the removal of the sand and gravel deposits in the upper section of the watershed. These sand and gravel deposits act as natural buffers that slow down rainfall preventing it from rapidly draining downstream.

The removal of 885,000 gallons of water per day and returning but 15% of it altered and heated from the upper reaches of the Westfield River in the summer drought period can only mean a reversal of all the attempts to correct its past and present abuses. This is another negative added to the river in the efforts being made for its rejuvenation and restoration.

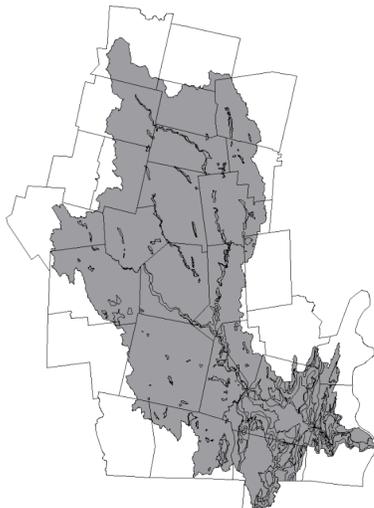
[http://masswaterworks.org/documents/MWWA\\_RegisteredWithdrawals3-5-07.pdf](http://masswaterworks.org/documents/MWWA_RegisteredWithdrawals3-5-07.pdf)

## **Columbia Greenway Rail Trail: Not Just a Dream**

By Dan Call

Westfield has a number of ambitious projects that should aid in revitalizing our downtown area. One of those projects currently in the works is known as the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail. When completed, it will be opened to the public as a multi use trail facility. A milestone was reached last June 2006 when Mass Highway came to Westfield for the 25% design review public hearing. Westfield's rail trail project consists of nine bridge crossings spanning south through downtown Westfield for 3.2 miles from the

Westfield River to the Southwick town line where it will join up with Southwick's on-going rail trail project. A few of the benefits that I see when referring to the Westfield rail trail is that it will be at an elevated grade providing exceptional views of Westfield's landscape. Another real plus will be zero conflict at road crossings between pedestrians and vehicles due to overhead bridges as part of the planned Columbia Greenway project. There continues to be enormous community support for this rail trail through Westfield. Recently, a proposal to build a new plaza complex on the property across the street from the current Stop& Shop is now before the City Council and Planning Board. The plaza developer would like to alter the existing raised rail bed currently between Thomas Street and Main Street. The developer's plans at this time includes bringing down to grade that section of rail bed between Thomas Street and Main Street which now alters the current rail trail design in progress. The developer has suggested a fly over bridge to be constructed; however, no specific plans have been shared as yet. Anyone who feels that the rail trail project for Westfield is a viable one, please continue to stay informed, and if needed, offer personal support at any future public meetings.



## Annual River Cleanup

By Mark Damon

WRWA held its annual river cleanup on Saturday, September 29 in conjunction with the Connecticut River Watershed Council's Source-to-Sea cleanup. Over 40 volunteers turned out and teams were at sites on the Westfield in Huntington, Russell, Westfield, West Springfield, and Agawam, as well as sites on two tributaries - the Little River and Powder Mill Brook. Our total for all the sites was 72 bags, 9 tires and many "other large items" (about 60, but it's a little hard to count things that are just a pile of debris) such as furniture, bicycles, mattresses, wood, steel, rugs, a window and half a 55-gallon drum.

Many thanks go out to all involved - special thanks to Seth Kellogg, whose company supplied the truck and winch used at Powder Mill Brook, to Phil Sousa, who came out for a preliminary start at Powder Mill Brook the previous week and who built some of our trash-picking equipment, to Sheryl Becker and Bill Rose, who planned and coordinated things at Pynchon Point in Agawam, and to Heather Comee, who helped plan several of the other sites. Special notice goes out, too, to Kathy Meyer, whose efforts all year round at sites in Russell and Huntington are appreciated by all of us. Hope to see you all again next year - and at other WRWA events in the interim.

## Does "C&D" Stand for Cursed & Deadly

By Alexandra Dawson

Why do some people love C&D? The term in fact stands for "Construction & Demolition" debris. We have a huge amount of the stuff in southern New England, as a result of our unfortunate propensity for development and redevelopment. Massachusetts alone produces 600,000 tons a year. Since it has been (sort of) excluded from disposal in Massachusetts, a lot of it is hauled to Maine. This solution is

so expensive, the producers offer *money* for anyone who will deal with the problem nearer to home. That is why some people love C&D.

Why do some people hate C&D? It abounds in toxics, including dioxin, asphalt, lead, mercury and arsenic. If burned, much of this goes into the air. If buried, it lands in the groundwater or in ash used to fix roads. No reliable method exists for sorting out the usable debris from the toxic waste. Who can tell whether a door has mercury in the paint? Or whether a deck contains the lamentable arsenic product now banned but widely used? Do the sorter-grinders even know that a wooden deck may contain a pound of hexavalent chromium?

Massachusetts waters already contain so much mercury, the fish are not safe for daily consumption; and the state has put on a major effort to get rid of mercury thermometers and fillings. In 2006, New Hampshire put a moratorium on the burning of C&D because of the arsenic load. Maine is brooding about lead, found in 80% of its housing. Massachusetts' enthusiasm for burning and/or landfilling C&D has gone underground: But it has not stopped.

How is the campaign to burn/landfill C&D proceeding? The first effort was to add the stuff to the so-called Renewable Portfolio Standards, making its disposal eligible for governmental grants and tax credits. A mere 5-word change in the regulations at 225 CMR 14.02 did the trick. An energy department cover letter sent out with the regulations was supposed to change the result; but somehow the regs were not rewritten. Then there was the change in the DEP regulations for "clean" wood waste. Supposedly, this does not include materials contaminated by toxics. However, DEP monitoring is inadequate and many contaminated loads slip through because the wood waste is delivered to the plants already ground up (with very little sorting). In case local bylaws ban the burning/landfilling, the energy department

claims it can override local controls in the name of sustainable energy.

Bad ideas like to ride in on good ideas like fleas on a dog's back hairs. Proponents of the use of C&D will claim that opponents are stopping the development of clean energy sources necessary to prevent global warming. In fact, using C&D as fuel or landfill cover is just a foolish idea. If you agree you can

--Support HB 791, a simple ban on burning the stuff introduced by Rep. Peter Kocot from Northampton ([Rep.Peterkocot@Hou.State.MA.US](mailto:Rep.Peterkocot@Hou.State.MA.US)). Write to the co-chairs of the Natural Resources Committee, Sen. Pamela Resort and Rep. Frank Smizik, State House Room 473F, Boston 02133.

--Rep. John Scibak signed onto Kocot's bill. If he is your rep, call him at 539-6566.

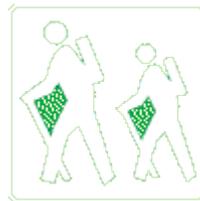
--Ask your state senators (generally Stan Rosenberg or Michael Knapik) to support Kocot's bill or introduce their own. Stan is pretty sympathetic.

--Let Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles and new DEP Commissioner Laurie Burt (617-626-1000 for both) know what you think of all this fancy footwork; copy to the Governor.

--You can reach me at 413-586-5586 for further advice.

Nescaum, the industry voice, wants to process 6 million tons of C&D a year in our region. With governmental agencies in conflict, only the legislature can settle this fight. Tell them all to just say No.

### Winter Outings



Let's Go! Snow or No Snow  
Cross Country Ski or Winter Hike (Granville or Becket)

Date and Time: Saturday, January 26, 9am– 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 Places: Maple Corner Farm, Beech Hill Road in Granville OR Becket Historic Quarry off Quarry Road in Becket. Call for directions.

If there's Snow: 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 may cancel. A \$10 trail pass and \$10 equipment rental apply.

If there's No Snow: Join us for a winter hike along the trail system at Becket Historic Quarry Forest Preserve. This demonstration forest abuts the historic Quarry and contains miles of trails. Both these preserved areas, which together comprise over 300 acres, are in the care of Becket Land Trust. We will wander a few trails, talk about winter adaptations of plants and look for signs of animals. Bring a lunch or snack. Here, there is no indoor area in which to eat or sit. No fee to hike here.

#### Eagle Watch, Essex, CT

Date and Time: Sunday, February 24, 7am – 6pm 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: Friendly's on Route 5 in West Springfield across Route 5 from the Town & Country Liquor Store Meet us for breakfast at Friendly's by 7:00 for a departure by 7:45. From there, we'll carpool down route 91 to the town of Essex Connecticut.

In and around this area are a number of spots overlooking the Connecticut River

where we'll stop to scout for eagles. Bald Eagles gather here during the winter months, as the river doesn't freeze this close to the ocean, so fishing is still possible. Gillette Castle can be seen from across the river from one of our stopping spots. We'll also foray into the town for a warm-up if need be, and for lunch. This is not the weekend of the Connecticut Audubon Society's annual Eagle Festival, which takes place the weekend prior, February 16-17<sup>th</sup>. (Visit <http://www.ctaudubon.org/about/eaglefestival.htm> for more information on that.) Bring binoculars and spotting scopes. Dress for the weather. We'll never be too far from your car.

#### Holland Glen, Belchertown

Date and Time: Saturday, March 15, 9am–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: McDonalds on Route 9 in South Hadley.

This hike will take us along the Metacomb and Monadnock Trail above one of Massachusetts' largest towns, Belchertown. We'll stroll along an oak covered ridge, which provides excellent views of the surrounding hills. We'll hike past abandoned farms marked by cellar holes and stonewalls. Eventually we will enter a dark primeval hemlock forest. The forest is home to Holland Glen Falls, a series of cascades that have carved a deep gorge through the gray bedrock. Hiking here in the spring should allow us to enjoy the falls at its thundering best. The trail is relatively flat, but has some short steep rocky spots. Good footwear is essential. A walking staff might also be of assistance. We must cross a small creek 2 or 3 times to reach our destination. The creek might require a wet crossing, so be prepared. Bring a lunch, water, and camera or binoculars. Dress for the weather and come enjoy this wonderful spot hidden in the Belchertown hills.

Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2007-2008.

<b>Officers:</b>					
President:	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
Vice President:	Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	02030	786-0195
Second Vice President:	Sheryl Becker	101 Regency Park Dr.	Agawam	01101	821-0818
Treasurer:	Heather Comee	10 Maple Street	Southwick		427-5089
Secretary:	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
	Dave Lovejoy	P.O. Box 219	Blandford	01008	572-5307
<b>Directors:</b>					
	Mike Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467
	Kathy Meyer	87 Old Farm Road	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	Philip Sousa	29 Yankee Circle	Westfield	01085	568-3982
	Stanley Warren	51 Southgate Avenue	Westfield	01085	562-3338
	Tom Condon	80 General Knox Road	Russell	01071	564-0895
	Bob Thompson	10 Lyon Hill Road	Chester	01011	354-9636
	George Reichert	75 Blair Road	Blandford	01008	848-2074
<b>Honorary Directors:</b>					
	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050	
	Dan Call	777 College Highway	Southwick	01077	569-9677

