



Watershed News

March 2015

President's Message

There are few times of the year that get us thinking about the natural processes that define our watershed like the springtime and the melting of the winter's accumulated snow. We can easily imagine the water droplets descending from icicles, joining other droplets to form rivulets and small streams high in the mountain hollows that are fractal-like microcosms of the larger watershed, draining towards the river's mainstem. We instinctively understand something about the nature of watershed as a geographical concept when we look at the river itself in springtime, swollen with frigid melt-water and running swiftly down hill, joined by countless other streams and tributaries – some named, some nameless – joining forces to drain the landscape in the seemingly infinite processes of the water cycle.

We also intuit something of the extraordinary force of water and its hazardous and potentially destructive character. Anyone who has travelled in the mountains of the northeast during the late winter or early spring knows how quickly one can get trapped on a hillside, when normally trivial stream crossings become raging torrents, forcing dangerous fording undertaken at great peril. At the landscape scale we appreciate the role of forests, wetlands and natural vegetation for their role in helping to mitigate flooding.

This incredible winter has reminded me of a great many things. Its a reminder that, although the climate is changing, I should keep my skis waxed and my wood piled high, because New England winters can still pack a punch. It's reminded me that I live in one of the most amazing places on Earth, where the grit it takes, not only to survive winter but to actually enjoy it, is rewarded by the wonders of spring and a new round of recreational activities.

Here at the Westfield River Watershed Association we'll be helping to celebrate these recreational opportunities through our annual symposium entitled Outdoor Fun in Your Watershed. We hope to see you there and at our annual spring clean-ups the weekend after Earth Day. Look inside for more details on these events and enjoy the promise of spring in the meantime!!!

Brian W. Conz
WRWA President

WRWA Spring Cleanup

The Spring River Cleanup Days are coming up – we're scheduled for Saturday, April 25 (at Westfield) and Sunday, April 26 (at Agawam) – the weekend after Earth Day. As in previous years, the Westfield group will meet at 9:00 AM at the municipal parking lot on Meadow Street (next to the Gas and Electric substation, across from the School of Music). The Agawam group will meet at Pynchon Point, at the mouth of the river. We'll supply gloves and bags (although if you can supply your own gloves, that's great) and people should arrive in clothes that can get dirty and wet. For more information on the 4/25 cleanup, contact Mark Damon at (413) 977-1577 or at mjdamon@verizon.net. For more information on the Agawam cleanup, contact Sheryl Becker at. In the past, we've had a great turnout and our volunteers have done an amazing job – let's keep up that tradition!

Fish Ladder Open House

This fun annual event is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, June 7. Check the website for updates and details.

Annual Meeting

We hope you can join us for this year's Annual Meeting, which will take place on Wednesday, May 20th in the downstairs meeting space of the Westfield Athenaeum. Refreshments will be available during a social hour beginning at 5:45 to be followed by the business meeting during which we'll hear a recap of the year's events, accomplishments and financial transactions. We'll also hear from our WRWA intern, Kane Hardaker. Kane is a Westfield State Regional Planning and Environmental Science student who is helping us to compile data towards a presentation on the 'state of the watershed' and our current knowledge of it.

As always, the annual meeting is free and open to our members. We'd love to see you there!

Brian W. Conz

WRWA's 21st Annual River Symposium: Outdoor Fun in Your Watershed

By Mike Young

Spring is just around the corner and that means it's nearly time for WRWA's annual river symposium, to be held this year on Saturday, April 11 in the Scanlon Banquet Hall at Westfield State University. This year's event will focus on recreational opportunities within the watershed, and one of the most exciting developments on that front is the recent arrival of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail in Westfield. The local trail, which now extends into the downtown area, with access from East Silver Street, just east of the downtown Big Y/Rite Aid shopping area, connects southward to Southwick and into Connecticut and is seeing lots of use by cyclists, rollerbladers, and walkers.

The keynote address at this year's symposium will be given by Joe Giffune, president of the Friends of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail, who will outline the history of the trail and provide updates on future work that will eventually connect the trail to the Westfield River and points north.

Registration for the symposium gets underway at 8:00 a.m. and participation is free and open to all. Light refreshments, coffee, tea and juice will be available during the registration period and throughout the morning sessions. The keynote will begin shortly after 8:30 a.m., to be followed by two sets of concurrent sessions featuring presentations by representatives of the Allen Bird Club, Mass Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, The Trustees of Reservations, The Berkshire Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club, and MassParks – all of whom will highlight the variety of outdoor experiences available within the watershed.

Between sessions, 15-20 exhibitors will be set up in the main foyer, providing information on a variety of recreational and environmental topics. Among the confirmed exhibitors are the Friends of Robinson State Park, the Naturalists' Club, the Friends of the Keystone Arches, the Western Massachusetts Fly Fishing Association, and the Westfield Invasive Species Partnership. A raffle to benefit WRWA projects will be held throughout the morning, with the drawing for a variety of prizes at noon.

In the afternoon, two field trips are planned:

- (1) a visit to a portion of the Columbia Greenway Rail Trail in Westfield, and
- (2) a birding walk to Stanley Park. Please save the date, and join us for this annual rite of spring!

Westfield River Canoe/Kayak Cruise – June 20, 2015

We have scheduled the WRWA annual paddle on the Westfield River from downtown Westfield to Robinson State Park for Saturday, June 20, 2015 – in conjunction with Robinson State Park Day, hosted by the Friends of Robinson State Park.

Registration will take place from 10:00 to 11:00 am at the parking area just east of the Great River Bridges in Westfield (accessible from Meadow St). After registration canoes & kayaks will be dropped off at the end of Hanover St. where we will arrange a shuttle for participants to park their cars at the end of the cruise

in Robinson State Park and be returned to the launch area. We will start the cruise at 11:00 am. The cost is \$10.00 per paddler and \$20.00 per family to cover insurance cost and snacks at the end of the cruise.

This 6-7 mile paddle is mostly flat water, with a couple of quick water sections, and usually takes over 3 hours to complete. We will have personnel on the river to help paddlers negotiate difficult areas. You may be asked to portage your craft around difficult areas.

Given that it parallels the busy Rt. 20 corridor, this section of the river is very scenic and more “natural” than you’d expect. Last year wildlife was all over – in the water, air and on the river banks. Several species of fish were spotted as well as eels. Eagles, both adult and juvenile, mergansers, several species of ducks and songbirds were observed. We saw deer on the banks and muskrat and beavers in the river.

The Cruise was enjoyed by all; we had 70 paddlers and 63 boats last year so we plan on a larger bus this year to improve transportation and reduce waiting times.

Note of Thanks for Demo Day Supporters

For the past several years, WRWA has offered a fun event called Demo Day at Hampton Ponds. Attendees were able to try several different styles and sizes of kayaks, canoes and paddle boards on the water. Our partner in this event was Wilderness Experiences/Westfield Water Sports. This wonderful partner provided all the boats (usually around 60), plus the paddles and personal flotation devices and a large crew of volunteers who made sure everyone was fitted with a PFD and had help getting into and out of the boats. They also provided mini paddling clinics throughout the day to offer safety and paddling techniques and demonstrations. Westfield Watersports has closed down, so we won’t be able to offer Demo Day this year.

We want to offer our most heartfelt thanks to them for their amazing efforts on behalf of Demo Day and

we wish them all the best with their continuing youth programs. We would also like to recognize and thank the other supporters that assisted us in the event – The Hampton Ponds State Park staff, Outdoor Wilderness Leaders (OWL’S) from Wilderness Experience, the Leaders Club of the YMCA of Greater Westfield and volunteers from the WRWA.

Trout in the Classroom

(by Mike Young)

The Trout in the Classroom (TIC) program is in its second year in western Massachusetts, and WRWA is again supporting a number of classrooms’ participation. The equipment that we’d been providing for the Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program (30-gallon aquarium tanks, chillers to keep the water near freezing til spring – just like outdoors!, and filtration systems) is now being used to raise trout, mostly in middle schools in the watershed. We’ve also been supplying more water quality supplies than in the past, as the trout grow larger than the salmon did by the time they’re released in late spring, requiring more attention to nitrate and ammonia levels in the tanks.

This year’s schools are the North and South (2 tanks) Middle Schools in Westfield, Gateway Regional Middle School in Huntington, Powder Mill Middle School in Southwick (2 tanks), and Berkshire Trails Elementary in Cummington. WRWA Board members helped out by delivering supplies late in the fall and about 100 eggs for each tank in early January.

Students will monitor the hatching of the young trout, then observe their development as they begin feeding, gradually increasing the amount of size of the food particles introduced into the tank. Late in the spring, they’ll spend a few hours to a half-day releasing the fish into local streams approved by the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. This program, developed by Trout Unlimited and running in a number of states, was quite successful last year and we hope will be a long-term tool for environmental education within the watershed.

Annual Financial Report

WRWA is a 503(c) non-profit organization. Total organizational assets at the end of 2014 were \$28,896.68, most of which was held in Certificate of Deposit accounts.

Our primary sources of income are funds from a Conservation Law Foundation lawsuit, membership dues and donations plus income generated by some of our events, particularly Demo Day, the Fish Ladder Open House, the Canoe Cruise, and the raffle held at the annual River Symposium (see pie charts below).

On occasion we've also received funds resulting from the settlement of lawsuits brought by other organizations. We are currently receiving settlement funds related to a case brought by Conservation Law Foundation totaling \$10,000. We received \$5,000 in 2014 with the remaining \$5,000 due in 2015. These settlement monies are targeted for a variety of initiatives related to the Westfield River Watershed.

Our largest category of expenditures for 2014 were administrative expenses, with most of those funds being expended on supplies and wages for our part-time administrative assistant. Additional duties were added to the workload creating this increase. The second largest expenditure was for various programs,

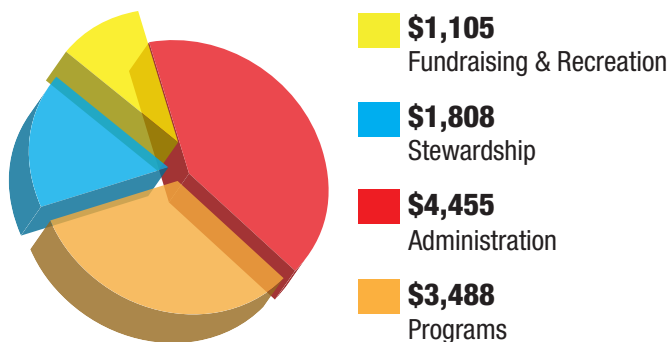
with the bulk of that money being spent on the Annual River Symposium (coffee and snacks for attendees, speaker's fees, lunch for speakers and exhibitors), Trout in the Classroom, and support for some of the activities of the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee.

Stewardship expenses, funded by the restricted use monies, were primarily for the storm drain labeling project that's been ongoing for the past several years, with some funding also being used to support our river cleanups. Approximately \$6,388 of that settlement money remains to be spent.

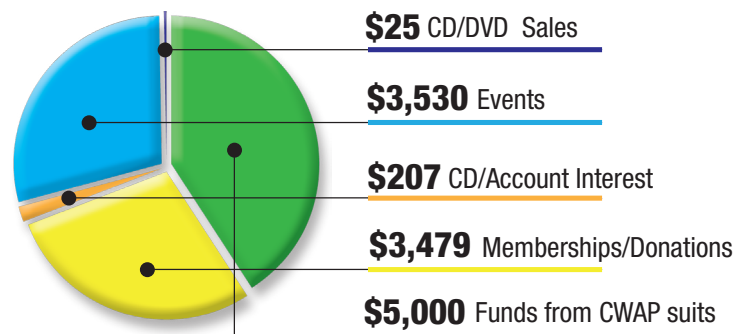
Finally, some funds were spent on Demo Day (food, T-shirts, park rental fee) and the Canoe Cruise (insurance, water, transportation assistance from the YMCA) in support of those fundraising and recreational events.

Overall, WRWA's finances are in good condition, with income exceeding expenses in 2014 by \$1,385. This is due to the influx of settlement funds. It should be a similar situation in 2015 except we will be losing the income from our Annual Demo Day function which had to be abandoned this year.

2014 Expenses Total: \$10,855.88



2014 Revenue Total: \$12,240.94



Amounts have been rounded to nearest dollar.

Officers and directors for 2014-2015.

Officers:		
President: Brian Conz	53 Balfour Drive Springfield 01118	572-8084
First Vice President: Aaron Reyes	100 Park Drive Westfield 01085	572-8380
Second Vice President: Sheryl Becker	101 Regency Park Dr. Agawam 01001	821-0818
Secretary: Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street Westfield 01085	572-9991
Treasurer: Fran Siska	47 Salvatore Drive Westfield 01085	562-4998
Directors:		
David Conley	PO Box 486 Agawam 01001	786-6005
Allan Guagliardo	72 Colony Circle Westfield 01085	568-4770
James Johnson	93 Clayton St. Springfield 01107	
Timblin Judy	37 Mountain Rd. Holyoke 01040	569-9018
Allan Ouimet	16 Russell Rd. Westfield 01085	539-0964
George Reichert	75 Blair Road Blandford 01008	848-2074
Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace Feeding Hills 01030	786-0195
Phillip Sousa	29 Yankee Circle Westfield 01085	568-3982
Samantha Via	16 Crowhill Road, Monson, MA 01057	668-7746
Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road Westfield 01085	562-3467
Mike Young	721 West Rd. Westfield 01085	562-8498
Honorary Directors:		
Dan Call	777 College Highway Southwick 01077	569-9677

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

2015 Membership Dues

We'd like to send out a big thank you to all those who have sent in their 2015 dues. Many of you even included a much-appreciated additional gift to help WRWA continue and expand its educational, recreational and stewardship activities. WRWA dues cover the calendar year January to December. For those who have not sent in their 2015 dues,

a membership form can be downloaded from our website (www.westfieldriver.org) and mailed to WRWA, PO Box 1764, Westfield, MA 01086-1764. WRWA has been an active and committed advocate for the Westfield River watershed for more than sixty years because of you, our loyal members. *You inspire us!*

Westfield State University
The Westfield River Watershed Association
P.O. Box 1630
Westfield, MA 01086-1630

The Westfield River Watershed Association Newsletter

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