

The

SPRING 2005

WatershedNews

Westfield River Watershed Association (WRWA) ~ P.O. Box 1764 ~ Westfield, MA 01086-1764 ~ (413) 532-7290 ~ www.westfieldriver.org

The President's Message

Now that we finally have some hints of the long-awaited spring, I hope all of you will be able to get outside and enjoy our beautiful watershed. When I've been out biking, I've noticed something that I've read about happening in more developed parts of Massachusetts, but haven't seen here until now. In two locations I observed small older homes torn down that are being replaced by much larger new ones. While "recycling" land in this manner may be better than building on undeveloped land, it does remind me that although the Westfield River Watershed is one of the least developed areas in the Commonwealth, we live in the third most densely populated state in the U.S. As pressures to develop creep our way, the work that WRWA does to raise people's awareness of the value of our local environment has never been more important.

WRWA has many things to celebrate: a very successful symposium, the additional "Wild and Scenic" designation on the Westfield River, very positive public reaction to "Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55", and a host of programs underway now and planned for the summer.

As WRWA Board Members implement a very ambitious slate of programs, we need two things: money, and help doing the work to carry them out. If you're reading this newsletter, you've already given money in the form of membership dues. If you are able, I urge you to take the next step by helping us out at least once this summer. Joan Pearsons needs volunteers to stencil storm drains and pass out literature to homeowners, I need help picking up trash in turnouts along Highway 20, and Mike Young is looking for people to measure bridges and culverts.

WRWA's work is important and we can't do it without you!

Kathy Meyer,
President

Mark Noonan Wins Waite Award

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200+ Attend 11th Annual Westfield River Symposium

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June is Rivers Month!

The Massachusetts Riverways Program has developed a calendar covering river-related events happening from May 14th to July 4th. The 2005 Rivers Month Calendar may be accessed on the Riverways' website www.massriverways.org. Take this opportunity to invite your friends, family, local leaders, legislators, and/or a favorite reporter to clean up, paddle, protect, enjoy and celebrate your favorite rivers and streams or experience new ones. Many activities require reservations in advance. Please call ahead to inquire about any restrictions, fees, rain dates or cancellations that may apply.

Recording Breaking Symposium

By: Kathy Meyer

Over 220 people flocked to WRWA's Eleventh Annual River Symposium on April 2 to listen to keynote speaker U.S. Representative John Olver, see the preview of "Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55", take in presentations by seven other topnotch speakers, and view over 20 exhibits.

Presenters included Ed Klekowski, professor of biology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, who showed his EMMY-award nominated film "The Great Flood of 1936 – The Connecticut River Story. Richard Little, professor emeritus of geology at Greenfield Community College and a leader of wide-ranging geological excursions, gave an overview of the geologic story of the Westfield River and Robert Brown, professor emeritus of history at Westfield State College, offered an historical perspective on the development of Westfield and the opportunities and hazards associated with the City's riverside location.

Carrie Banks, of the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee, detailed the recent expansion of the Wild & Scenic designation for some upper reaches of the Westfield River, while Alison Bowden, of The Nature Conservancy, reported on the status of the stream connectivity project that WRWA is working on with TNC. Jim Lyons, Town Engineer for West Springfield, presented information on storm runoff and the storm drain stenciling program that WRWA has been implementing in West Springfield and Westfield over the past year. Professor Gary Beluzo spoke about old growth forests in our watershed. Although heavy rain canceled one field trip, Tom Wisnaukas still led a tour of two flood control dams on the Westfield River.

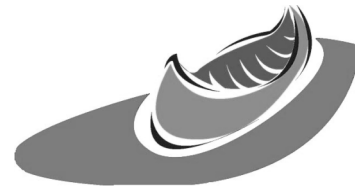
Interestingly, as our symposium looked at the historic floods of 1936 and 1955, heavy rain and winter melt contributed to flooding danger on the day of the symposium. So Channel 40, Channel 22, The Westfield Evening News and the Sunday Republican all came to the symposium looking for information on flooding. Tom Wisnaukas and some scenes from "Five

Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55" were featured on the early evening and 11:00 news on both Channels 22 and 40 that day.

Many thanks to symposium committee who worked with me to put together this exceptional event: Carl Grobe, Mike Young, Eileen Rannenberg, Bob Thompson, Mark Damon and Jack Hayward. And a special thanks to Jack Hayward of Hayward Communications and Mark Saint Jean of Westfield State College for countless hours spent producing "Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55".

Annual Canoe Cruise

Our annual canoe cruise from downtown Westfield to Robinson State Park will take place on Sunday, June 12th on the Westfield River. Contact Mike Vorwerk at 572-5305 for more details.



Atlantic Salmon Rearing at Powder Mill Middle School

By: Tom Condon

"Do your fish" I would say as my students entered my classroom during the past 4 months. This was our shorthand for calculating how much heat, first the salmon eggs and later, the salmon fry had been exposed to in a given period of time. The students would manipulate a simple algebraic formula involving temperature difference and days of exposure. By calculating the Total Temperature Units (TTUs) the students were able to predict when hatching would occur, when feeding would be necessary, and when we should ultimately release our brood of salmon into the Granville Gorge. Raising salmon was a daily part of science on the Garnet Team at Powder Mill. Students would always check their fish in the tank that sat on the counter in the

back of my room. Surprisingly for these 7th and 8th graders, the students grew more and more attached to their salmon.

On May 5th and 6th I took my students out to Munn Brook to release our 3-month-old fry. We struggled up the trail-less gorge to find pools of flat water. Before releasing the fry, we would search the stream for macroinvertebrates such as insect nymphs, larvae, and crayfish. We found lots of mayflies, stoneflies, caddis flies, riffle beetles, a few salamanders, and even some small fish. Our best find was a female crayfish with a cache of eggs under her tail that were hatching as we watched. All these species told us that the river quality was perfect for release of our salmon. We ran some chemical tests and found the pH to be just slightly acidic and the dissolved oxygen levels at about 100 ppm (parts per million); again, confirmation that the stream was perfect. So after a short discussion as to proper technique for release (salmon are neither cliff divers nor able to fly) and the safest place for release (we tried to avoid put them right into the mouth of trout already in the stream), we let the fish return to the wild.

In these days of high stakes testing in our schools, many teachers shy away from projects that are not absolutely connected to state learning standards. The experience my students had with the Atlantic Salmon Egg Rearing Project (ASERP) was a far more valuable learning experience for these future decision makers than many of the lessons we teach in school. But don't take my word for it, these are some things that the students wrote when they reflected on their experience. Sarah said that "this was real science, we were out there really making a difference." Nina commented, "This project wasn't about releasing fish and that's that. It was about saving a whole species." And finally, Bre gives a plug for all teachers thinking about projects like these, "the salmon project taught me a lot about science, history, math, and language arts. So what started out as a science project turned into an all around project." So on behalf of all my students, I would like to thank you, the members of WRWA, for providing my classroom with the tank, chiller, and other necessary equipment to

bring this experience to Powder Mill Middle School.

"Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55" Now for Sale

By Kathy Meyer

"Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55", the video produced by WRWA and Hayward Communications recounting the memories of those who lived through the biggest recorded flood in Westfield's history, is now available in DVD and VHS. It can be purchased for \$5 at WRWA events and also is available at Conner's, 34 Elm St., Westfield.

This documentary is free to non-profit organizations such as schools, libraries, historical societies, etc. by sending a request on letterhead stationary to:

WRWA
P.O. Box 1764
Westfield, MA 01086-1764

"Wild and Scenic" Tee-Shirts for Sale

To celebrate the additional designation of 38 miles of the Westfield River as "Wild and Scenic", WRWA is selling tee shirts that read "Go Wild and Scenic on the Westfield River" and have the very attractive National Park Service Wild and Scenic logo. These will be available for sale at WRWA events. The price is \$12 and profits will go to the Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee to fund celebrations of the expanded designation.

Fishway Open House

By: Gabe Khatchadourian

The fish Ladder open house will be held this year on Sunday, June the 5th from 10:00 AM until 3:00 PM. The weather has kept the water temperature low so the fish are holding off. This is good news because by June the 5th the temperature should be perfect for the return. I

predict large schools of fish will be there on that day so make sure you mark June 5th on your calendar, and bring your family and friends to see this amazing trip. If you have any questions or need more info please email me or call me dorian.gabe@verizon.net 413-231-2798. See you there.

Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee Update

By: Bob Thomson

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee has been busy over the last few months dealing with a number of varied issues. A great deal of our efforts have been dedicated to the June 4th Celebrations. The event

will be the kickoff of Rivers Month on the Westfield and will take place at Gardner State Park in Huntington. After you read this article, hopefully you will plan to take part in the festivities.

When driving about the watershed, watch for new signs that signify the "Wild and Scenic" areas. These signs are provided to the communities with portions of the river or tributaries that are "Wild and Scenic" by the National Park Service. I would like to thank Liz Lacy of the Park Service for her efforts in obtaining the signs.

We have had discussions with Bill Hull regarding the Biomass Plant that may be constructed in Russell, and are continuing a dialogue regarding the project. The Committee is also continuing its dialogue with Mass Highway regarding a number of bridge replacements along the River.

Finally, the Westfield River has recently achieved Partnership River status through the National Park Service. I will update everyone on the benefits of this Partnership status as funding becomes finalized. Enjoy the summer and I look forward to see you along the River or at the fall fairs.



June is River's Month, Come Celebrate!

Join the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee (WRWSAC) on Saturday, June 4th to celebrate the Westfield River. Music, games, hikes, and other fun family activities will highlight the remarkable scenic, geologic, recreational, historical, and ecological values of the Westfield River Watershed.

The event, coinciding with National Trails Day and Rivers' Month, begins with morning hikes throughout the watershed and culminates along the banks of the river for an afternoon of activities.

"Warbling in the Westfield" (8:30am-11:30am)

The Nature Conservancy's expert birder Wayne Klockner, State Director and Bill Toomey, Westfield River Highlands Program Director will lead an exploration of migratory song birds in the upper Westfield River Watershed. The large intact forests in this area link habitat from the mid-Atlantic through the Northern Appalachians, creating safe corridors for the migrating birds to travel. A variety of warblers, thrushes, woodpeckers and hawks make their home here, so bring your binoculars! This walk is limited to 20 people and registration will be required. To register, contact Venessa Salvucci at (617) 227-7017 x 309 or vsalvucci@tnc.org.

"Restoring History: Keystone Arch Bridges" (9:30-11:30am)

Dave Pierce is founder of the Friends of the Keystone Arch Bridges, a local preservation group that works to help restore and protect the historic bridges. An avid railroad enthusiast, Dave will lead a hike that explores the history of the area from the 1840s to the present. Participants will walk along the West Branch of the Westfield River listening to captivating stories of George Washington Whistler's engineering feat to span the winding river. The hike will culminate in a discussion of how modern day technologies will be used to restore two of the bridges this summer. For more information, contact Dave Pierce at 413.354.7752 or Dpiercedlp@aol.com.

Outstandingly Remarkable: Westfield River Wild & Scenic Celebration (1pm-4:30pm)

Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) C.M. Gardner State Park, Huntington:

Sponsored in cooperation with the DCR, this afternoon event will include music, food, games, hikes and other activities that celebrate the scenic, geologic, recreational, historical, and ecological values of the Westfield River Watershed. For more information, contact Carrie Banks at (413) 268-3129 or river_banks@hotmail.com.

Help Needed

By Kathy Meyer

There are several wonderful river access points along Highway 20 that are used by picnickers, fishermen and swimmers in summer. Unfortunately, trash is a problem at some of these locations. So, each week during summer I'll be replacing trash bags in the new dispensers that will be in place at three turnouts along Highway 20 and picking up trash left behind. I like to pick the trash up on Mondays or Tuesdays and can do it anytime during the day or early evening. If you can help me even once, please call me at 568-4252 or email at kmmeyer@comcast.net.



A Little History of the Westfield River

By: Henry Warchol

The Westfield Athenaeum has two old volumes of *Westfield and Its Historic Influence* by Reverend Lockwood. Here are some interesting facts that are included in this historic piece of literature:

- The Westfield River was originally called the Agawam River.
- In 1779, a committee of five was chosen to patrol the rivers in Westfield and

prosecute those who broke fishing regulations.

- The first map of Westfield indicated that 500 feet of the river's width was held in common.
- The falls in Woronoco were once called Salmon Falls.
- Weller's Dam was located right bellow the present Rt. 202 Bridge in the center of Westfield.
- On May 18, 1772, fisherman caught 2,130 shad in one day on the Little River.
- In August of 1788, a 6-foot, 112 lb. sturgeon was caught in the Westfield River, just below Weller's Mills.

Springtime Hike: M-M Trail, Section 3

Date: Sunday, June 5 Time: 9:00 – 2:00

Hike Leaders: Nancy & Tom Condon
Registration: Please call Nancy or Tom to sign-up (413 564-0895) Meeting Place: Westfield Wal-Mart parking lot – towards the back.

This trail section takes us from the Pioneer Valley Rod & Gun Club in Westfield to the Mass Pike in the span of about 3 miles. It will be a "yo-yo" hike, in which we will



"about-face" for our return trip, for a total hike length of about 6 miles. Initially, we will walk along the edge of huge Lane Quarry, then stroll beneath a grove of protective Eastern Hemlock, and also encounter beautiful sentinels of red oak in a handsome hardwood forest. The trail is not well maintained, so expect to hurdle fallen trees and encounter rocks and logs hidden under leaves on the trail, so ankle-supporting footwear is necessary. Join us for this little known section of trail with water, a lunch, binoculars, and a spirit of adventure. Heavy rain cancels hike.

Waite Award Winner!

By Joan Pearsons

Mark Noonan is this year's Waite Award winner. This award is given annually to a person who helps preserve and improve the local environment. Mark was presented the award at the WRWA Annual meeting on May 19th. He has shown he is a worthy candidate for this award because of his years of dedication to his community, the environment, and the Westfield River Watershed. He has been an advocate for many environmental issues and as a member of Westfield's City Council, has committed untold amounts of energy and time in support of key programs. His efforts make Mark an asset to the Westfield River Watershed. **Congratulations and Thank You Mark!**

What's Happening in Your Watershed?

By Matt DelMonte

Anything that happens on the land, in the water, and even in the air in our watershed affects the people, plants, and animals in it. The Westfield River Watershed Association is not only an advocate for recreational activities, but for resource management and protection. These efforts often focus on activities directly affecting the Westfield River itself, but the WRWA is also concerned with the environmental health of the entire 330,000 acres and 100,000 people of the watershed. As stewards of this large watershed, the WRWA spends a great deal of time monitoring developments and providing feedback when warranted. Today, WRWA is monitoring several projects within the watershed - projects with varying impact.

Earlier this year, WRWA submitted comments to Secretary of Environmental Affairs regarding the proposed Target Distribution Center in Westfield. This 1.7 million square foot facility would be partially located over the recharge area of the Barnes Aquifer and areas of priority wildlife habitat. In February of 2005, the Secretary determined that this project complied with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).

Several wastewater treatment plants on the main branch of the Westfield River are in the process of renewing their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits for discharging into the River. Among these are plants in Huntington, Russell, and Westfield. WRWA has reviewed these applications, identified some concerns, and submitted written comments to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Another project affecting the Westfield River watershed is the proposed biomass power plant in Russell. This proposed plant would burn tree chips and wood waste products to generate up to 45 megawatts of green electricity. WRWA typically supports renewable energy projects, but has some concerns about the water withdrawals from this proposal. In addition to this project, the WRWA is monitoring the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing of hydropower facilities in this portion of the River.

For more information on these and other watershed projects, contact the WRWA or look for updates in future *Watershed News* issues.

Upcoming Events

June 4 – August 27, Friday or Saturday mornings. **Storm Drain Stenciling.** Contact Joan Pearsons at 736-5208.

Saturday, June 4 **Wild and Scenic Celebration.** Contact Carrie Banks at (413) 268-3129

Sunday, June 5 West Springfield **Fish Ladder Open House.** Contact Gabe Khatchadourian at 568-3005.

Sunday, June 12 at noon: **Canoe Trip** on the Westfield River. Contact Mike Vorwerk at 572-5305.

Saturdays, October 1 and October 15 at 9:00 a.m. **Westfield River Clean Ups.** Contact Gabe Khatchadourian at 568-3005.

For further information, visit our website at www.westfieldriver.org

**Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2005
Feel free to communicate with any one or with our headquarters at (413) 532-7290**

Officers					
President	Kathy Meyer	87 Old Farm Road	Westfield	01085	568-4252
Vice President	Gabe Khatchadourian	74 Western Ave	Westfield	01085	568-3005
Second Vice President	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
Director, Special Projects	Daniel Call	7 Wynnfields Circle	Southwick	01077	569-9677
Treasurer	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
Secretary	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467

Directors					
	Michael Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
	Carl Grobe	314 Russell Road	Westfield	01085	572-5304
	Joan Pearsons	59 Van Horn Street	West Springfield	01089	736-5208
	Michael Vorwerk	10 Basket Street	Huntington	01050	572-5305
	Eileen Rannenberg	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	12 Brooker Hill Road	Becket	01223	623-0275

For a membership application please call Kathy Meyer at (413) 568-4252 or visit the Westfield River Watershed Association on the World Wide Web at www.westfieldriver.org.



Matt DeMonte is the editor of The Watershed News.
Please forward comments or suggestions to mdelmonte@comcast.net.