

The
2006

SPRING

Watershed News

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

The President's Message

As people who are concerned about our local environment I encourage you to participate in the planning process currently underway for the Five-Year Westfield River Watershed Action Plan. This plan will set Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) funding priorities for our watershed for the next five years. If you didn't participate in one of the three public input meetings already held, you can still contribute by taking a survey online at www.pvc.org or calling Anne Capra, PVPC, at (413) 781-6045 and asking her to send you a copy of the survey. Please ask your friends and neighbors to do the same.

So far, implementing smart growth strategies is the top priority of those surveyed. In listening to people who took the survey, this means different things to different people. For some, it may mean preserving farms so they aren't subdivided into 5-acre building lots; for others it means stopping the proposed BioMass plant in Russell; yet others are concerned about preserving open space.

There are 95,000+ citizens living in the watershed and we don't all see things the same way. A plan that reflects diverse opinions has a chance of working for all of us. What won't work is a plan without much input.

No one is going to take away what makes the watershed special to each of us; rather we, and the town officials who represent us, will gradually give it away in tiny increments because we don't have a plan to preserve it.

Kathy Meyer, WRWA President

54TH ANNUAL WRWA MEETING
HELD

PAGE 4

RECAP OF 12TH ANNUAL
WESTFIELD RIVER SYMPOSIUM

PAGE 2

JUNE IS RIVERS MONTH

...so get outside and explore
the watershed!

WHAT WAS SO SPECIAL ABOUT OUR SYMPOSIUM?

By Carl Grobe, member of the Board of Directors

Nearly 200 attendees registered for WRWA's 12th Annual Westfield River Symposium held on Saturday, April 1 at Westfield State College. WRWA president Kathy Meyer kicked off the event with opening remarks and a welcome to all participants. Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs Joan Rasool welcomed everyone on behalf of Westfield State College and mentioned the close relationships between the College, the Westfield River, and the Watershed. The theme of this year's Symposium was "What's so special about our Watershed?"

This question was answered almost immediately by Wayne Klockner, State Director of The Nature Conservancy. Wayne's keynote address, "Assessing the Conservation Opportunities in the Westfield River Watershed," outlined the goals and priorities for The Nature Conservancy, and their particular interest in the Westfield River Watershed. In a dynamic and well-illustrated presentation, Wayne highlighted the outstanding features of our Watershed. He also discussed TNC's current and future plans to preserve and enhance the most critical areas of our Watershed for wildlife, environmental quality, and human enjoyment.

The keynote address was followed by concurrent sessions including presentations on "Railroad to the Moon - The Keystone Arch Bridges" (Dave Pierce), "Rare Plants of the Watershed" (Dave Lovejoy), "Henry Knox's Trail of Artillery" (Dennis Picard), "Changes in Massachusetts Bird Populations" (Wayne Petersen), "William Cullen Bryant Homestead" (Ellice Gonzalez), "Coexisting with Bears in Massachusetts" (Dave Fuller), and "Keeping the Westfield River 'Wild and Scenic'"

(LizLacy). Additional presentations included a workshop on the Westfield River Five-Year Watershed Action Plan by Anne Capra (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission) and an introduction to the new Westfield River Environmental Center by Michael Vorwerk (Westfield State College).

In addition to the concurrent sessions, informational displays ranged from wildlife photography, fly tying, and regional planning to sustainable forestry, conservation efforts, and salmon restoration. For the first time, the Symposium also included a student poster session. At the session, Westfield State College students presented information on their current research projects addressing various Watershed issues. Afternoon sessions included a demonstration of global positioning software (GPS) applications by Bob Thompson and a hike to Sanderson Brook Falls by Tom Condon and Bill Toomey.

Our thanks go out to members of the Symposium Committee who organized the event, our host Westfield State College, all of the speakers and exhibitors, and all of you who attended. We hope to see you all again next year!

ATLANTIC SALMON EGG-REARING PROGRAM

By Mike Young

WRWA's sponsorship of the Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program (ASERP) has grown to five schools this year, with new systems running at the North Middle School in Westfield and at the Chester Elementary School. The program has been in place at the South Middle School in Westfield since 2002, and at the Gateway Regional Middle School in Huntington and the Powder Mill Middle School in Southwick since 2003. WRWA has provided each school with an approximately 30-gallon aquarium tank and a

Glacier Corporation chiller, capable of keeping the tank temperature cooled to 35-40 degrees (F) for much of the spring. An Emperor filtration system and a variety of other accessories complete the setup. Our thanks to the Holyoke Petco, which provided a significant discount on the tank, filter and some accessories, and to the Westfield WalMart, which provided a grant for the purchase of additional accessories.

Salmon eggs from the Roger Reed hatchery in Palmer were delivered to each school in February, with hatching taking place several weeks later. For their first month or more (depending on the temperature at which the tank is kept), the salmon fry lie nearly motionless within the gravels of the tank bottom, consuming their yolk sacs to stay alive. By late April, though, most of the tanks will have been gradually warmed to around 50 F and the fry will have exhausted their built-in food source. At that point the students begin raising brine shrimp (yes, "sea monkeys") to feed to the fry. Within a few weeks the fry will have developed into parr, still hiding in the tank-bottom gravels most of the time, but rising into the water column to feed when brine shrimp are added to the tank. By late May most of the schools will be releasing their young salmon into appropriate habitats along the Westfield River or its tributaries.

Those "release days" are a highlight of the program, and WRWA has always managed to find a few volunteers to help out. Students generally sample and identify macroinvertebrates from the stream bed, as a way to assess the "health" of the stream and its suitability for salmon. They also don waders and measure the depth and width of the stream channel and the velocity of the flow, data that will allow them to calculate the stream's discharge (gallons per second flowing past) back in the classroom. Sometimes, they've done additional surveys of the site or conducted a clean-up along the stream. And, of course, they release the fry they've raised over the past several months.

If you'd be interested in helping out (no previous experience needed!), please contact Mike Young at (413) 572-5741 or via email to myoung@wsc.ma.edu.

WRWA RECEIVES GRANT

By Kathy Meyer

The Norcross Wildlife Foundation awarded a \$2,000 grant to WRWA to purchase a projector. This projector will be used with the laptop computer we purchased two years ago. This will enable us to make presentations about the watershed using the thousands of photos we now have on the laptop. The new projector purchased with this grant was used for the first time at the May 4 Annual Dinner Meeting.

ANNUAL CANOE CRUISE OF THE WESTFIELD RIVER

By Michael Vorwerk

The Westfield River Watershed Association is sponsoring their annual canoe cruise of the Westfield River on Saturday June 3rd at 1:00. The cruise will go from the Westfield Riverfront Park (just downstream of the Green Bridge in Westfield) to Robinson State Park. Depending on the water level, the trip will take about two hours. On previous cruises, canoeists saw wildlife such as ducks and beavers, trout, cottonwood "snow," and spring wildflowers. Though the trip runs right through the middle of Westfield, the river has a secluded wilderness feel in this section that will amaze you. This year, all canoes will leave as a group promptly at 1:00. Registration begins at 12:30 in the parking lot off Meadow Street. There is a \$5.00 registration fee per person. Participants must provide their own canoes, paddles, and lifejackets. Lifejackets must be worn at all times while on the cruise. The WRWA will provide refreshments at the takeout. For

directions or more information, contact Michael Vorwerk at (413) 667-5152 or email: mvorwerk@wsc.ma.edu.



WRWA RESUMES STORM DRAIN STENCILING PROGRAM

By Joan Pearsons

We have set the date of June 10th for the first storm drain stenciling program of the season. So far, our volunteers include Cub Scout Pack 570 from West Springfield. We will be meeting at 9 AM at Mittineague Methodox Church and will stencil until 11:00 AM. If you know of a group that would like to get involved in this community project, please call Joan at 736-5208.

VALLEY OF PARADISE PHOTO CONTEST

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee 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 publications, such as newsletters, postcards, calendars and posters. Prizes to be announced. Submit photos by September 15, 2006. For more information and submittal forms, please call the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee at (413) 268-3129 or visit www.westfieldriver.org

54TH ANNUAL MEETING HELD

By Kathy Meyer

Forty-one WRWA members attended the 54th Annual Dinner meeting held on May 4 at Tekoa Country Club. Westfield Mayor Sullivan and State Representative Don Humason joined WRWA in honoring retired Board member Dan Call for his service to WRWA and many contributions to local environmental efforts. WRWA also honored and thanked George Reichert of Conner's for distributing 1,000 of "Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55" as a public service.

Keynote Speaker Alison Bowden of The Nature Conservancy explained the progress of the nearly complete Westfield River Connectivity Project. One of the first positive impacts of the project is the inclusion of bridge and culvert designs that are better for aquatic life in the new MA Highway Design Manual. TNC and WRWA recognized the efforts of WRWA member Mike Young for the tremendous amount of work he did on this project by presenting him with a framed photo and gift certificate.

WEST SPRINGFIELD FISH LADDER OPEN HOUSE

By Henry Warchol

The Westfield River Watershed sponsored open house event for visiting the fish ladder to view Atlantic salmon, shad and other fish passing by an under water viewing window is scheduled for Sunday June 4 from 10 AM to 2 PM meeting and registration is at A&D Hydro dam (formerly DSI Fibermark) 70 Front street West Springfield. For information contact Henry Warchol at 562-3467 or Bill Rose at 786-0195 .



A&D Dam, West Springfield

WILD AND SCENIC STEWARDSHIP PLAN UPDATE

By Kathy Meyer

One might think that getting the National Wild and Scenic designation for 78 miles of the Westfield River would protect it forever, but that the reality is far more complex. Without careful attention from the ten towns that have Wild and Scenic River mileage in them, the “Outstandingly Remarkable” features that merited the Wild and Scenic Designation can disappear over time through development and other changes.

The Wild and Scenic Stewardship Plan will catalogue all the unique features along the 78 miles with the Wild and Scenic designation and put that information in a form that the ten towns can use easily. Here’s what’s been done so far:

1. An intern from Westfield State College has mapped existing information on the unique geological and historical features.
2. A Stream Team Coordinator has been organizing teams to do fieldwork to add to existing information.

Over the summer, meetings will be held in all ten towns to present the maps and add to them based on input from people who live in the area and know the river. Once complete, the Wild and Scenic Stewardship Plan will make it easy for towns to see exactly where key natural and historical features are so that they can consider these when they rebuild bridges, roads, or make decisions about development. This plan will also guide the Wild and Scenic Committee in its future work.

HILLTOWN PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ART EXHIBIT COMING

By Kathy Meyer

See the Westfield River Watershed through the eyes and easels of seven talented watershed artists at the Hilltown Plein Air

The WRWA wishes to acknowledge the following business members of our organization:

Carpet Ends (Westfield, MA)

China Star (Westfield, MA)

D.L. Bean, Inc. (Westfield, MA)

Elm Industries, Inc. (West Springfield, MA)

Fuss & O’Neill, Inc. (West Springfield, MA)

Hull Forestlands, LP (Pomfret, CT)

Huntington Conservation Commission
(Huntington, MA)

L.B. Eddy (Westfield, MA)

Puffer Printing (Westfield, MA)

Russell Biomass L.L.C. (Boston, MA)

Town of Russell (Russell, MA)

United Bank (West Springfield, MA)

Western MA Fly fishermen (Feeding Hills,
MA)

Painters Exhibit in the Jasper Rand Art Museum of the Westfield Athenaeum. The exhibit will run during the month of July with the Museum open Mondays through Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

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. For the last three years this group met once a week, packed up cars with painting gear, and headed out to paint a beautiful place in the watershed. This exhibit is the result of their efforts over the last three years.

According to artist Karin Cook, "Visiting so many beautiful places in different parts of the Westfield River Watershed has given us a great appreciation for the watershed. We paint what we have seen, felt, heard and even smelled. Hopefully those who see our paintings will have a sense of this and also treasure the Westfield River."

WRWA will host a reception for the painters on Thursday, July 8 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., which will be open to the public. We hope as many WRWA members as possible can come meet the artists, and enjoy the exhibit.

SPIDER HUNT HIKE

By Tom Condon

Spiders are fascinating creatures. Were it not for them, our world would be overridden with insects. Come learn a little bit about these invertebrates and participate in a hike to find some. We will stop in a couple of different spots along the trail and perform a variety of collecting techniques. Armed with vials, we'll sift through the leaf litter, tap branches to see who falls out on a collecting tarp, and perhaps set up a Burlese funnel to

temporarily collect specimens for inspection. We'll check them out with hand lenses and microscopes to get a close look at the 8 eyes or the combs on the end of the tarsi. Armed with guides and keys, and Nancy's limited but practiced aptitude, we'll figure out who we found, and gain a higher respect for these crafty little fellows.

Come dressed for the weather and for getting down on hands & knees. Gloves may make you feel better about handling spiders, but are not really necessary. An adventurous spirit is all that is required.



Date: Sunday, May 28 Time: 10:00 – 12:00
Leader: Nancy Condon (413-564-0895)
Meeting Place: Stanley Park, by the Frank Stanley Beveridge Wildlife area trailhead.
Reservations: Call Nancy

UPCOMING EVENTS

SPIDER HIKE
Sunday, May 28th

CANOE CRUISE
Saturday, June 3rd

FISHWAY OPEN HOUSE
Sunday, June 4th

HILLTOWN PLEIN ART EXHIBIT
July 2006

ANNUAL RIVER CLEANUP
Saturday, September 30th

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 Carl Grobe at 572-5304.

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 Kathy Meyer at 568-4252 for further information.

**Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2006
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	Vacant				
Second Vice President	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
Treasurer	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
Secretary	Michael Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498

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	West Springfield	01089	736-5208
	Michael Vorwerk	10 Basket Street	Huntington	01050	572-5305
	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	12 Brooker Hill Road	Becket	01223	623-0275
	William Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	01030	

**Honorary
Director:**

	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050	
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