

The

SPRING 2008

WatershedNews

The President's Message

This edition of the newsletter is a good chance to review WRWA's activities for the year. Our annual river cleanup was held on September 29, and we continued to expand its scope to some of the tributaries of the Westfield. Our symposium was on April 5, with Richard Sullivan, the former mayor of Westfield and current DCR commissioner, as keynote speaker. We continue to supply articles to Southwoods magazine and to clean up the traffic turnouts along Route 20 - both projects led indefatigably by Kathy Meyer. We also continue with our commitment to increasing youth participation in our programs - particularly the ASERP program led by Mike Young and the storm drain stenciling program and flyfishing clinic led by Bill Rose, and the salmon fry stocking program (a state Fish and Wildlife program, with WRWA's involvement led by Henry Warchol). We've also expanded our support of Meredyth Babcock's Watershed Waltz puppet show in schools, scout troop meetings, and other venues.

Ironically, our formally organized activities taper off just as spring blossoms fully into the long days of summer. By the time this newsletter reaches you our open house at the DSI dam fish ladder (June 1) and our canoe cruise (June 7) will already have happened. Our last June event is on the 21st - when we will have Alan Weisman, author of *The World Without Us*, as a guest speaker at the Westfield Athenaeum.

Summer is a difficult time to schedule events because it's vacation time for many people and because some of the natural phenomena around which we organize activities - fish migration, for example - have already happened. You don't need a planned event to enjoy what our watershed has to offer, though. Living here gives us plenty of chances to enjoy, and get to know and appreciate, our natural world - without a lot of the driving which many of us would like to cut down on out of concern over gas prices, global warming, or both.

Being aware of our local environment is something for which too many of us don't take the time. Recently, a colleague was telling me about her experience taking a college biology class out on a nature trail. She was amazed, and saddened, at how many of them were disoriented, confused, and even frightened at being in the woods. Like too many of us, most of their time is spent indoors and rarely do they get outside in a place away from buildings and pavement. They may know a lot about the crisis in the Amazon rain forest - it's important to know that - but they know it from a TV or computer screen. Yet for most of us who care about the environment enough to want to protect it, our motivation is borne more from the times spent outside hiking, fishing, and mucking around in our own local outdoors. If we want later generations to feel the same way, it's important to get them out there, too. While we're at it, we need to get out ourselves - and we need to protect that natural world.

Mark Damon

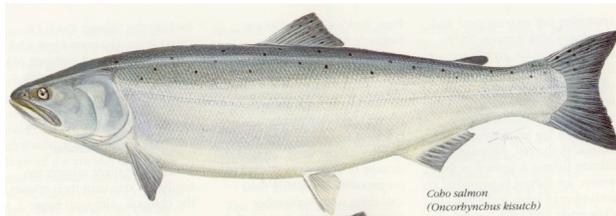
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Alan Weisman To Talk At Westfield Athenaeum

By Mark Damon

Alan Weisman, author of the bestselling book *The World Without Us*, will be giving a talk at the Westfield Athenaeum (the Westfield city library) at 10:00 AM on Saturday, June 21. Alan is an award-winning journalist who has written for The New York Times, Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly, Discover, and NPR. His book *The World Without Us* explores what would happen to our planet, including the artifacts of our own civilization, if humanity were to vanish tomorrow. WRWA has arranged for his talk and is in the process of arranging for a book sale and signing afterwards.



Coho salmon
(*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)

Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program Update

By Mike Young

WRWA completed a seventh consecutive year of sponsorship for the Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program (ASERP) in watershed schools – with six schools participating this winter and spring. Most schools released their fry in May and WRWA provided volunteers to help with macroinvertebrate surveys and stream flow measurements for four of those schools. Thanks to Carl Grobe, Marj Lehan, Tim Parshall, and Michael and Karin Vorwerk for their help with those release activities!

Great River Exhibit

By Jackie Koller

June is National River Month! Be sure to stop by the Great River Exhibit in the new rear entrance Exhibit Hall at Pilgrim Candle Marketplace and learn about the past, present and future of the Westfield River. Exhibits show scenes from the great floods of Western MA history, and maps can direct history buffs to Chesterfield Gorge, the Stone Arches, and other places where glimpses of the river's rich past can still be seen. Nature enthusiasts can find out all about the nationally designated "Wild and Scenic" Westfield River and discover the canoeing, hiking, fishing, picnicking, bird-watching and educational opportunities that abound along its banks. The Exhibit also includes a fascinating look at the Great River Bridge Construction Project, currently in progress. The Pilgrim Candle Marketplace is located at 16/36 Union Avenue in Westfield and the exhibit is available from 6 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sundays (please use the rear café entrance before 10 a.m.). Contact Jackie (413-562-1295) for more information.

Youth Committee Update

By Bill Rose

Approximately 40-50 volunteers showed up to help with marking storm drains in Agawam on April 19, and about 200 drains were labeled. A picture of the group with the mayor of Agawam was featured in the *Agawam Advertiser*. The fly fishing derby and clinic weren't as successful – no one showed up to participate!! We did, however, gain some valuable experience and are committed to returning the clinic to the turnout in Huntington next year. That site has better parking and much better access to the river. The items we collected for the raffle will be saved for a future event.

Annual Dinner Meeting

By Kathy Meyer

About 40 WRWA members participated in our 56th Annual Dinner Meeting held at School Street Bistro in Westfield on Thursday, May 29. Joan Kimball, of Mass Riverways, received this year's Waite Award for her leadership in the removal of the Silk Mill and Ballou Dams on Yokum Brook, a tributary of the Westfield River, in Becket. This five-year effort involved coordinating 27 local, state and federal agencies. The dams were removed because they were in poor condition and their removal improves the habitat for cold-water fish such as eastern brook trout and Atlantic salmon. The keynote address was given by Jennifer Fish (of Mass ACORN), who discussed the important role private landowners play in preserving our forests through forest planning and conservation easements. Interestingly, she used the preservation efforts of longtime WRWA members Dave and Ruth Pardoe as one of her examples of the tremendous impact private forest owners have by their own actions and networking with others.

In the business portion of the meeting, WRWA President Mark Damon updated us on WRWA's many activities and events. Our support of "The Watershed Waltz", a puppet show developed by Marmalade Productions, has proven to be an important tool for reaching children with an environmental message in a fun way. Treasurer Ken Taylor presented the Financial Report and Mike Young presented the Audit Committee Report, both of which confirmed that WRWA's finances are in good order. We elected Board Members for the upcoming year – all are listed at the end of this newsletter. We particularly welcome new Board members Tracy Adamski, Allan Guagliardo, John Shuttleworth, and Fran Siska. Tom Condon was elected Secretary and Ken Taylor was elected Treasurer for

2008-2009. Our thanks to retiring Board members Dave Lovejoy and Stan Warren.

Thanks also to Board Members George Reichert and Sheryl Becker for helping me plan this year's annual dinner meeting.

Fishway Open House

By Henry Warchol

On Sunday June 1 WRWA sponsored an open house for the general public to be able to view the migratory fish that use the fish ladder located a short distance upstream of 150 Front Street in West Springfield. More than 250 people attended and were treated to close-up views of a 27-inch Atlantic salmon that had been trapped the day before.

The fish ladder is monitored every day from the first week in April to about the last week in June by seasonal personnel that are hired by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife under the direction of Dr. Caleb Slater, who is also in charge of the salmon restoration program in the rivers and streams of the Commonwealth. The fishway is owned and maintained by A & D Hydro who, along with the Southworth Paper Co. and MA DFW, generously give permission for us to host this annual event.

Last year 21 salmon, 4,497 shad, 2,280 suckers, and 1,797 lamprey used the fishway seeking nesting spots in the upper reaches of the river to lay their eggs. 245 American eels also came up a separate eelway at the site. The eels spend their adult life in the river, then return to the Sargasso Sea off the coast of Florida to mate and lay their eggs. As of June 1 of this year 18 salmon had been counted. They were transported to a fish hatchery for their eggs to be hatched and the fry distributed into the upper reaches of the river in the spring.

Power of the People

By Cory Andros
(WSC Environmental Science major)

Robinson State Park -what beauty, what peacefulness. You can hear the birds chirp and chatter to each other and the rustle of fresh leaves blown by the gentle breeze. You can feel the energy of nature all around you, behind every bush, beneath every unturned stone. It is hard to believe that such a place of serenity is located not very far from the hustle and bustle of Springfield, the largest city in Western Massachusetts.

That serenity was almost disturbed two years ago. A timber sale was proposed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for Robinson State Park that would have included the cutting of both red pine (some diseased) and hardwoods in several areas across the park. The proposed sale was met with much discord from locals, who viewed the park as a place that should be left in as pristine a condition as possible, noting that dead trees were a natural aspect of the park's ecosystem. The "Friends of Robinson State Park" was formed to battle against the timber sale. Over the course of the next two years, with the help of some other conservation organizations, they successfully delayed and then, finally earlier this year, stopped the timber sale - protecting some of the red pines as well as the hardwoods in the park. The "Friends" pushed for close analysis of the park's environmental uniqueness and its rights as a recreational park of the Commonwealth.

Preservation was helped by several scientific studies that discovered many vernal pools and several rare species of birds native to Robinson. Furthermore, the "Friends" group has made it a goal to join a network of statewide groups that intend to improve and protect recreational lands of Massachusetts. They will continue to

promote the value of Robinson State Park to communities in the area by encouraging people to visit the park and by stopping destructive activities such as waste dumping and illegal ATV use.

As an initial step the "Friends" are sponsoring Robinson Park Community Environmental Day at the park on Saturday, June 21. That event will serve as a "fun, educational" experience for children and families in the community as the organizers hope to share what they have learned about the park in the last two years. The prevention of the timber sale at Robinson is an example of an amazing conservation effort by a citizens' group and all the parties involved should be applauded for their help in protecting the park from the potential scarring it could have suffered.

Summer Outing

Gobble Mountain, Chester

Date and Time: Sat, Aug 23, 8:00-noon

Leader: Tom Condon

Registration: Please call 413-564-0895 to register, so if bad weather forces cancellation we can contact you.

Meeting Place: Chester Elementary School, Middlefield Road, Chester, MA.

Gobble Mountain is a Nature Conservancy Property in the town of Chester. As the name implies, there will be a climb and it can be a bit steep at times. Hence the reason for the early meeting time. The trail, an old road really, will allow us to wind our way up the mountainside. Eventually we'll level out and find ourselves in amongst some unusual rock cliff. After a touch over one mile, we will crest out at the site of an old fire tower. The views from the top of the Westfield River and its watershed are well worth the effort of the climb. Bring along a snack, plenty of water, binoculars. Dress for the weather and you may want to wear solid hiking shoes. It can be a bit rocky in places.

Thanks to Matt DelMonte!!

The Winter 2008 newsletter was the last one edited by Matt DelMonte, who's done a stellar job of getting out four issues annually for many years. Our heartfelt thanks to Matt for his editorial expertise, occasional articles, and for overseeing all the little details needed to get this newsletter out! We also welcome Cory Andros, an Environmental Science major at Westfield State College, who's helped out with putting this issue together and is interested in taking on some editorial responsibilities.

Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2008-2009.

Officers:					
President:	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant St.	Westfield	01085	572-9991
First Vice President:	Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	01030	786-0195
Second Vice Presidents:	Sheryl Becker	101 Regency Park Dr.	Agawam	01101	821-0818
	Heather Comee	10 Maple St.	Southwick	01077	427-5089
Secretary:	Tom Condon	80 General Knox Rd.	Russell	01071	564-0895
Treasurer:	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock St.	Westfield	01085	562-4947
Directors:					
	Tracy Adamski	26 Aldrich St.	Northampton	01060	210-8693
	Allan Guagliardo	72 Colony Circle	Westfield	01085	568-4700
	Kathy Meyer	39 Rachael Terrace	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	George Reichert	75 Blair Rd.	Blandford	01008	848-2074
	John Shuttleworth	63 Warwick St.	Longmeadow	01106	567-3648
	Fran Siska	47 Salvatore Dr.	Westfield	01085	562-4998
	Phillip Sousa	29 Yankee Circle	Westfield	01085	568-3982
	Bob Thompson	10 Lyon Hill Rd.	Chester	01011	354-9636
	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Rd.	Westfield	01085	562-3467
	Mike Young	721 West Rd.	Westfield	01085	562-8498
Honorary Directors:					
	Dan Call	777 College Highway	Southwick	01077	569-9677
	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Rd.	Huntington	01050	

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