

The

SPRING 2009

# WatershedNews

## *The President's Statement*

As the spring days lengthen, everything else seems to stretch and get active as well. Plants leaf out and blossom and animals emerge from winter dormancy or migrate back to (or through) our watershed. The river itself burgeons with the last snowmelt melding into its tributaries along with the spring rains. As this article is being written, the annual Whitewater Races are taking place.

WRWA's activities pick up in the spring too. Since our last newsletter, we've held our annual symposium and begun taking part in the Massachusetts Fish and Game Department's annual salmon fry release program, and this weekend we were represented at two events – a symposium on invasive plants in Cummington and the Earth Day activities in Agawam. Still to come are more fry stocking, storm drain labeling, the fly fishing clinic, our annual meeting and dinner, monitoring of the fishway and eelway and the open house at the fish ladder at the DSI dam in West Springfield, and the canoe cruise. We'll also be doing periodic small cleanups at some sites along the river, and some of our members will be involved in the Westfield State College Environmental Center's water quality monitoring.

I'd like to use this opportunity to note the contributions of our board members. It's impossible to cite all they do in this space, so I'll just highlight a few things. Much of the organizational work is done by Mike Young, who manages the website, Kathy Meyer, who does the paperwork associated with event publicity and membership, and George Reichert, who does most of the organization of the annual meeting. Tom Condon (and before Tom, Dave Lovejoy) keeps the minutes of board meetings as our secretary, and Ken Taylor has been our treasurer for as long as I've been with WRWA. Educational programs like storm drain labeling, ASERP, the fly fishing program, the symposium, and the open house are the purview of Bill Rose (the first vice president and youth committee chair), Henry Warchol, Mike Young, Kathy Meyer, George Reichert, Phil Sousa, Fran Siska, Sheryl Becker, Tracy Adamski, John Shuttleworth, Heather Comee, and Tom Condon. River conservation and water protection programs (like the cleanup and water quality monitoring) are largely handled by Bill Rose, Sheryl Becker, Phil Sousa, Heather Comee, Kathy Meyer, and Bob Thompson. Recreational programs like hikes and the canoe cruise are the responsibility of Tom Condon, Phil Sousa, and Mike Young. Other board members supporting all of these activities include Allan Guagliardo and, last year, Stan Warren. There's much more they all do, and more overlap in activities than that, but not enough room to list it all here. Finally, our newsletter is ably edited by Cory Andros and before Cory, by Matt DeMonte. Thanks to all of them and to all of you for your enthusiasm and support.

For more information or to get involved in any WRWA activities, contact a board member (information available at the end of this newsletter) or go to our website at [www.westfieldriver.org](http://www.westfieldriver.org). See you around the watershed.

Mark Damon

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## **Fun Brings Record Crowd to Symposium**

By Kathy Meyer

A record 200 people attended the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Westfield River Symposium on Saturday, March 28 at Westfield State College. Symposium organizers attribute the huge turnout to the positive theme "Have Fun in Your Watershed," which offered a welcome counterpoint to the long winter and gloomy economy. Participants at the symposium learned how to be tourists in their own backyards by attending presentations from ten speakers and visiting representatives of 25 organizations with informational exhibits. There was positive energy and enthusiasm abound.

Today many people are content to let enjoyment come to them in highly scripted ways such as television, amusement parks, and the Internet, observed Jim Caffrey in his keynote address. Caffrey challenged the standing room only audience to enjoy the subtle and rewarding pleasures that come from connecting with nature. As a Manager of Conservation Lands for The Trustees of Reservations, Caffrey developed a very successful cross-county ski program at Notchview Reservation in Windsor, MA involving hundreds of children, teens and their families. Caffrey emphasized that the program's success hinges on active participation of parents, commenting, "Parents get out and ski with their children, not just sit in the car and read a book or do email." Caffrey went on to describe recreational opportunities on other properties managed by The Trustees of Reservations within the Westfield River Watershed including the Chesterfield Gorge and the William Cullen Bryant homestead.

The symposium included ideas for active and leisurely recreation. Fishing guide Marla Blair offered tips on choosing the right bait, Don Podolski of New Horizons Sports talked about on and off-road cycling and Scott Cook of Wilderness Experiences spoke on safe paddling. Dave Pierce from Friends of the Keystone Arches discussed the 25-year long effort to protect early railroad bridges, Jeff Penn tantalized the audience with

photos and descriptions of little-known waterfalls, and Dr. Robert Bristow of Westfield State College's Geography and Regional Planning Department described a complete map of hiking trails in the watershed. Educators Tom and Nancy Condon gave parents tips on how to reconnect children to nature and Seth Kellogg of the Allen Bird Club gave pointers on birding. Woody Darling and Karen Leigh from the City of Westfield talked about recreational opportunities on City water supply lands. Permits that allow the public to access part of the city's water supply lands are available at the City Water Department along with maps and information on parking and activities that are allowed and prohibited.

In the afternoon some people joined Dave Conley of the Appalachian Mountain Club on a walk on the Noble View property in Russell, MA boasting spectacular views of the Pioneer Valley, while other willing walkers accompanied Jeff Penn on a hike to several waterfalls.

Many thanks to WRWA members who worked with me on the symposium committee to make this wonderful day possible: Mike Young, John Shuttleworth, George Reichert and Tracy Adamski. A number of other WRWA board members were on hand to help at the symposium including: Henry Warchol, Ken Taylor, Fran Siska, Sheryl Becker, Tom Condon and Bill Rose. We also thank Westfield State College for the use of Scanlon Hall and their other continuing support.

## **Invasive Plant Species Symposium**

By Mark Damon

On April 18, WRWA cosponsored and had a display at the Invasive Plant Species symposium organized by the Trustees of Reservations at Cummington Community House. Speakers included Julie Richberg, Regional Ecologist with the Trustees, Heather Cupo, Horticulturalist with Plant Euphoria, and Lincoln Fish, Forester for Bay State Forestry Service. They

discussed the identification and control of a variety of plants, notably garlic mustard, glossy and common buckthorn, Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed, goutweed, pale or black swallowwort, and oriental bittersweet. The Highlands Community Initiative will be sponsoring several field days this spring and summer on the control of invasive species. Anyone interested in registering for a field day should contact them at (413) 268-8219 or at [highlands@ttor.org](mailto:highlands@ttor.org). More information can be found at [Highlandcommunities.org](http://Highlandcommunities.org) or [LeastWanted@ttor.org](mailto:LeastWanted@ttor.org).

## **Fly Fishing Clinic**

By Bill Rose

The fly fishing clinic will be held on May 16<sup>th</sup> from 9:00am to 2:00pm on the Westfield River, at the rest area across from the Huntington medical center on Route 20. There will be a fly tying demonstration and instruction and fly-casting instruction, so we encourage people to bring their fly pole. Also, samples of insects will be taken from the river and viewed under a microscope and there will be a person fishing in the river to demonstrate how fish are actually caught with an artificial fly. In the past this event has been a big hit with both children and adults. See you there!! Contact Bill Rose at (413) 786-0195 for more information and any questions.

## **Fish Ladder Open House 2009**

By Henry Warchol

The date for the public viewing of the fish ladder is Sunday, June 7 from 10am to 3pm. Registration and passage will be at the gate of the former office of the Southworth Paper Co. building located at 150 Front Street in West Springfield. Caleb

Slater of Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife is the coordinator of the anadromous fish project; last year 34 salmon and 3,293 shad came up the Westfield River.

A look at the salmon cycle:

Returning Atlantic salmon come up river from the ocean with the urge to spawn at the place of birth from whence they came. They migrate up river in the spring and dwell in the area until autumn when they will lay their eggs. The eggs will then hatch in the spring (Year - 1).

They will spend at least two years of growth in fresh water until they become smolt, the stage when they are urged to migrate down river to the ocean (Year - 3).

Once in the ocean's salt water they feed and grow for at least two more years, before being compelled to return back to the river's fresh water to reproduce by spawning and fertilizing their eggs to repeat the cycle (Year - 5-6 ).

The continuous compounding of water depletion permits on the Westfield River, adding to the present discharges of storm drain contaminants and partially treated swage plant discharges, are still placing obstacles in the way to bring back the Atlantic salmon. Progressively negative impacts are also obstructing the Clean Waters Act, which is in place to reverse the environmental degradation for the benefit of the next generation.

It took only five to six salmon generations to reintroduce the fish that once came up to our back yard, which is not a very long time. With the advances in technology that have been made, there is no reason not to expect their return.

For more information on the open house, contact:

Henry Warchol – (413) 562-3467 –  
warch@verizon.net  
<<mailto:warch@verizon.net>

Or Bill Rose – (413) 786-0195

## **Volunteers Needed: Storm Drain Marking In Westfield**

By Tracy J. Adamski

The WRWA is sponsoring storm drain marking in the City of Westfield on Saturday, May 30th. Volunteers should meet at the Westfield City Hall parking lot at 59 Court Street at 8:30AM. Materials will be provided and markings are used as reminders to not use catch basins for waste disposal. These basins flow into the storm drain system and eventually discharge into the wetlands, ponds, and streams that form the Westfield River watershed. Help us protect the watershed!

## **Agawam Earth Day**

By Sheryl Becker

Agawam's first Earth Day Event on Saturday, April 18 at the new School Street Park was a great success, in which the WRWA was proud to take part. Kathy Meyer and I represented the Association with a display board and handouts, and spoke with about 50 folks who were eager to learn more about the watershed and/or upcoming WRWA events. The majority of attendees were children, and they were pleased to see that we have many upcoming activities that are both educational and fun for children. The event that excited most children and parents was the salmon-fry stocking. There were also quite a few interested in the river cleanups, fly-fishing clinic/derby, and canoe cruise. The Agawam Go Green Committee and the Agawam Department of Public Works hosted the Earth Day Event. The

outdoor, fair-style event featured green practices in gardening, energy-saving tips, energy companies showcasing green products, recycling information, food, and fun events for children.

In addition to the WRWA, among the exhibitors were:

- The Western MA Master Gardeners Association, which conducted soil testing for a \$1 donation.

- The Agawam Garden Club, which provided gardening advice and gave out free seed packets.

- Berkshire Service Experts, which offered information on saving energy on heating and cooling. Berkshire also disposed of old thermostats containing mercury.

- The Agawam DPW took orders for rain barrels and gave out free water conservation packs. Visitors could also pick up a replacement or second recycling bin.

- The Friends of Robinson State Park was on hand to answer questions about the biodiversity and recreational opportunities in the park, which offers nearby opportunities to hike, bike, fish and paddle.

- The Agawam Go Green Committee was doing a "bulb swap." Visitors, in exchange for bringing in used compact fluorescent bulbs for disposal, received a flower bulb to plant.

Visitors also could check out the School Street Park, see the historic barn, play bocce, basketball, and let the kids play on the new accessible playscape. There was a large turnout, including Mayor Susan Dawson and Conservation Commission Chairman Henry Kosloski.

## Medicine in a Blossom

By Tom Condon

In our temperate, deciduous forests, some wildflowers have evolved to take advantage of early spring conditions. The trees have yet to fully leaf out and so the strengthening sunlight has a chance to warm the forest floor. This warming sparks to life the dormant bulbs, tubers, and corms that store energy spring plants use to bring forth this year's blooms. Insects too are now becoming active and begin the search for pollen and nectar for their nutrition. Now is the time to get out into the forests to enjoy the wildflowers of spring.

Today, we enjoy flowers for their beauty, but that has not always been the case. Native Americans and early settlers relied on plants to treat illness and injury. Through trial and error and even superstition, plants became the treatment for everything from heart disease to melancholy. Both red oak and quaking aspen bark were used to calm a racing heart and blueberries were a treatment for insanity. But how much truth is there in these treatments?

The study of medicinal properties of plants as identified by non-modern cultures is called ethnobotany. Its practice became more important when scientists realized that the devastating loss of species in tropical forests could result in the loss of potentially significant medicines. And so, ethnobotanists began scouring our tropical forests for new and unique plants and the chemicals within them. They found quinine in the bark of the Cinchona tree when they learned that Peruvian Indians used it to halt shivering due to cold weather. Today quinine is used to treat malaria, leg cramps, arthritis, and may one day help with the treatment of prion diseases such as mad cow. In Madagascar, they found Rosy Periwinkle which is now used to treat some forms of leukemia. Some ethnobotanists have looked and found surprising

treatments for cancer right here in New England.

As you walk the forested trails this spring, watch carefully for a plant about 18 inches tall with a pair of very large leaves. The umbrella-like leaves are deeply notched and arise from a fork in the plant stem. At this fork, hidden beneath the leaves, you will find a single large, white flower; this is Mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*). With the exception of the yellowish fruit, all parts of the plant are poisonous. It is this poison that has made it an effective medicine. It is so potent some Native Americans used this plant to commit suicide.

The Cherokee used Mayapple to treat warts. It may have been this use that brought science to study it, for its first modern use was for genital warts. But the chemical within, Podophyllotoxin, soon became a treatment for other conditions. Today, Podophyllotoxin and its descendant medicines, is used to treat testicular cancer, small cell lung cancer, and some forms of leukemia and lymphoma. America's pharmacology has been enhanced by the study of this plant and its past uses. What plants will next assist our physicians is in the hands of ethnobotanists around the world.

The Westfield River Watershed Association is sponsoring a hike at Noble View in Russell on May 24<sup>th</sup> to explore the birds and blooms of spring. If you would like to join us, you can find more information at [www.westfieldriver.org](http://www.westfieldriver.org).

**Make sure to check out these WRWA events:**

May 16 - Fly Fishing Derby - Route 20 turnoff across from Huntington Health Center, Huntington

May 21 - Annual Meeting and Dinner - The Bistro, Westfield

May 30 - Storm Drain Labeling - Westfield

June 7 - Open House - DSI Dam and Fish Ladder, West Springfield

June 13 - Canoe Cruise - Westfield-Agawam

**Membership Update**

**Thanks to these Businesses and Organizations for their Support of WRWA**

Town of Russell  
China Star  
D. L. Bean  
Wal-Mart  
Western Mass Fly Fishermen  
A & D Hydro  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commissions  
Westfield River Canoe Club

**Welcome to these New Family and Individual Members**

William Babcock  
Meredyth Babcock & Michael Walski  
Mary & Dave Conley  
Ralph Cortis  
Elizabeth Dillman  
John & Sue Radner  
John & Deb Shaver  
The Soverow Family  
Gene Theroux  
Pam Tierney  
Tara Weiss  
John Ziskowski

## WRWA 2009 Annual Meeting

Save the date! The 2009 Annual Meeting will be held Thursday, May 21st. Invitations will be in the mail soon! Watch the WRWA web site for more Annual Meeting news as it becomes available!

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

<b>Officers:</b>					
President:	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	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 Street	Southwick	01077	427-5089
Secretary:	Tom Condon	80 General Knox Road	Russell	01071	564-0895
Treasurer:	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
<b>Directors:</b>					
	Tracy Adamski	26 Aldrich St.	Northampton	01060	572-3256
	Allan Guagliardo	72 Colony Circle	Westfield	01085	568-4770
	Kathy Meyer	39 Rachel Terrace	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	George Reichert	75 Blair Road	Blandford	01008	848-2074
	John Shuttleworth	63 Warwick St.	Longmeadow	01106	567-3648
	Fran Siska	47 Salvatore Drive	Westfield	01085	562-4998
	Phillip Sousa	29 Yankee Circle	Westfield	01085	568-3982
	Bob Thompson	10 Lyon Hill Road	Chester	01011	354-9636
	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467
	Mike Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
<b>Honorary Directors:</b>					
	Dan Call	777 College Highway	Southwick	01077	569-9677
	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050	

### New to the WRWA Family:

For more information on WRWA's activities, check our website at [www.westfieldriver.org](http://www.westfieldriver.org)

Whitney & Susan Scott	PO Box 298	Middelfield	MA	01234
Bill and Barbara Toomey	809 Leonhardt Rd	Becket	MA	01071
Andrea Bugbee and Jim Wang	77 Tannery Road	Southwick	MA	01106
Barbara A. Welch	126 Western Circle	Westfield	MA	01085
Ingrid and David Young	125 Rogers Avenue	West Springfield	MA	01085

