

The

Spring 2012

WatershedNews

The President's Statement

Hi Everybody,

Spring is here according to the calendar. So!!! Lets "get involved". Starting with the salmon stocking in April, "Demo Day" in May, and the "Fish ladder" open house in June. You can check out these activities on our web site.

The Symposium was held on March 19th and you can read all about it in this newsletter. The first salmon stocking will also have taken place before this newsletter reaches you. Hopefully the weather cooperated.

The second stocking will be April 21st (NOT April 28th, as originally announced). Then there is "Demo Day" on May 19th. The annual dinner will be on May 23rd. Don't forget the fish ladder open house on June 3rd. These are fun and interesting activities planned for you this spring and early summer.

Our members are our eyes and ears in the watershed. If you have any concerns, please don't hesitate to contact a board member. You can get information on the web site (westfieldriver.org). Remember, our members are our most important asset!!!! Now is the time to "GET INVOLVED" with the many activities that will be offered. SEE YOU THERE!!!

Bill Rose

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Kayak Demo Day is Back, and Better than Ever

By Kathy Meyer and George Reichert

WRWA's third annual Kayak Demo Day promises to fuse FUN and FUNDRAISING on **Saturday, May 19** (rain date: Sunday, May 20) at Hampton Ponds State Park.

For anyone thinking about buying a kayak or upgrading, this is THE event of the year. Instead of running around from store to store shopping for kayaks, participants can test-paddle and compare over 60 kayaks from a variety of manufacturers. Manufacturer's Reps will be on hand to answer questions and share their expertise. Refreshments will also be available.

A full slate of programs and demonstrations round out the day (***bold, italicized events*** are in the water; others are on shore):

10:15-10:45

Whitewater Kayak & Eskimo Roll Demo
Kayak & Equipment Basic Demo

11:00-11:30

Kayak Intro Clinic

Outfitting Your Kayak and Gear for Safety

11:45-12:15

Kayak Rescue Clinic

How to Transport Your Boat

12:30-1:00

Whitewater Kayak & Eskimo Roll Demo
Fishing Demo

1:15-1:45

Kayak Intro Clinic

Kayak & Equipment Basic Demo

2:00-2:30

Kayak Rescue Clinic

Outfitting Your Kayak and Gear for Safety

2:45-3:15

Stand up Paddle Board Intro Clinic

Fishing Demo

So much for FUN. Kayak Demo Day is WRWA's biggest fundraiser of the year and the key component of the FUNDRAISING effort is the raffle, which includes the chance to win a Sound 120 Kayak valued at \$649, a Thule Roof Rack valued at \$180, an Eagle Ray Paddle valued at \$140, or other prizes. Raffle tickets are only \$5 each, or 6 for \$20. Raffle tickets can be purchased at Kayak Demo Day, from our partner in this event (Wilderness Experiences and Westfield Water Sports at 526 College Highway in Southwick), or by contacting George Reichert at 848-2074. You don't need to be present to win. So even if you aren't coming, please buy a raffle ticket.

The event runs from 10 AM to 4 PM. Stop by for an hour or two, or stay all day! Admission is **free for WRWA members** and only \$5/person or \$10/family for everyone else.



Westfield River Canoe/Kayak Cruise

By Fran Siska

WRWA's annual paddle on the Westfield River from downtown Westfield to Robinson State Park is scheduled for **Saturday, June 16** – in conjunction with Robinson State Park Day, hosted by the Friends of Robinson State Park. Registration will take place from noon to 1:00 pm 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.

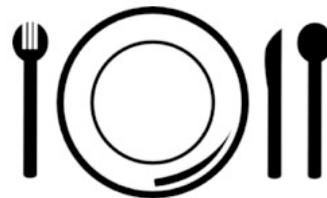
This 6-7 mile paddle is mostly flat water, with a couple of quick water sections, and usually takes 2-3 hours to complete. Given that it parallels the busy Rt. 20 corridor, this section of the river is very scenic and more "natural" than you'd expect. In past years we've regularly seen orioles and once a bald eagle, in addition to lamprey nests in the stream bed. The cost is \$7/person or \$20/family, which covers insurance and snacks at the take-out point.

Steady rain or inappropriate flow conditions will cancel the event. We have been fortunate in prior years to have good weather and the event has been very successful. For more information contact Fran Siska (413-562-4998).

Annual Meeting Wednesday, May 23 Strathmore Park, Russell

By George Reichert

The Annual Meeting of the WRWA will be held at Strathmore Park on Rt. 20 in Russell, MA on **Wednesday, May 23**. The grounds will be open for recreation and visiting beginning at 4:00 PM. A Social Hour begins at 5:00 PM, with the buffet dinner served at 6:00 PM. The menu will include Chicken Vermont, Roast Pork loin, Veggie Pasta, salad/rolls, dessert and coffee.



Our speaker for the evening will be Karen Leigh, Conservation Commission Coordinator for the City of Westfield. In that capacity, she is responsible for supervising a 7-member Conservation Commission in all aspects of its operation, including permit applications, enforcement, and compliance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Westfield Wetlands Protection Ordinance. Ms. Leigh also serves as an Adjunct Professor at Westfield State University. Her topic for the after-dinner presentation will be "Vernal Pools."

All members of the WRWA are encouraged to attend the Annual Meeting. Reservations may be made by sending a check (payable to WRWA) for \$15.00 per person to George Reichert, 75 Blair Road, Blandford MA 01008 before May 16th.

Storm Drain Labeling

By Mike Young

WRWA will again be working to label storm drains in the central portion of Westfield with plastic markers intended to let people know that those drains go directly to the river – so only rainwater should be going down them! We'll be looking for volunteers to help with the project, with the first work day being held on **Saturday, June 2** from 9 a.m. to noon. We'll meet at the Westfield City Hall and will then disperse, in groups of 2-3, to label drains in assigned areas. The pavement has to be dry for the adhesive to bond, so rain or recent rain will postpone the event. Check the website for additional dates throughout the summer, or contact Mike Young (562-8498) for more information.

Fish Ladder Open House

By Bill Rose

The fish ladder open house will be held on **Sunday, June 3** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Parking is near the old Southworth Paper Company building at 150 Front St. in West Springfield. With good weather, more than 400 people attended last year, when shad and bass were swimming in the river near the ladder! This year, maybe we'll get lucky and have a salmon in the holding tank.

WRWA board members will be there to describe the history and operation of the ladder. Down in the pit is the viewing window, where visitors can watch fish of all types swim by on their way to the canal and the upper part of the river.

"Protecting Our Watershed" 18th Annual Westfield River Symposium

By Mike Young, Brian Konz,
Kathy Meyer and Bill Rose

The 18th Annual Westfield River Symposium was held on the campus of Westfield State University on Saturday, March 24. Approximately 150 people attended the event, which featured a half-dozen speakers during the morning sessions, 15-20 exhibitors, and afternoon field trips to the West Springfield Fish Ladder and to the Littleville Dam.

The morning began with the keynote address by **Andy Finton**, Director of Conservation Science for The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts office, who noted that the Westfield Watershed is unusual in southern New England for being less developed than most, with roughly 80% of the watershed being forested. That status shows up nicely in the Conservation Assessment and Prioritization System, a project of UMass Extension (check it out at www.umasscaps.org). The Nature Conservancy has maintained a presence in the watershed for more than a decade now, and is working to maintain the region's "resilience", or ability to recover from disturbances – including both short-term events (like the series of unusual weather episodes the region has experienced over the past year), and longer-term climate change. Strategies include (1) maintaining and improving habitat connectivity, (2) establishing protected areas large enough to maintain a full suite of natural processes, and (3)

working to limit the impact of system stressors, things like climate change and invasive species. The BioMap2 project (see www.nhesp.org), with which Andy has been deeply involved, is designed to help guide strategic biodiversity conservation.

Two of the morning speakers talked on topics related to fish and the preservation of aquatic habitats. **Dr. Caleb Slater**, the Anadromous Fish Project Leader for the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife for the past 15 years, discussed the presence and status of our migratory fish species, gave us updates on restoration efforts, the threats of climate change to vulnerable species, and outlined the path ahead. Of particular concern were the several species Dr. Slater noted to be in decline. These include all of the herring species (shad, alewife and blueback), short-nosed sturgeon, and the catadromous eel (which spawns in the ocean, living its juvenile and adult life in freshwater). Shad, for example, are not only declining in number but also in average age and, correspondingly, in size. **Dana Ohman**, also of Mass Wildlife, explained that cold water fish want clean water that averages 68 degrees or less. Leaving trees in place along stream banks provides the shade needed to maintain cool temperatures, and the trees' roots also stabilize stream banks against erosion. The use of rip rap on a stream bank, common in road construction, increases the velocity of water and causes erosion of the opposite bank. An alternative technique uses reinforced earthen banks planted with trees that have deep, fast growing roots, but it can be challenging to get those new methods adopted.

Julie Richburg, the Regional Ecologist in Western Massachusetts for The Trustees of Reservations, talked about how the severe weather of the past year is likely to help non-native invasive weeds, insects, and plant pathogens expand their ranges. When the forest canopy is destroyed by fallen or damaged trees, sunlight is able to reach the forest floor, allowing invasives to grow and often to outcompete native species. Some of the invasives of particular concern are honeysuckle, bittersweet, garlic mustard, and knotweed.

Other speakers focused on issues related to human impacts on stream environments. **Alison Bowden**, of The Nature Conservancy, provided an update on stream crossings. She noted that the roughly 30-40,000 culverts in Massachusetts often present barriers to both aquatic and terrestrial organisms that use streams as transportation corridors. WRWA was involved in early efforts (2003-2005) to survey culverts in our watershed, and that data has been used to help justify new crossing standards, which have been adopted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Work continues on prioritizing structures for replacement, with the goal of improving the "connectivity" of those stream corridors. **Beth Lambert**, of the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, discussed dams as barriers to movement along waterways. Roughly 100 dams are present within the watershed, and many of those have impoundments that have filled with sediment and are no longer serving a useful purpose. The DER is actively working to remove such dams in situations where there's an owner willing to consider that option. That's

increasingly common as owners recognize their potential liabilities (e.g. if dams fail during storm events), particularly since public grant funding may partially cover the cost of removal in some cases.

The final talk of the day was given by **Carrie Banks**, also of the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, and focused on the impacts of Tropical Storm Irene. Banks' talk combined her extensive professional experience, which includes many years of service as the Westfield River Wild and Scenic and Stream Team Coordinator, with her personal experiences observing the Deerfield River adjacent to her parents' property in Charlemont, where she grew up. Banks gave the audience a crash course in fluvial geomorphology, using a number of before and after photos that highlighted the power of rivers to shape surrounding landscapes. The record flows recorded during Irene, and the devastation left in its wake, provide convincing evidence that rivers must be given space for natural processes, especially given the probability of extreme weather events in the future.

Other Happenings in the Watershed

By Mike Young

The Naturalists' Club of Springfield runs an extensive program of outdoor trips throughout the Connecticut Valley and beyond. This spring several of their local offerings may be of interest to WRWA members, including:

Saturday, April 21 - Dave Gallup (525-4697), long-time President of the club, will lead a leisurely 3-mile walk to Sanderson Brook Falls, with lunch on the rocks below the falls. The group will meet at the Westfield State University commuter parking lot (enter at the stoplight) at 10:00 a.m. Rain cancels.

Wednesday, May 16 - Micky Novak, hatchery manager for the Cronin National Salmon Station for the past 20 years, will speak on "Atlantic Salmon Restoration in the Connecticut River Basin" at the club's regular monthly meeting. The meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Tolman Auditorium at the Springfield Science Museum.

Sunday, May 20 - Dave Lovejoy, professor of Biology at Westfield State, will lead a casual walk in search of wildflowers at Stanley Park (568-9312, ext. 100) as part of their Nature Workshop series. Meet at the entrance to the Beveridge Wildlife Sanctuary at 11 a.m.



The Allen Bird Club of Springfield, celebrating its centennial this year, offers regular birding trips throughout the Northeast. In May they're offering a popular trip within the watershed:

Sunday, May 13 - John Hutchinson (562-3976) will lead a half-day trip to Robinson State Park in Agawam, with the expectation of finding warblers, tanagers and thrushes, among other bird species. Meet on Colemore St. opposite the North Street entrance to the park at 7:30 a.m.

Call for Waite Award Nominations

Since 1981 WRWA has presented the Waite Award (named after WRWA's Executive Director from the 1960s, Richard Waite) to those who have made substantial contributions to the watershed. If you have a worthy recipient in mind, please forward your nomination (by May 1, with a brief justification) to any of the members of this year's nominating committee: Mike Young, Aaron Reyes, or Allan Ouimet. Email addresses can be found on our website (westfieldriver.org); postal addresses and phone numbers are in the table below!

Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2011-2012.

Officers:					
President:	Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	01030	786-0195
First Vice President:	Sheryl Becker	101 Regency Park Dr.	Agawam	01101	821-0818
Second Vice President:	Brian Conz	53 Balfour Drive	Springfield	01118	572-8084
Secretary:	Mike Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
Treasurer:	Fran Siska	47 Salvatore Drive	Westfield	01085	562-4998
Directors:					
	Cory Andros	139 N. Blandford Rd.	Blandford	01008	231-4330
	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
	Allan Guagliardo	72 Colony Circle	Westfield	01085	568-4770
	Timblin Judy	15 Lake Shore Drive	Southwick	01077	569-9018
	Kathy Meyer	39 Rachael Terrace	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	Allan Ouimet	16 Russell Rd.	Westfield	01085	539-0964
	George Reichert	75 Blair Road	Blandford	01008	848-2074
	Aaron Reyes	100 Park Drive	Westfield	01085	572-8380
	Phillip Sousa	29 Yankee Circle	Westfield	01085	568-3982
	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467
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