

The

SUMMER 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

It's been a hot summer in the Watershed in more ways than one.

On the positive side, WRWA members have been busy working for the good of the watershed on a number of hot projects. Working side by side with dedicated scouts and their parents, we stenciled storm drains and handed out literature to homeowners in Westfield. Mike Young and other volunteers picked up where they left off last year in measuring bridges and culverts throughout the watershed. The resulting database will be used to ensure that correct structures for aquatic life passage are included in road projects. I continued my efforts to reduce trash in three turnouts along the Westfield River with weekly clean ups and the addition of trash bags dispensers. Along with members of Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway and the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee, I helped design and install an informational sign that is in the Rout 20 turnout in Huntington across from the Health Center. Henry Warchol and other dedicated volunteers manned the fish ladder and eelway in West Springfield.

Speaking of hot..... public reaction to "Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55" continues to be overwhelming. Over 1,000 copies have either been given free to non-profit organizations or sold at cost to members of the public!! People swarmed to showings at our symposium and at the Westfield Public Library. Local papers wrote numerous articles about the flood and our video. As a testament to the quality of this video, WGBY (Channel 57) will air it during primetime on Thursday, September 8 at 9:00 p.m.

Also heating up is public concern over a proposed Biomass Plant in Russell. While WRWA hasn't taken a position on the issue, we do have a task force studying it. If you have any thoughts, for or against, please let me know.

Please join me in extending WRWA's thanks to Dan Call, who resigned from our Board after many years of dedicated service.

Stay cool.

Kathy Meyer,
President

**Nearly 300 Attend Annual
Fishway Open House**

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Storm Water Education Update

By Kathy Meyer and Joan Pearsons

Thanks to WRWA members Gabe Khatchadorian, Bill Rose, Mark Damon, Dianne Crowell, Kathy Meyer, Joan Pearsons, Henry Warchol, Carl Grobe, Mike Young, scouts from Pack 110 and Pack 410- Den 3 and their parents for helping to stencil 178 storm drains and pass out literature to about 800 homes in Westfield. The grassroots efforts by these volunteers are critical in educating members of the public about storm water runoff and what they can do to prevent water pollution.

With help from Massachusetts Community Water Watch (MCWW), we expanded this year's storm water education program to Westfield State College. Westfield State College students comprise about 10% of the population of the City of Westfield, so it is important to tailor information on this important subject to them. MCWW volunteers developed a storm water handout in the form of a bookmark they distributed to 2,900 students and about 80 – 90 students attended information sessions featuring the video "After the Storm".

A special thanks to The Riverways Program of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game who funded this year's Storm Water Education Program.

Volunteers Needed to Hand-Pull Japanese Stiltgrass in the West Springfield Area

Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*), a recent arrival in Massachusetts, is an invasive species that can have a devastating effect on both endangered and common plants in floodplain communities. Already widespread in the southern United States, stiltgrass has been found in Massachusetts. Efforts are underway to control stiltgrass before it becomes well established in New England. The New England Wild Flower Society (NEWFS) hopes to prevent its future expansion into New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine.

Thanks to Susan MacIntosh, Mike Young, and Ron Lucassen for helping Kathy Meyer clean trash from turnouts along the Westfield River.

Within Mittineague Park in West Springfield, NEWFS volunteers have reduced stiltgrass infestations by 80% by hand-pulling plants within the past few years. Similar events are scheduled in 2005 at sites along the Westfield River and others, in Milville, MA (near the RI border) and Longmeadow, MA (on the CT border). This species is an annual and can be easily controlled if infestations are caught early. You are likely to get wet during this project, as volunteers will be wading along the river shore. Consider it a great way to cool off on a hot day!



September 12 & 13 - West Springfield, MA
September 14 & 15 - Longmeadow, MA

For more information, or to sign up for a few hours or a few days, contact Chris Mattrick, IPANE Volunteer Coordinator at 508-877-7630, ext. 3203 or email at cmattrick@newfs.org

Thank you, Dan!

WRWA offers its thanks to Dan Call who recently resigned from our Board after many years of service.



A & D Hydro – West Springfield Fish Ladder and Eelway

By Henry Warchol

The last two years, the number of Atlantic salmon coming up the Westfield River's fish ladder has doubled each year. This year, 2005, the number more than doubled to 25 sea run salmon. Another positive note is that there's a new eelway installed at the facility that is working very well. It was put in place by Alex Haro and his helpers and was funded by a grant awarded to the Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC).

The WRWA would like to thank this year's volunteers that monitored the fishway and are presently monitoring the eelway. Many thanks go to dependable Leon Pothier, Stan Gula, Tom Bertrand and his father, John Sinton, Bill Rose, Tom Eaton and Diane Crowell.

Fishway Open House

By Kathy Meyer

About 280 people attended our June 5 Open House at the West Springfield Fish ladder and Eelway. The chance to view an adult salmon captured that morning was the highlight of the day, although visitors also spotted numerous other fish such as shad and eels going through the fish ladder on this very warm and sunny day. Thanks to Gabe Khatchadourian for organizing the event and to these other WRWA members who joined me in greeting and guiding our visitors: Mike Young, Mark Damon, Leon Pothier, Joan Pearsons, Henry Warchol.

New Sign in Huntington

By Kathy Meyer

Next time you drive on Highway 20 in Huntington, be sure to stop and see the new information sign in the rest area across from the Huntington Medical Center. The sign, a collaborative effort involving the Westfield River Watershed Association, Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee and the Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway, Inc., highlights the Wild and Scenic areas of the Westfield River and identifies points of interest within the watershed and along Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway (Highway 20).

The Riverways Program provided funding for this sign and Shaun Hayes of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission designed it. Photography from area residents including Steve and Linda Hamlin, Doug James, Glenn Corbierre, Chris Curtis and Kathy Meyer add visual appeal to the sign.

UPCOMING FALL TALKS

"Atlantic salmon in New England: Status, Conservation and Research"

Stephen McCormick, a USGS researcher at the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center in Turner's Falls and an Adjunct Professor in the Biology Department at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst will speak on Tuesday, November 15 at 7:00 P.M. (exact location to be determined in September) on the campus of Westfield State College. Dr. McCormick has provided the following brief outline of his talk: Atlantic salmon were once highly abundant in all of the large rivers of New England. In the Connecticut River and other rivers of southern New England, dam construction and habitat loss were responsible for their extirpation in the mid-1800's. Restoration efforts begun thirty years ago have met with limited success. In Downeast Maine, Atlantic salmon were abundant until the

mid-1970's when populations began to decline, resulting in their listing as an endangered species in 2000. In his talk, Dr. McCormick will review the status of Atlantic salmon in New England and describe current restoration and conservation efforts. He will also present some of our research on the impacts of dams, acid rain and pollution on Atlantic salmon, focusing on the downstream migratory (smolt) stage.

"Westfield and the River - Hazards and Opportunities"

Robert Brown, Professor Emeritus from the History Department at Westfield State College, will talk about the history of Westfield and its river on Thursday, October 13 at 7:00 P.M. in the Rand Gallery of the Westfield Athenaeum. Dr. Brown has provided the following brief outline of the talk: American development depended upon rivers and streams to provide both highways to the interior and power for the proto-industrial economy. The history of Westfield was no different. Original settlement at the conflux of the Westfield and Little Rivers was followed in 1668 by the first water-powered mill. In 1697 the first dam and mill was placed on the Westfield River and by ten years later, there were water powered mills on every stream in the Westfield Valley. The river, however, was also a source of danger. At least 20 major floods struck the community in the last 300 years with those of 1868, 1879, 1927, 1936, 1938 and 1955 doing the most damage. Westfield's watershed continues to offer both promise and threat in the 21st century.

A HARD LESSON

By Susan McIntosh

We have been having some tumultuous talk in Huntington about public access to the East Branch of the Westfield River.

There's a small park, called Hillgate Park, off Route 112 in downtown Huntington. It has some grass, some woods, some ruins of an old mill, and a lot of riverfront. For some years, the Selectboard and Conservation Commission (of which I am Chair) have tried to think of ways to make the park more useful and interesting to the

general public. We considered restoring the picnic tables that used to be there and also laying out some short interpretive trails to inform visitors about natural and historical features.

Lacking both funds and expertise for the trails, we went looking for grants. And lacking expertise in writing grant applications, we looked for a grant writer. We found one at the Hampshire Council of Governments, a county organization dedicated to serving the needs of member communities. The grant writer was not able to secure funding for any of our ideas. The only thing she achieved, was a proposal from the Public Access Board of the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife to construct a fishing and boating access. Then she quit.

Although it was not what we originally intended, it seemed a good idea. At no expense to our town, the PAB would upgrade an existing parking area and footpath to make access easier for canoeing, kayaking and fishing. It was a purpose compatible with the town's long-range economic plan to foster small business based on sports and recreation. And once the access was established, it might be easier to obtain grants for the other ideas. So the Selectboard entered into an agreement with the PAB to proceed.

Upon learning about the project, a number of Huntington residents expressed their fear that the improved access would attract "undesirables" who would come in large numbers to trash the park and pollute the river. Their objections became more strident during three public meetings in June and July. Seeking support for the proposal, I finally did what I should have done much earlier--talked with people who are active canoeists and kayakers, familiar with the river. They were not concerned about people visiting from out of town, but they pointed out that Hillgate Park is not a good place to put in a boat. That is the section toward the end of the expert course in the whitewater races, a section known as "the boulders." Enough said. A person who knows the water would not choose to put in there, and someone unfamiliar with the river would enter at considerable risk during high water. During the rest of the year, there is not usually enough water to allow boating.

As of this writing in mid-August, the future of the public access is uncertain. But whatever the outcome, I have learned a valuable three-part lesson about public projects:

(1) Early on, when you have the first glimmer of an idea about the project, talk informally with local residents. There are people who know more than you do, and they can offer good suggestions. You may want to reject racist, exclusionary remarks, but you will know about them and be ready to deal with them in public meetings.

(2) Also seek advice from people who know the land and the water. They can help you understand the practical details of the proposed use.

(3) Even if someone else is providing the funds, be prepared to spend many hours in research, discussion and negotiation. There's still no such thing as a free lunch.

I'd be glad to hear from anyone who wants to share experiences or offer advice. I'm in Huntington at 78 County Road, telephone 413-667-8893.



Shatterack Mountain Hike

Date & Time: Sunday, November 6, 9am – 2pm

Leaders: Tom & Nancy Condon

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

Meeting Place: Westfield State Commuter Parking Lot

Rising up over the village of Russell is Shatterack Mountain. The views from the peak offer spectacular vistas of the Westfield River and the surrounding mountains. A short, but steep, descent will bring us to Shatterack Brook which we will trace back to near its source on the mountain. Stopping along the trail, we will discuss the signs of reforestation from recent

fire, fall tree identification, and the strategies of wildlife as they prepare for the coming winter. This hike is for experienced hikers. In places the going can be rough. Although we will travel at a casual pace, there will be times when significant elevation is gained and lost in a short distance. Please wear appropriate footwear, dress for the weather, pack a lunch, and carry plenty of water.

Looking for other trails in the watershed? Try one of these locations:

AMC Noble View in Russell

The Appalachian Trail in Washington & Becket

Chester Blandford State Park in Chester & Blandford

Chesterfield Gorge in Chesterfield

Gardner State Park in Huntington

Granville State Forest in Granville

Huntington State Forest in Huntington & Montgomery

J.J. Kelly Wildlife Management Area in Chester

Keystone Arch Bridges Trail in Chester & Middlefield

Knightville Dam Recreation Area in Huntington

Littleville Dam Recreation Area in Huntington & Chester

M-M Trail in Agawam, Westfield, W. Springfield, Holyoke

Mittineague Park in West Springfield

Notchview Reservation in Windsor

October Mountain State Park in Washington & Becket

Robinson State Park in Westfield & Agawam

Stanley Park in Westfield

Walnut Hill WMA in Middlefield

Westfield Riverside Trail in Westfield

Windsor State Forest in Windsor & Savoy

Westfield River Clean Ups

WRWA will be conducting our annual Westfield River fall clean-ups this October. Our first clean-up will take place on **Saturday, October 1** from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Our second fall clean-up along the Westfield River will take place on **Saturday, October 15**, also from 9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Contact Gabe Khatchadourian at 568-3005 for more information. Come help make the river a cleaner place!

THANK YOU!

The WRWA gratefully acknowledges the support of the following business and professional members:

Carpet Ends
(Westfield, MA)

Puffer Printing
(Westfield, MA)

China Star Restaurant
(Westfield, MA)

Town of Russell
(Russell, MA)

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

Town of Southwick Conservation
Commission (Southwick, MA)

Elm Industries, Inc.
(West Springfield, MA)

United Bank
(West Springfield, MA)

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

Wal-Mart
(Westfield, MA)

Hull Forestlands, L.P.
(Pomfret Center, CT)

Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory
Committee

Huntington Conservation Commission
(Huntington, MA)

Woronoco Hydro, L.L.C.
(Hamilton, MA)

The Nature Conservancy
(Becket, MA)

Worthington Assembly
(Worthington, MA)

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
(West Springfield, MA)

NOT YET A MEMBER?

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.

**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
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 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
Rich Bucklelew	150 Hillside Road 26	Westfield, MA	01085	
William Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	01030	

Honorary Director

Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050
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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 DelMonte is the editor of The Watershed News.
Please forward comments or suggestions to mdelmonte@comcast.net.