

The

WINTER 2005

# WatershedNews

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

## The President's Message

2005 couldn't be off to a better start!

Thanks to generous time contributions from WRWA member Jack Hayward and Mark St. Jean of the Westfield State College Communications Department, and a grant from the City of Westfield, we'll be commemorating the flood of 1955 with the creation of a documentary, *Five Feet and Rising: the Flood of '55*. On top of that, we received three grants from the Massachusetts Riverways Program to carry out other projects that are discussed in a separate article.

I hope to see many of you at the ambitious slate of programs put together by our hardworking Board of Directors. If you want to work to improve our local environment, you could help Mike Young measure bridges and culverts or work with the ASERP program in local schools, stencil storm drains with Joan Pearsons, stock salmon fry with us this spring, or join me to pick up trash in turnouts along Highway 20. If fun is on your spring and summer agenda, join Mike Vorwerk on our Westfield River Canoe Cruise or come to the Second Annual Fly Fishing Derby organized by Gabe Khatchadourian. If learning more about our beautiful watershed interests you, come to one of the outings offered by Tom Condon or the Fishway Open House coordinated by Gabe Khatchadourian

By all means, come to our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Westfield River Symposium that will be held on Saturday, April 2. Join us as we celebrate the "Wild and Scenic" designation of an additional 38 miles of the Westfield River and view the premier of our own *Five Feet and Rising: the Flood of '55*. We are delighted that Congressman John Olver who was instrumental in the "Wild and Scenic" designation process tentatively agreed to be our keynote speaker this year.

Kathy Meyer,  
President

**11<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Westfield River  
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## Thank You, Dave!

Our thanks to long-time Board Member and former WRWA President Dave Pardoe, who recently resigned from the Board.

## ***Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55***

By Jack Haywood

HELP! That one word in the Westfield Fire Department log for August 20, 1955 said it all. By then, an exhausted Westfield had survived torrential rains, rampaging floods, and the death of two residents. Hurricanes Connie and Diane hit the area with more than 24 inches of rain in less than a week, causing the Westfield River, Little River, and Powdermill River to top their banks and inundate much of the town. Water was 20 feet deep on North Main Street, lower sections of Stevens Paper Mill were destroyed by water from a breached levee and a wall of water and debris from a broken dam flooded the Clay Hill section of town, devastating Sterling Radiator in the process.

*Five Feet and Rising; the Flood of '55*, a video documentary produced by the Westfield River Watershed Association and Hayward Communications, is the story of three horrendous days in August of 1955 as told by the people who lived through them. The producers conducted more than 40 interviews and pored through more than 200 private photographs and reels of film donated by generous residents of Westfield and surrounding towns, as well as the Westfield Athenaeum.

Television production services for the documentary are being provided by the Westfield State College Department of Communications. A grant from the Westfield Community Preservation Committee will help ensure that this important story is captured for all time.

The documentary is currently in production with a goal of premiering it as part of the Westfield River Symposium on April 2, 2005 at Westfield State College. Subsequent public showings, including repeated airings on Comcast Cable's public access channel, are in the planning phase and the WRWA has approached the Westfield School System about using the documentary in its classroom activities.

The flood of 1955 remains in the hearts and minds of the people of Westfield. *Five Feet and Rising; the Flood of '55* is our way honoring them and serves as a reminder of the delicate

balance that exists between the watershed and the people who enjoy its bounties.

## **WRWA Receives Four Grants**

By Kathy Meyer

Thanks to four grants WRWA received in 2005, we will be doing some exciting projects this year. These grants are:

- \$3,000 from the City of Westfield for the documentary *Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55*
- \$1,550 from the Riverways Program for Storm Drain Stenciling
- \$600 from the Riverways Program for Trash Bag Dispensers along Route 20
- \$2,000 from the Riverways Program for a sign in Huntington along Route 20

1) *Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55* – The \$3,000 from the Community Preservation Act provided by the City of Westfield will be used for out-of-pocket expenses to produce and to distribute this documentary to schools, libraries and others. This grant, along with donations of time and service by Jack Hayward (Hayward Communications) and Mark St. Jean (Westfield State College Communications Department) that are valued at over \$20,000, make this project possible. We hope you'll join us at the premier of *Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55* on April 2 at the Symposium.

2) Storm Drain Stenciling – This grant enables us to continue the storm drain stenciling project in Westfield begun last year and headed by WRWA Board Member Joan Pearsons. Partnering with the WaterWatch Program at Westfield State College (WSC), we also will conduct a Storm Water Management Education Program at WSC. The 3,500 students at WSC constitute an important part of our community and this program will spread the message to WSC students.

3) Trash Bag Dispensers – To deal with trash from picnickers, we will place trash bag dispensers with signage in Spanish and English at three turnouts along Highway 20 adjacent to the Westfield River. We will clean up any trash that is generated and replenish trash bags on a

weekly basis throughout the summer. Hopefully, this will help with an ongoing trash problem at these locations.

4) Westfield River/Jacob's Ladder Trail Sign – In partnership with the Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway, Inc. and the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee, we will design an informational sign about the "Wild and Scenic" Westfield River and Jacob's Ladder Trail (Highway 20). This sign, which will educate people about the unique natural beauty of our watershed, will be placed in the turnout in Huntington along Highway 20. The Massachusetts Highway Department has agreed to let us place the sign in an existing case that has been empty for several years.



We could use help implementing these grants. If you'd be interested in working with us on the storm drain stenciling, trash bag dispenser or sign grants, please contact me at 568-4252.

### Upcoming Outdoor Programs

**Saturday, April 30th** – The Allen Bird Club is hosting a half-day birding walk in Stanley Park that's free and open to the public. This walk will focus on warblers, thrushes, and vireos and will be led by John Hutchinson (562-3976). Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the tennis courts in Stanley Park, off Western Avenue in Westfield (across from the new WSC Athletic Facility).

**Sunday, May 8th** – The Allen Bird Club is hosting a half-day birding walk in Robinson State Park (Agawam) that's free and open to the public. This walk will focus on warblers, tanagers and thrushes and will be led by John Hutchinson (562-3976). Meet at 7:30 a.m. on Colemore St. opposite the North St. entrance to the park.

### **TO OUR MEMBERS:**

If you have already renewed your membership, or have recently joined the WRWA, we thank you for your support! If you have not yet renewed your membership, please don't forget! We are depending on you!!

If you need a membership application, please contact Carl Grobe, Membership Director, at 572-5304 or [cgrobe@wsc.ma.edu](mailto:cgrobe@wsc.ma.edu).



### **2005 Fly Fishing Derby**

By Gabe Khatchadourian

Last year, when I thought of organizing a fly fishing derby, I was very pleased to see so much enthusiasm among WRWA members. Our inaugural Derby was a success. This year I am hoping we will have a better turnout. The Derby will be held on May 22 on the same stretch of the Westfield River which is from Foggy's heavy equipment to the Whipperton pullout on Rt. 20. In order to have a successful derby, we have to seek more help in the form of physical and financial help. I am looking for prizes from businesses and private contributors. Your help in soliciting some business is crucial to the success of this year's derby. So, if you want to help please contact me at [dorian.gabe@verizon.net](mailto:dorian.gabe@verizon.net) or 413-231-2798.

## **Annual Membership Meeting and Dinner**

By Kathy Meyer

This year's annual membership meeting and dinner will be held on Thursday, May 19 at the School Street Bistro in Westfield. Our sit down dinner will include appetizers, salad, vegetable, potato, choice of four entrees, dessert, coffee and tea. Following dinner, Glenn Corbiere of Chester will show his beautiful photos of dragonflies and damselflies and talk about the lives of these graceful and fascinating insects. For a sneak preview of Glenn's photos, visit his website at [www.dragonhunter.net](http://www.dragonhunter.net).

We will be having something special to honor Dave Pardoe, who recently resigned from the WRWA Board of Directors after many years of service. We hope you will be able to join us.

## **LETTERS NEEDED IN SUPPORT OF SALMON RESTORATION**

By Mike Young

Janice Rowan, Connecticut River Coordinator for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, gave a presentation on the Connecticut River Migratory Fish Restoration Program to an audience of 25-30 at Westfield State in late January. Her presentation focused on some of the successes of the program, and during the questions following the presentation she made a plea for public support of the program in Congress. The restoration program, which includes several other species in addition to Atlantic salmon, has played a role in increasing the numbers of anadromous fish in the Connecticut River, has provided another incentive to keep our rivers clean, and has spawned a very successful educational program (ASERP), which WRWA has sponsored in local schools for the past five years. However, low returns of adult Atlantic salmon in the Connecticut River over the past several years have raised questions about the feasibility of the restoration project for that species. Those low returns are not unique to the Connecticut River Basin though; returns of Atlantic salmon have been low in rivers flowing into the North Atlantic throughout North America

and Europe. At this point scientists do not understand where the difficulty (or difficulties) lie, whether in the freshwater streams in which young salmon hatch out and spend their first year or two, or in the oceans, where adult salmon feed and grow before returning to their natal rivers to spawn. A variety of research projects have been proposed to try to answer these questions, but those answers will take time. In the meantime, proposed funding cuts for the program threaten to eliminate it entirely, likely putting a permanent end to attempts to reintroduce salmon into the Connecticut River. I, for one, would like to understand whether or not the goal of salmon restoration is truly unreachable before discarding the years of effort that have been put into establishing the facilities and expertise that might make it possible. If you agree, please contact your Representative and Senators in Congress, and indicate your support for the program. Your letters really can make a difference!

I have a note from Janice Rowan that includes more specifics about the FY2006 budget requests for the program and "talking points" to use in letters. I'd be glad to email it to anyone who would like more information. Send your request to [myoung@wsc.ma.edu](mailto:myoung@wsc.ma.edu).

### **Volunteers Needed for Earth Day Cleanup**

Sponsored by the Town of West Springfield & Mayor Edward Gibson

Saturday, April 23, 2005 from 9:00 AM - 3:00 P.M. – Rain or Shine! For details, contact the West Springfield Conservation Commission at: 263-3203. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Bring waterproof boots, work gloves, and a desire to help clean the environment!



## 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WESTFIELD RIVER SYMPOSIUM – April 2

By Mike Young

The 2005 Westfield River Symposium will be held on Saturday, April 2 in the Savignano Auditoriums (Wilson Hall) at Westfield State College, with registration from 8:00-8:30 a.m. and the program beginning at 8:30 a.m. The symposium is free and open to the public, so bring your friends! The theme for this year's symposium is "Land + River + People: Balancing the Equation" and John Olver, U.S. Representative for Western Massachusetts is the invited keynote speaker. Three concurrent sessions will run during the morning, with 45 minute presentations (beginning at 9:45, 10:45 and 11:45) punctuated by 15 minute breaks during which attendees can move between rooms and view poster displays from approximately 20-25 exhibitors.

2005 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the devastating Westfield River floods of August, 1955, and a highlight of this year's symposium will be the first screening of a new video – *Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55* produced by Jack Hayward in cooperation with WRWA. The film includes a number of interviews with Westfield residents recalling their experiences of the 1955 event – the largest recorded flood in Westfield's history. Ed Klekowski, professor of biology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, will also be showing his EMMY-award nominated film "The Great Flood of 1936 – The Connecticut River Story", which has been aired on dozens of PBS stations around the country. Richard Little, professor emeritus of geology at Greenfield Community College and a leader of wide-ranging geological excursions, will be giving an overview of the geologic story of the Westfield River and Robert Brown, professor emeritus of history at Westfield State College, will give an historical perspective on the

development of Westfield and the opportunities and hazards associated with the town's riverside location.

Other speakers will provide updates on a number of current projects that link the river to its neighbors: Carrie Banks, of the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee, will provide the details of the recent expansion of the Wild & Scenic designation for some upper reaches of the Westfield River; Alison Bowden, of The Nature Conservancy, will report on the status of the stream connectivity project that WRWA is working on with TNC; and Jim Lyons, Town Engineer for West Springfield, will provide information on storm runoff and the storm drain stenciling program that WRWA has been implementing in West Springfield and Westfield over the past year.

Those who would like to get out in the watershed during the afternoon will be able to attend either of two field trips: Carrie Banks will lead a tour of some of the river sections included in the new Wild & Scenic designation, and Tom Wisnaukas, of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, will lead a tour of the two large flood control dams on the upper Westfield River. This year's symposium is sponsored by WRWA, Westfield State College, and Westfield Gas & Electric. All in all, this promises to be one of the best symposia ever, and we hope that you'll be able to attend. The full program, updated as new information becomes available, can be accessed at [www.westfieldriver.org](http://www.westfieldriver.org).

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!

APRIL						
M	T	W	TH	F	S	SU
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

### SPRING OUTINGS

### Falling Waters Hike

Date and Time: Saturday, March 26, 9am to 3pm Leaders: Tom and Nancy Condon  
Registration: Please call 413-564-0895 to register, so if bad weather forces cancellation, we can contact you. Meeting Place: Commuter Parking Lot, Westfield State College.

As the snows of winter melt away, the rivers rise in a torrent. Come join the club and explore a few of the prettier streams throughout the Westfield River watershed. We'll visit some well-known and little known waterfalls and share in their turbulent beauty. This is mostly a driving tour with stop for short walks to scenic locations. Dress for the weather. Bring lunch, water and a camera if you wish.

### Stanley Park Wildflower Stroll

Date: Sunday, May 15<sup>th</sup>  
Time: 9:00 – 12:00 Leaders: Nancy & Tom Condon (413-564-0895) Registration: Please call Nancy or Tom to sign-up Meeting Place: Stanley Park, near Ed Piela Wildflower Garden.

Is it a Jack-in-the-Pulpit or a Jill? Did you know that this species of flower can change sex from year to year? Do you know which gender takes more energy? Come find out during an enlightening springtime stroll to reveal the wildflowers along the trails at Stanley Park in Westfield. Distance covered will be minimal since we will be stopping frequently. Brush up not only on identification of the flowers we see, but learn something of the origin of their names, medicinal purposes or interesting pollination strategies. There is more to a wildflower than meets the eye! Wear sturdy walking shoes. Bring wildflower guide, binoculars, and/or hand-lens if you wish. Heavy rain cancels.



### Springtime Hike: M - M Trail, Section 3

Date: Sunday, June 5  
Time: 9:00 – 2:00  
Leader: Nancy & Tom Condon  
Registration: Please call Nancy or Tom to sign-up (413-564-0895) Meeting

Place: Westfield Wal-Mart parking lot – towards the back.

This seldom-used trail section takes us from the Pioneer Valley Rod & Gun Club in Westfield to the Mass Pike in the span of about 3 miles. It will be a “yo-yo” hike, in which we will “about-face” for our return trip, for a total hike length of about 6 miles. Initially, we will walk along the edge of huge Lane Quarry, then stroll beneath a grove of protective Eastern Hemlock, and also encounter beautiful sentinels of red oak in a handsome hardwood forest. The trail is not well maintained, so expect to hurdle fallen trees and encounter rocks and logs hidden under leaves on the trail, so ankle-supporting footwear is necessary. Join us for this little known section of trail with water, a lunch, binoculars, and a spirit of adventure. Heavy rain cancels.

### **Board of Directors Annual Retreat**

By Kathy Meyer

“Where was WRWA five years ago? Where would we like WRWA to be five years from now?” In exploring these poignant questions at its annual planning meeting on Saturday, January 22, the Board of Directors agreed that WRWA continues to be on target in fulfilling the mission to “make the Westfield River Watershed a better place in which to live” by restoration, conservation, education, research, and working with other groups to this end.

In looking at changes that have taken place in the watershed over the last five years such as decreases in state and federal funding for environmental matters, increased development pressures, the stronger presence of other environmental organizations and the disappointing return rates of migratory fish, the Board identified three goals for the next five years.

First, we would like to see a stronger focus on children. Second, we want to explore additional funding sources so that we may be able to hire a professional staff person to guide the organization through an increasingly complex environment. Third, we fully support the Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program and especially support research on migratory fish.

We will be offering more educational programs to keep WRWA abreast of research on Atlantic Salmon and other migratory fish, so expect to see more speakers on this important subject. We are forming committees to work on the child focus and funding issues. Our Board members will provide leadership for these committees, but we need and welcome other WRWA members to serve on these committees. If you have expertise or interest in these areas and want to become involved, please contact me.

### **FISHWAY GUIDE SEASONAL JOB OPPORTUNITY**

Northeast Utilities is hiring 5 fulltime fishway guides for Turners, MA and Holyoke, MA. The workweek is Wednesday through Sunday, plus holidays, 8:45 – 5:15 a.m. The position lasts from April 21 through June 21. Compensation is \$400 per week. Application deadline is March 14. For further information, contact Kim Noyes at 413 659-4462.

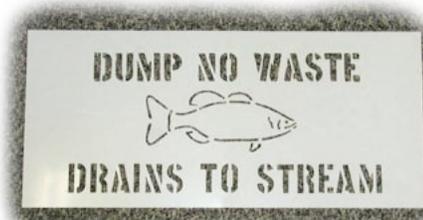
### **Upcoming Events**

Monday - Saturdays, April and May - exact dates to be determined. **Salmon Fry Stocking** on the Westfield River and tributaries. Contact Kathy Meyer at 568-4252.

Thursday, May 19 6:00 p.m.  
**Westfield River Watershed Annual Dinner Meeting** at School Street Bistro in Westfield. For WRWA members and their guests only. Contact Kathy Meyer at 568-4252.

Mondays, June 31 - September 6 at 9:00 a.m.  
**Trash in the Turnouts:** Kathy Meyer will be coordinating weekly cleanups of the Rt. 20 turnouts in Russell and Huntington during the summer months. Contact Kathy Meyer at 568-4252 to sign up for a date.

June 4 – August 27, Friday or Saturday mornings. **Storm Drain Stenciling.** We'll be continuing our successful storm drain stenciling program in Westfield and West Springfield. Contact Joan Pearsons at 736-5208 for more information.



Sunday, June 5 West Springfield **Fish Ladder Open House:** The fish ladder will be open to the public. Contact Gabe Khatchadourian at 568-3005 for more information.

Sunday, June 12 at noon: **Canoe Trip** on the Westfield River from downtown Westfield to Robinson State Park. Contact Mike Vorwerk at 572-5305.

Saturdays, October 1 and October 15 at 9:00 a.m. **Westfield River Clean Ups.** Contact Gabe Khatchadourian at 568-3005 for more information.

**For further information, visit our website at  
[www.westfieldriver.org](http://www.westfieldriver.org)**

The WRWA gratefully acknowledges the memberships of the following businesses and organizations for 2005:

**China Star Restaurant**

**Puffer Printing**

**The Nature Conservancy**

**Town of Russell**

**D.L. Bean, Inc.**

**Woronoco Hydro, LLC.**

If YOU would like to join the WRWA, please contact Carl Grobe, Membership Director, at 572-5304 or [cgrobe@wsc.ma.edu](mailto:cgrobe@wsc.ma.edu).

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***Do You Know Someone  
Who Has Helped To  
Preserve Our Watershed?***

***The Westfield River Watershed Association is seeking nominations for the***

***WAITE AWARD***

This annual award recognizes and honors an individual who has contributed to the betterment or preservation of the Westfield River Watershed. This year's award will be presented at the WRWA Annual meeting on May 19th. We are accepting nominations through April 15th. Nominees do not need to be members of WRWA. We are looking for grassroots people who have helped our local environment in some way. Self-nominations are welcome.

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**Waite Award Nomination Form**

**Name of Person Nominated:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons for Nomination:** (attach additional sheets if necessary)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Your Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Your Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Return by April 15 to: Westfield River Watershed Association  
P.O. Box 1764  
Westfield, MA. 01086-1764

**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**

<b>Officers</b>					
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
Director, Special Projects	Daniel Call	7 Wynnfields Circle	Southwick	01077	569-9677
Treasurer	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
Secretary	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467

<b>Directors</b>					
	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

**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](http://www.westfieldriver.org).**



Matt DeMonte is the editor of The Watershed News.  
Please forward comments or suggestions to [mdelmonte@comcast.net](mailto:mdelmonte@comcast.net).