

The

WINTER 2006

Watershed News

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

The President's Message

What's so special about the Westfield River Watershed? And who thinks it's special, besides me?

Recently three large organizations made major commitments that affirm the value they place on our watershed.

"Saving the Last Great Places on Earth" is the motto of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and they're undertaking a major effort within the Westfield River Watershed. TNC established a field office in the watershed, did an extensive scientifically-based study to identify areas for conservation, and developed a plan to protect these places. With all the great places on this Earth to protect, if TNC thinks our watershed is worthy of their efforts, it must be pretty special.

In 2004 the National Park Service expanded the "Wild and Scenic" designation on the Westfield River so that it now covers 78 miles. The Westfield River is one of only two rivers in Massachusetts and six in New England to merit this designation. If one thinks of all the beautiful waterways in the Northeast, it puts in perspective how very special our river is.

In 2005 Westfield State College allocated funds for the Westfield River Environmental Center. The Center encourages students to work on environmental research projects in the watershed and helps local K-12 teachers incorporate hands on environmental science into their curriculum. The outcome will be improved environmental information about our watershed and better classroom experiences for grade school and high school students in the watershed.

As others have come to realize how special our watershed is, we thought this would be an appropriate theme for this year's symposium. We've chosen to highlight the watershed's flora and fauna, historical attractions, and look at what's needed to protect them in the future. Please join us for the 12th

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

12TH Annual Westfield
River Symposium
April 1st

Wild and Scenic Update
Page 2

5-Year Watershed Action Plan Being
Developed
Page 4

NEW Westfield River Environmental
Center
Page 5

Annual Westfield River Symposium entitled "What's So Special About Our Watershed?" on Saturday, April 1.

Kathy Mayer, WRWA President

WILD AND SCENIC UPDATE

By Bob Thompson Chairman, Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee

The Wild and Scenic Committee has been working over the winter months on a variety of projects that will become more active when the weather becomes warmer. The first is a continuation of the East Branch Trails Projects. One of the major efforts has been to replace the dangerous bridges that are along the trail. This summer the Student Conservation Associates Trail Crew will be providing assistance in replacing the damaged bridges. Also, Westfield State students are using GPS units to identify areas along the trail of special concern. It is our hope to generate large format maps to better enjoy, and protect the "special" areas along the Trail.



The Committee is also working with the National Park Service and the Watershed Association on a Stewardship Plan for the upper portions of the watershed. With financial assistance from the Westfield River Watershed Association, an intern has been hired from the Environmental Science Department at Westfield State College. The student intern will be working with the Wild and Scenic Committee, National Park Service, Watershed Association and Westfield State Faculty to develop maps and written descriptions of the "Outstandingly Remarkable" features of Westfield River corridor for each of the 10 towns on the *Wild and Scenic* portions of the Westfield River. A private contractor has also been hired. The contractor will work on a major component in the development of the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Stewardship Plan. The contractor will work with the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee and Westfield River Watershed Association to obtain on-the-ground

information pertaining to the Wild & Scenic features of the Westfield River. The work will include: outreach to town officials and residents; attending a series of ten community meetings in each of the Wild & Scenic Communities; and ultimately -- organizing and managing volunteer Stream Teams to conduct Shoreline Surveys for the three major tributaries the Westfield River (East, Middle, & West Branches).

Anne Capra of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is in the process of creating a Westfield River Five-Year Watershed Action Plan and the Wild and Scenic Committee will be involved with this project.

We are looking forward to the Westfield River Watershed Association's annual Symposium on the first of April. Please stop at the Wild and Scenic booth and find out more of what is taking place within the *Wild and Scenic* designated areas of the watershed.

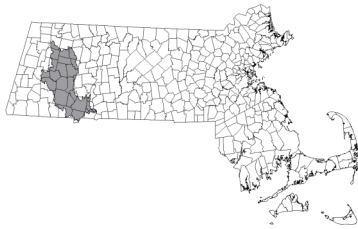
JANUARY PLANNING MEETING

By Mike Young

WRWA's Board of Directors met for three hours on the evening of January 30 to make plans for the coming year. The outcome was general agreement that we want to extend our commitment to priorities identified at a similar meeting in January, 2005: (1) a focus on ways to involve youth in WRWA programming, (2) continued support for the river restoration program that, among other things, has the goal of reestablishing Atlantic Salmon in the Connecticut River watershed, and (3) pursuit of external funding for our organization, with a more explicit goal of hiring a part-time employee.

Bill Rose, chair of our Youth Committee, reported on several links he's trying to establish with local groups connected to young people. There appears to be some interest from those groups in participating in storm

drain stenciling or river cleanup projects. We may also be able to place a revolving exhibit at the new Westfield Children's Museum – though the Board agreed that more information was needed before we could commit to such a project. WRWA has increased its commitment to river restoration by funding equipment for two new Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program (ASERP) systems this year. We now have five schools (Powder Mill Middle School in Southwick, both the South and North Middle Schools in Westfield, Gateway Middle School in Huntington, and the Chester Elementary School) participating in this project, which gives students the chance to raise salmon fry and release them in local streams. We'll also be assisting the state with its much more



ambitious stocking program in April and May. Finally, Bill Toomey reported that the Grants Committee is actively

pursuing funding for a Community Mapping program, a well-established program that involves communities in identifying and mapping features of natural, cultural, or historical value in their areas. The funding requests will include money for salary for a part-time employee who would oversee the project.

The Board also heard about two major planning efforts that are under way in our watershed. Anne Capra, of the Pioneer Valley Planning Council (PVPC), reported on the development of a Five-Year Westfield River Watershed Plan for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. That document will guide state funding for projects in the watershed over the next half-decade. PVPC, in partnership with WRWA and an environmental engineering firm, has been awarded the state contract to produce the plan. Several meetings will be held to allow public input to the plan, which will be completed by the end of the June. Check the WRWA

website (www.westfieldriver.org) for preliminary versions of the document as they become available. The National Park Service is also in the process of creating a Stewardship Plan for the ten communities that are home to sections of the river that have been designated "Wild & Scenic". Meetings will be held in each of those ten communities to allow the public to comment on initial drafts of that document. Those meetings will be held this spring and early summer.

Finally, a review of WRWA's finances and a budget for 2006 were discussed. Last year proved to be a very successful one for us financially, with sales of the "Five Feet and Rising" video and several large donations resulting in an increase of our net worth by several thousand dollars. The 2006 budget includes many familiar programs and increased funding for the Youth Committee – it promises to be an exciting year!

FISH LADDER MONITORING

By Henry Warchol

The West Springfield Fish Ladder, formerly DSI, is now the property of A&D Hydro. The fish Ladder in West Springfield may need volunteers to monitor and record the different species of fish and trap the migrating adult salmon. These salmon are transported to the fish hatchery for their eggs that, in turn, are hatched into fry that are then distributed into the upper reaches of the Westfield River and its tributaries. A three-hour commitment period on Saturdays or Sundays is requested of volunteers. Monitoring starts in May until the end of June with possible fall monitoring in September and October. An American eel count takes place in the fall. They are netted from a trap, counted, recorded then dumped upstream, requiring much less time. If you would like to volunteer please contact WRWA volunteer Henry Warchol (413) 562-3467 or email <warch@verizon.net>.

FISH LADDER OPEN HOUSE

The target date for the open house at the West Springfield fish ladder is set for Sunday, June 4th 2006 from 10 am to 3 pm. This date is pending approval from A&D Hydro (new owners of the dam and fish ladder) and Fibermark DSI (owners of the parking lot). Caleb Slater of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game has given his approval.

LOOKING FOR A SUMMER JOB?

Life Guards for State Parks and Pools.

\$439.62/week. For further info contact the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of State Parks and Recreation Regional Office in Amherst (413) 784-1756 or Pittsfield (413) 784-1829 or visit <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/1-guard/urban.htm>

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE SORROW (WRWA MEMBER REPORTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE OF KATRINA)

By Katheryn Darrow

I spent most the fall semester with my students, reading about and discussing Katrina, in great despair. In November I had decided to go and "see for myself". As a freelance journalist I knew I would learn more in the field than I could at the distance of New England. I told my students that I would go – they were in awe. My sons and daughters approved, but were apprehensive about my safety.

I arrived December 30 and was there five days. I walked, I talked, I eavesdropped, I smelled nasty things. I listened to jack hammers and dozers...and music. Impressions filled by brainpan and seeped into my dreams. One woman looked me in the eye and said: "Go home and tell our story."

Originally I wanted to sit in on public meetings tackling subjects of environment restoration, but found out they were not taking place during my stay there. Next best was to describe the roots and branches, jerked, snapped, and stripped of tropical foliage. Southern magnolias and live oaks lay where the hurricane had hurled them, uprooted with gigantic platter of soil and roots standing vertical. Street grates were twisted upright, clutching the sorry trunks like claws. Looking down the side streets one could see a mishmash of standing trees, unscathed, and the giant toothpicks next to them.

My walk through City Park was like a funeral. Home of the largest collection of mature live oaks in the world, the live oaks once proudly standing along the paths were now teetering, half in, half out of their moorings. According to the *Landscape Design*, the club in honor of the alley of oaks now has only one human member and she worries that her tasks exceed her strength and fortitude. One regional editor of the same magazine, Buck Abbey, is from Baton Rouge, hard at work in the long process of botanical triage.

Scientific minds are hard at work, trying to weave science, politics, and money into a coherent whole. "Lots of luck!!" sneer the cynics. First they must win over the bureaucracies, the Corps of Engineers, the EPA, and the host of NGO's. Democracy limps and stumbles amidst such challenges.

WESTFIELD RIVER FIVE-YEAR WATERSHED ACTION PLAN

By Anne Capra, Pioneer Valley Planning
Commission

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, in partnership with the Westfield River Watershed Association and ESS Group, Inc., has been awarded a contract under the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs to develop a five-year watershed action plan for the Westfield River.

Created by watershed partners, the five-year watershed action plan (WAP) will outline

various issues and priority areas over a five-year period, charting a course of action for state agencies, watershed communities, and other decision makers within or related to the watershed. Using results from previous watershed stakeholder work plans and an extensive literature review, the WAP will set the stage for the next five years of watershed protection and management, and will guide state funding priorities within the Westfield River basin.

A project Steering Committee is currently being formed to guide development of the WAP. Current members include The Nature Conservancy, the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, UMass Amherst, and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. In addition, each of the 28 communities in the watershed has been asked to appoint a representative to the Steering Committee.

WRWA members and the general public will have an opportunity to comment on a draft version of the plan at The Westfield River Annual Symposium on April 1.

THE UNIQUE WESTFIELD RIVER ENVIRONMENT SPAWNS A NEW ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

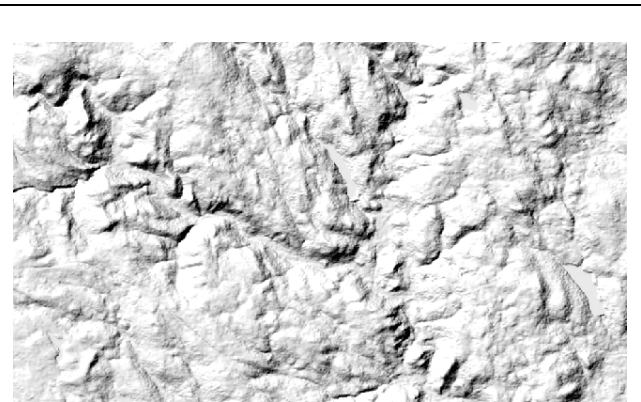
By Michael Vorwerk
WRWA Board of Directors
Associate Professor, Environmental Science,
Westfield State College

Members of the Westfield River Watershed Association are excited about our new partner in the watershed, the **Westfield River Environmental Center** at Westfield State College. The Environmental Center was recently formed by an interdisciplinary group of faculty and administrators as a result of WSC President Carwein's I³ grant program. The goals of the center are to promote environmental research, community

partnerships, GIS applications, and K-12 science education in the watershed.

The unique Westfield River environment offers an outstanding opportunity to fulfill the goals of the center. Much of the land in the watershed is undeveloped, and nearly 80 miles of the Westfield River are designated as Wild and Scenic. The ecosystems in the watershed offer unparalleled opportunities for research by faculty and students at Westfield State College. Students are currently mapping trails on the East Branch of the Westfield River, inventorying plants near the East Branch trail system and studying habitat dynamics of invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and purple loosestrife. The Environmental Center fosters this research by connecting students with environmental partners that have research needs, such as the WRWA, Wild and Scenic Committee, the Trustees of Reservations, and The Nature Conservancy. The Environmental Center also offers research grants to fund the undergraduate research.

The Westfield River Environmental Center will help serve as a community meeting area to encourage community partners and the public to meet and share environmental ideas and information. The Center will also offer a seminar series and publish environmental information on its website.



The confluence of all branches of the Westfield River in Huntington shown in a Digital Elevation Model (DEM), shaded relief

The Environmental Center will foster the use of GIS (geographic information systems) in coursework at Westfield State College. GIS is commonly used in regional planning and environmental science, but it has applications in other majors such as biology (mapping invasive species or endangered species habitat), criminal justice (mapping crimes), and business (mapping markets). Part of the effort will be directed at becoming an authorized GIS learning center and purchasing professional quality GPSs (global positioning systems) for student use.

The K-12 science component is aimed at helping local science teachers incorporate environmental science into their science curriculum. We think that the environment can be used as the integrating theme that connects the sciences, mathematics, and other coursework such as writing, history, and social studies. In coordination with local teachers, the Environmental Center will work toward developing materials that help teachers utilize the environment for labs and hands-on activities for students, while focusing on preparing them for the upcoming MCAS science tests. The Environmental Center will hold a Science Teacher Workshop next summer to further develop the program.

Several WRWA board members are part of the team coordinating the Westfield River Environmental Center, and we think this partnership will be beneficial to the watershed and the community at large. We wish our new watershed partner all the best for the future!

For more information on the Westfield River Environmental Center, check out their website at <http://www.wsc.ma.edu/envcenter>. {This article was first published in Southwood's Magazine}

Westfield River Watershed Art Exhibit

By Karin Cook

During the month of July, the Hilltown Plein Air Painters will be exhibiting their paintings of the Westfield River Watershed at the Jasper Rand

Art Museum of the Westfield Athenaeum. The seven featured artists – Alma LaFrance, Mary Montague, Carolyn Avery, Anne Kusiak, Carol Chandler, Natalie Birrell and Karin Cook – have painted in all seasons at numerous sites along the river. These include Chesterfield Gorge, Knightville Basin, the Keystone Arches, Gardner State Park and views from the highways in Worthington, Chester and Huntington. These places will be identified on a map of the Westfield River Watershed as part of the exhibit.

This exhibit is open to the public free of charge. WRWA members are encouraged to attend and share the artists' portrayal of this precious and beautiful part of Western Massachusetts.



What's So Special about the Westfield River Watershed?

By Kathy Meyer

Find out the answer to this question by coming to the 12th Annual Westfield River Symposium on Saturday, April 1. With the theme "What's So Special about Our Watershed?", the symposium will feature speakers on flora and fauna, historical attractions, and a look at what's needed to keep the watershed healthy in the future. Keynote Speaker Wayne Klockner, State Director of The Nature Conservancy, will explain why TNC is making a huge land preservation commitment to the Westfield River Watershed. Other highlights of the day will include world renown birder Wayne Petersen discussing changing bird populations in New England, Historian Dennis Picard presenting a fascinating program on the General Knox Trail, clips from the new video of the Keystone Arches and discussion of restoration plans, and six other speakers.

Field trips will include a hands-on demonstration of GIS mapping and a short hike to Glendale Falls, one of the natural wonders of the watershed.

Sponsored by the Westfield River Watershed Association, this program is open to the public free of charge, including complimentary continental breakfast. The program will be held in Wilson Hall of Westfield State College with the indoor portion from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and field trips beginning at 2:00 p.m. For further information, visit www.westfieldriver.org or call 532-7290.

8:30 to 9:00 Registration and continental breakfast
9:00 to 10:00 Keynote Address
10:15 to 11:00 Concurrent Speaker Session I (choice of 3 speakers)
11:00 to 11:30 View WSC environmental student projects/ refreshments
11:30 to 12:15 Concurrent Speaker Session II (choice of 3 speakers)
12:20 to 1:05 Concurrent Speaker Session III (choice of 3 speakers)
1:05 to 2:00 Lunch on your own
2:00 Field Trips

WRWA Outdoor Programs Spring 2006

By Tom Condon

East River Trail Hike -*Chesterfield*

Date and Time: Sunday, April 2, 9am – 2pm
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: Westfield State Commuter Parking Lot

The East River Trail begins in Chesterfield Gorge and follows the Westfield River down to Knightsville Dam in Huntington. We'll be following this trail downriver and search for interesting natural sightings. Bring your binoculars to search for the return of early spring birds and perhaps a field guide for wildflowers, should we be so lucky, or mushrooms if the spring is wet.

This hike is for casual hikers, we will travel at a leisurely pace. We have no particular destination or distance in mind. We'll walk as far as people wish and time allows. Please wear appropriate footwear, dress for the weather, pack a lunch, and carry plenty of water.

Spider Hunt -*Westfield*

Date: Sunday, May 28 Time: 10:00 – 12:00
Leader: Nancy Condon (413-564-0895)
Meeting Place: Stanley Park, by the Frank Stanley Beveridge Wildlife area trailhead.
Reservations: Call Nancy

Spiders are fascinating creatures. Were it not for them, our world would be overridden with insects. Come learn a little bit about these invertebrates and participate in a hike to find some. We will stop in a couple of different spots along the trail and perform a variety of collecting techniques. Armed with vials, we'll sift through the leaf litter, tap branches to see who falls out on a collecting tarp, and perhaps set up a Burlese funnel to temporarily collect specimens for inspection. We'll check them out with hand lenses and microscopes to get a close look at the 8 eyes or the combs on the end of the tarsi. Armed with guides and keys, and Nancy's limited but practiced aptitude, we'll figure out who we found, and gain a higher respect for these crafty little fellows.

Come dressed for the weather and for getting down on hands & knees. Gloves may make you feel better about handling spiders, but are not really necessary. An adventurous spirit is all that is required.

WILD AND SCENIC PHOTO CONTEST

The Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee invites you to submit photos of the National Wild & Scenic Westfield River & the remarkable scenic, cultural, historic, recreational and natural resources of the Westfield River Valley. Photos will be exhibited in locations throughout the watershed. Submission of photos releases



images for future use in WRWSAC publications, such as newsletters, postcards, calendars and posters. Prizes to be announced. Submit photos by May 31, 2006. For more information and submittal forms, please call the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee at (413) 268-3129 or visit www.westfieldriver.org

2005 VOLUNTEER THANK YOU!

The WRWA Board of Directors (Kathy Meyer, Mark Damon, Ken Taylor, Mike Young, Tom Condon, Henry Warchol, Joan Pearsons, Carl Grobe, Eileen Rannenber, Bob Thompson, Mike Vowerk, Bill Rose, Bill Toomey) thanks the following people who volunteered their time, energy, and creativity in 2005. In addition, we thank the 50 volunteers who helped us stock salmon fry and the 45 who helped at our annual river clean up.

Stream Connectivity:

Sheryl Becker
Marilyn Bekech
Marj Lehan
Larry Myers-McElwhee
Beth Rothermel

Outings Co-Leader:

Nancy Condon

Membership Coordinator:

Debbie Grobe

Newsletter Editor:

Matt DelMonte

Newsletter Articles:

Susan McIntosh
Katheryn Darrow

ASERP Teachers:

Laura Fisk (Gateway School in Huntington)
Elena Martin (W. Springfield)
Tom Condon (Southwick)
Jeff Collier (South Middle School in Westfield)

Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55:

Jack Hayward
Mark St. Jean

Fish Ladder and Eelway:

Leon Pothier
Stan Gula
Tom Bertrand
John Sinton
Tom Eaton
Diane Crowell

Picking up Trash in Rt. 20 Turnouts:

Susan McIntosh
Julia Santa
Thomas Easton

Stenciling:

Diane Crowell

Fishway Open House Guide:

Leon Pothier

Symposium Volunteer:

Marilyn Bekech

Retired Board Members:

Dan Call
Dave Pardoe
Gabe Khatchadourian

THANK YOU ALL

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.

WRWA Board of Director meetings are held on the fourth Monday of the month at the Geology Museum (3rd floor, Wilson Hall) of Westfield State College. All WRWA members are welcome. Contact Kathy Meyer at 568-4252 for further information. 2006 dates are:

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Monday, March 27 | 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. |
| Monday, April 24 | 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. |
| Monday, May 22 | 7:00 - 8:30 p.m. |

**Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2006
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 | Vacant | | | | |
| Second Vice President | Mark Damon | 54 Pleasant Street | Westfield | 01085 | 572-9991 |
| Treasurer | Kenneth Taylor | 8 Greylock Street | Westfield | 01085 | 562-4947 |
| Secretary | Michael Young | 721 West Road | Westfield | 01085 | 562-8498 |

Directors:

| | | | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-------|----------|
| Henry Warchol | 2 Sackville Road | Westfield | 01085 | 562-3467 |
| 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 |
| William Rose | 39 Sunset Terrace | Feeding Hills | 01030 | |

**Honorary
Director:**

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-------|
| Dave Pardoe | 25 Sampson Road | Huntington | 01050 |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-------|