

The

WINTER 2007

Watershed News

The President's Message

Over the past couple of years there have been more than the usual number of high-profile issues within the watershed. First, there is the ongoing proposal to construct a biomass-burning power plant in Russell - which has stirred considerable controversy. Then, last summer, there was the DCR proposal of a substantial timber harvest in Robinson State Park, which is currently on hold until a number of issues can be clarified.

Another issue that's been in process, but which hasn't received as much publicity is the proposed development of the Westfield Pavilion project just north of the Massachusetts Turnpike and just east of the Barnes Airport in Westfield. This development, as currently envisioned, would include a number of big-box retail stores along with some restaurants and other service businesses. It would entail the creation of nearly 100 acres of impervious surface (parking lots, roadways, and buildings) atop the Barnes Aquifer, which is a significant source of water for the City of Westfield. In its initial form, presented at the MEPA scoping session last summer, it would also have approximately doubled the number of daily vehicle trips in the vicinity of Exit 3 of the Massachusetts Turnpike. A modified proposal, presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) issued in December, 2006, includes the creation of a new eastbound entrance to the Turnpike some distance to the east of the current exit. Access to the Westfield Pavilion site from the existing Exit 3 will be over a new bridge across the Turnpike, just west of the MA State Police barracks - a structure whose cost will apparently be born by the City, in anticipation of increased tax revenues from the Westfield Pavilion businesses. The City is listed as a proponent of the project on the DEIR, a sponsorship that would appear to be at odds with efforts to revitalize the downtown shopping area.

While the new plan for eastbound access to the Turnpike will help to reduce the impacts on traffic at the existing Exit 3, it seems that there are a number of potential concerns about the project. Those include (1) the impacts of stormwater runoff, including possible chemical impacts from oil, gasoline, road salt (or other deicing materials) flowing off all those impervious surfaces into the aquifer, (2) the impacts on the Pond Brook system, which flows through the western portion of the site, and (3) the impacts on the viability of Westfield's downtown business district. I urge you to find out more about this issue, and to raise any concerns you have with your City Councilors.

Meanwhile, please plan to attend the 13th Annual Westfield River Symposium, to be held in the Scanlon Banquet Hall at Westfield State College on Saturday, March 31. You'll find additional information about the symposium, along with information about other upcoming WRWA events throughout this issue.

Best, Mike Young

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SAVE THE DATE

13th Annual River Symposium

The thirteenth annual Westfield River Symposium will be held at Westfield State College on **March 31, 2007**. This year's event will take place in the Scanlon Banquet Hall, which has a much larger and more inviting area for the exhibitors along with a large auditorium that can be partitioned into three separate rooms.

WRWA Joins Clean Water Coalition

By Kathy Meyer

Clean Water Action, a national organization with various efforts to protect our water resources, invited WRWA to join its Massachusetts Coalition for Safe and Affordable Drinking Water. At a national level Clean Water Action launched initiatives to defend water protections currently in place as well as campaigns related to energy/air quality and toxics. In Massachusetts they have campaigns underway related to clean water, toxic hazards, global warming, clean power, zero mercury and recycling of computers.

A representative from Clean Water Action will be at our upcoming symposium to offer more information on their various programs and how all of us can become more involved.

"Water, Woods, and Warming" -13th Annual Westfield River Symposium

By Mike Young

Our annual Westfield River Symposium is scheduled for Saturday, March 31 at Westfield State College, and promises to be a memorable experience. For the first time, we'll be holding the event in the Scanlon Banquet Hall, which provides more accessible space for exhibitors - so when you arrive on campus, be aware that our location will have changed! You can find a map of the campus at http://www.wsc.ma.edu/About_WSC/CampusMap.pdf, with Scanlon Hall being identified as Building 18. This year's theme is "Water, Woods, and Warming" and the keynote address will be given by Dr. Ray Bradley, a paleoclimatologist in the Department of Geosciences at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst who will give an "update" on global warming. Dr. Bradley has worked on reconstructions of past global temperatures from a variety of records, and is one of the authors of the 1998 paper that introduced the "hockey stick graph" which was featured in the 2001 report of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

As usual, we'll have three concurrent sessions following the keynote address. One room will feature a "water" theme, with talks on the biology and

ecology of the American eel, and on the removal of dams in Massachusetts, including the recently removed dam in downtown Becket. The second room will feature a "woods" theme, with talks on sustainable forestry in Massachusetts and the Mass Acorn project. The third room will provide a stage for a preview of portions of "The Watershed Waltz", an educational puppet show being developed by Marmelade Productions with funding obtained by WRWA from the Highlands Community Initiative grant program sponsored by The Trustees of Reservations. That presentation will be very appropriate for children at the elementary school age level, and we're hoping to get some kids to attend at least part of the program this year! To further encourage parents to bring children to this year's symposium we'll also provide a quick tour of several interesting sites on campus during the morning session - including a tank housing Atlantic salmon eggs, the Biology Museum, and the Geology Museum. Of course, adults will be welcome to join that tour as well! Additional talks and afternoon field trips are still being arranged, so check our website (www.westfieldriver.org) for complete, up-to-date information on the full program. Registration will open at 8:00 a.m., with introductions and the keynote address beginning at 8:45. We hope to see you there!

West Springfield Fish Ladder Open House

By Henry Warchol

The Westfield River Watershed Association sponsored open house at the West Springfield Fish Ladder will be held (contingent on approval from the owners A&D Hydro and Southworth Paper Co.) on **Sunday June 3 from 10 am to 2 pm** - meeting spot and registration will be at the gate near the former Southworth Paper Co. Office building, 150 Front street West Springfield.

Visitors will be able to view migratory fish passing by a viewing window and elvers (juvenile American eels) in their separate passage way. Last year many were able to view two salmon being trapped and transferred to the holding tank. The salmon were later transferred to a fish hatchery for the eggs that end up being salmon fry next spring, that in turn

become the stock for distributing into the upper tributaries of the Westfield River.

Last year the fish counts at the West Springfield fish ladder were: 1,533 Shad – 3,447 white Suckers – 2,263 American eels – 1276 sea lamprey and 34 Atlantic salmon that were transported to the fish hatchery. For information contact Henry Warchol at 562-3467 or Bill Rose at 786-0195.

The Watershed Waltz

By Barbara Toomey

The WRWA has received a grant of \$5,000 from the Highland Communities Initiative to produce a puppet show about watersheds in conjunction with Marmalade Productions. Meredyth Babcock of Marmalade Productions has been busy writing a show that is educational and engaging that will be performed at elementary schools, museums, libraries and other venues throughout the Highlands Region.

In the show Raven, a young girl puppet, explores the watershed. Through her interaction with fish, birds and aquatic creatures that inhabit a stream, she learns about the dynamics of a healthy watershed. Woodpecker and Alevin the Brook Trout teach Raven about the importance of clean water and healthy forests to their lives and to the lives of the humans that live nearby. The voice of the river sings and explains much of the river's mysteries. She sings of the river's power and the healthy ecosystem's ability to cleanse the water. JoAnne Spies is writing original music that weaves the importance of nature's wisdom into the show.

The premier performances of "The Watershed Waltz" will be at the Berkshire Museum at 11a.m. on May 5th and at 2p.m. on May 6th 2007. "The Watershed Waltz" will be available for schools as of May 1st 2007. Call (413) 623-2070 to schedule a performance or visit www.marmaladeproductions.com. Schools will be able to offset part of the cost of the show by participating in a water conservation program through which students will learn about conserving water both at school and at home. A portion of the show's cost can then be paid in "gallons of water saved".

A performance of the show will be filmed, and DVDs will be available to market the show to schools and libraries. The Watershed Waltz puppet show is made

possible through a grant from the Highland Communities Initiative, a program of The Trustees of Reservations.

Winter Outings

By Tom Condon

Foray to Mount Washington State Forest, Mount Washington

Date and Time: Sunday, March 18
8am – 5pm

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, Western Ave., Westfield. Carpooling will be necessary.



With spring just around the corner, join us as we tour two of the most dramatic features in the southwestern corner of Massachusetts. We will start by taking a short hike to see Bash Bish Falls along the border with New York. This spectacular fall drops through several gorges before plummeting over an 80-foot ledge to the brook below. Upon return to our cars, we will continue our travel to the trailhead where our hike up Mount Everett will begin.

Our hike will take us past Guilder Pond as we ascend to just over 2600 feet and the summit of Mount Everett. This vantage point offers outstanding views of the tri-state area. Bring a lunch, plenty of water, sturdy hiking boots, and dress for the weather. Plan to join us for a casual dinner in Great Barrington on the trip back to the Pioneer Valley.

Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program

By Mike Young

For the sixth year in a row, WRWA is sponsoring several local schools' participation in the Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program (ASERP) that was developed, and continues to be supported by, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and Trout Unlimited. This year we have six schools in the watershed participating - elementary schools in West Springfield and Chester, and middle schools in Westfield (two!), Southwick, and Huntington. WRWA has provided each school with a 30-gallon aquarium

tank, a chiller capable of keeping the tank water a few degrees above freezing, a multiple-function filter, and a variety of supplemental supplies. By the time this newsletter reaches you each tank should be home to about 300 Atlantic Salmon eggs, delivered from the Roger Reed hatchery in Palmer. Students will monitor the hatching of the eggs and the development of the fry into the spring, eventually releasing them in local streams in May or June. Most schools raise brine shrimp to feed the fry during their final few weeks in the tank. WRWA has also provided some assistance on the dates of the fry releases for most schools, helping out with student surveys of the release sites (collection and identification of macroinvertebrates, measuring the volume of stream flow, etc.) and with the release itself. This program has proven very popular with both the teachers and the students, and several of our teachers have been involved for three or more years. With assistance from the Westfield River Environmental Center, we're hoping to continue to grow the program over the next couple of years, so if you know of a school that might be interested in participating, please let us know!

Salmon Fry Stocking

By Henry Warchol

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game stocks Salmon Fry in the branches of the Westfield River every year. The family volunteers that helped last year on the two events that the WRWA helped coordinate deserve much praise in their dedicated and enthusiastic contribution. This year, the WRWA will sponsor the same two salmon fry stocking events and aid Dr. Caleb Slater, Mass. Wildlife's Anadromous Fish Project Leader. Dr. Slater has set the time and dates. This year the events will take place on Saturday April 14, for Munn brook and Dickenson brook in Granville. And the upper middle branch of the Westfield River event will take place on Saturday April 28.

The meeting place for the Granville stocking will be the Westfield State College parking lot at 8 am April 14 and in Huntington at the Gateway Regional High School for the upper & middle branch of the Westfield River 8 am April 28. Dates and times for all the fry stocking will be posted on the WRWA web site www.westfieldriver.org. For information call Henry Warchol (413) 562-3467 or email

warch@verizon.net. Bring extra clothing in case you get wet, some extra waders are provided.

Attention, Seniors!

By Kathy Meyer

The Pension Protection Act of 2006 created a new opportunity for charitable giving to organizations such as the Westfield River Watershed Association. If you've ever considered making a gift to WRWA that would help stabilize our funding so that we can continue our work in future generations, this may be the opportunity to make your dream a reality.

For 2007, people over 70 ½ can donate up to \$100,000 from their IRA's (Individual Retirement Accounts) to "qualified" charities. I contacted the IRS and WRWA does qualify as such a charity. These contributions are tax-free and count toward the required minimum distributions that IRA holders in that age group must take every year. Of course, the gift can be an amount less than \$100,000.

As you might guess, you need to follow three steps carefully to comply with IRS rules.

1. You need to make the contribution directly from your IRA to the charity. To do this you need to contact your IRA custodian (e.g. the bank or mutual fund company that holds your IRA) and let them know you want to move part of your IRA to a charity. Ask them what paperwork is required.
2. Notify the charity and get a letter acknowledging the amount of the gift and that it came from an IRA.
3. On your tax return for 2007, on line 15A of Form 1040 report your entire IRA distribution. Then, subtract the amount that went to charity and enter the difference on line 15B, and follow with the initial "QCD" (Qualified Charitable Distribution).

Right now this new act covers contributions made in 2006 and 2007 only. While the act may extend this opportunity into future years, that isn't certain. If you are considering a legacy gift to WRWA, please contact us soon to make sure we don't miss this window of opportunity. I and other WRWA Board members would be happy to meet with you to discuss how you would like to see your gift used. I would also be able to help you with the paperwork involved.

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 Mike Young at 562-8498 for further information.

Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2007.

Officers:

President	Mike Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
Vice President	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
Second Vice President	Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	01030	786-0195
Treasurer	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
Secretary	Dave Lovejoy	P.O. Box 219	Blandford	01008	572-5307

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	W. Springfield	01089	736-5208
	Kathy Meyer	87 Old Farm Road	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	Eileen Rannenberg	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	19 Main Street	Chester	01011	354-7780
	Mirela Newman	GARP Department	WSC	01086	572-5307
	Joyce Platt	Log House Box 124	Russell	01071	862-3247
	Larry Meyers-McElwee	11 Laurel Terrace	Westfield	01085	568-8234

Honorary Directors:

	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050	
	Dan Call	777 College Highway	Southwick	01077	569-9677