### The WINTER2008

# WatershedNew

#### The President's Message

If you regularly drive through Westfield, you've seen the Great Bridge project, which will replace the current Elm Street/North Elm Street bridge with two bridges -one northbound, one southbound. It's an impressive undertaking, diagrammed in the Westfield River display in the Pilgrim Candle building.

How often, though, do we notice all the other travel routes in our area? First, there's the river itself. Before modern roads, water routes were often the easiest mode of travel. The Woronoco people would have used the river as a highway, and European settlers and early Americans used rivers in a similar way, often modifying water travel with canals. Today, canoeists use the Westfield for recreation; the Westfield Whitewater races are held on Patriot's Day weekend, and WRWA's own canoe cruise is held later in the spring (this year, it's tentatively scheduled for June 7).

On land too, our watershed is full of travel routes you don't drive on. Part of the Appalachian Trail touches the western boundary in October Mountain State Forest. On the opposite side near the river's mouth, the Metacomet-Monadnock trail crosses through Robinson State Park. Other hiking trails in our watershed can be found on the Westfield Riverwalk, at the Appalachian Mountain Club's campground at Noble View, along the East Branch (or North Branch) trail system, in Beveridge sanctuary next to Stanley Park, on the Keystone Arches Trail, in Robinson State Park and Gardner State Park, and in Chester-Blandford State Forest, Peru State Forest, Chesterfield State Forest, Worthington State Forest, Windsor State Forest, and Granville State Forest, just to name a few.

For those who prefer wheels, but still don't want to drive, many of our roads offer biking opportunities away from traffic, and there's an expanding pool of bike trails. Southwick has taken bids for the construction of their part of the Columbia Greenway bike trail, and construction is due to start this summer. In Southampton, Friends of Southampton Greenway is attempting to get a bike trail going.

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Between the two is Westfield, which has funding for its portion, but where the central part of the trail is threatened by the Falcone Company's proposed construction on Main Street near Stop and Shop. If you'd like to see this project built as planned, it would be wise to make your views known to the city council and mayor.

Finally, of course, humans aren't the only species traveling through the area. One activity with which many of us have been involved is the Nature Conservancy's river continuity project, evaluating which dams and culverts present the greatest obstacles to animals migrating in the river or along its banks, with a view to correcting the problem where possible. We're also approaching the season when birds will migrate up the Connecticut Valley, many going through our watershed.

So spring is a time for travel - and a time to watch other species do the same. Several hikes in our watershed (and some outside) are listed in this newsletter. Links to other recreational opportunities can be found at our website, www.westfieldriver.org. Get out and enjoy.

## 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Westfield River Symposium

By Mike Young

Our annual River Symposium will be held in the Scanlon Banquet Hall at Westfield State College on Saturday, April 5. Registration takes place from 8:15-9:00 a.m. and a free continental breakfast is provided. program begins at 9:00 a.m. with welcomes and a keynote address by Westfield's former mayor, now Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Richard K. Sullivan. The theme for this year's symposium is "What's Up in Your Watershed", and the two sets of concurrent sessions (beginning at 10:15 and 11:30 a.m.) will feature half a dozen talks on a range of current topics, including anadromous fish restoration. conservation and/or preservation efforts, the impact of bridges and culverts on aquatic organisms, the development of a water quality monitoring program for the watershed (volunteers needed!), and celebration of two anniversaries related to "wild and scenic" rivers. As always, there will be many exhibitors (including state and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and some local groups), and we've scheduled a half-hour time block (11:00-11:30 a.m.) specifically for viewing those exhibits - which will also be available throughout the morning.

In association with the morning program, there will be two afternoon events. Leaving from the Scanlon Banquet Hall at 1:15, a group will visit a recently completed project in Worthington that was funded through the Landowner Incentive Program, which helps landowners manage their property for wildlife. Also at 1:15, in Scanlon Banquet Hall B, there will be a performance of "The Waltz", Watershed а puppet show developed by Marmalade Productions of Becket, with funding through a grant that received from the WRWA Highland Communities Initiative, a program of The

Trustees of Reservations. The show, which lasts about 45 minutes, is designed for elementary school children and focuses on the adventures of a boy and his mother as they learn about watersheds and some of the characteristics of healthy watersheds. You can view a trailer for the show on the welcome page of the WRWA website (westfieldriver.org).

All of the day's events are free and open to the public. Please help us to spread the word about this year's symposium by telling friends, neighbors, and co-workers. We're particularly encouraging folks with elementary-school-age kids to attend the afternoon puppet show, which has been performed in about a dozen schools in the watershed and is currently scheduling additional shows for this spring and next fall.

#### **Russell Biomass Water Withdrawal**

By William B. Hull

As a member and strong supporter of the Westfield River Watershed Association, I read with interest Henry Warchol's opinions on the Russell Biomass project in the fall issue of the Watershed News. company, Hull Forestlands L.P., is likely the largest private forest land owner in the Westfield River Watershed includina thousands of acres with over 10 miles of frontage on the Westfield River or its main tributaries. I have seen to it that most of this land is protected from development by conservation restrictions (CRs), is third party certified by "Smartwood" as to sustainable forest management practices, and is open to the public for passive recreational use.

That said, I am also one of five development partners in the 50 MW Russell Biomass power project which will provide huge tax revenues to Russell as well as jobs and

wood markets to Russell and surrounding communities while at the same time helping this nation diversify into alternative fuel sources. We will pay \$10 million annually for wood fuel chips. These dollars will stay in the local economy instead of being exported to countries that don't even like us in payment for oil and natural gas. This project is an overall win-win-win for the economy, the environment and for the Town of Russell as well as surrounding communities.

Now as to Henry, I love him dearly and so much enjoy hearing him talk about a lifetime of experiences on the Westfield River. However, Henry does not have his facts straight. The maximum Russell Biomass daily water withdrawal from the river will be 1.37 cubic feet per second (cfs), or 885,000 gallons per day (gpd), but the average daily withdrawal will be 1.02 cfs, or 662,000 gpd, the 885,000 Henry states. Approximately 15% of this daily average withdrawal, or about 100,000 gpd, will be returned to the river as treated clean water that will have no adverse effect on river water temperature. Therefore, the average amount lost is 562,000 gpd, about 200,000 gpd less than the 752,250 gallons Henry asserts. This is a percentage loss of 1/10 of one percent of the average annual daily flow of over 400 million gpd. Currently, there are 55 million gpd of permitted withdrawals from the Westfield River watershed. As a further comparison the estimated average evaporation from the Westfield River is 1.2 million gpd. The point is that the less than 1 million gpd water withdrawal of the Russell Biomass plant will not produce any adverse impacts.

There is a difference between private deeded rights to withdraw water and DEP's permitted withdrawal. The Russell Biomass plant must obtain a DEP permit for the full withdrawal regardless of what the private rights are. Russell Biomass now has obtained private rights from the owners of the Russell Falls hydro site to withdraw up

to 885,000 gpd, and expects DEP to and complete its review issue the withdrawal permit with withdrawal restrictions it deems appropriate in early The reason Henry cannot find an existing water withdrawal permit is because Westfield River Paper Company never had one as they were around long before the DEP came into being and so were grandfathered.

Another point of information: In the last watershed newsletter Alexandria Dawson wrote an article about the hazards of burning wood from construction and demolition (C&D). Russell Biomass has signed a legally binding agreement with the Town of Russell such that the Russell Biomass project will never burn wood from C&D sources. For more information on either Russell Biomass or Hull go to www.russellbiomass.com and to www.hullforest.com

#### **Water Withdrawal**

By Henry Warchol

Yes, we have to be thankful to Bill Hull for the acquisitions in the watershed that have the mentioned easements. But he failed to mention that the Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife & the Norcross Wildlife Foundation contributed substantial grant monies to the property purchases that helped make those easements possible. (Hampshire Gazette 7/00).

Averaging As documented in the Tighe & Bond study response to Massachusetts Fish & Wildlife (section 10.6 & 10.4 - Water Withdrawal), it is projected that the hottest days of summer will require the greatest water withdrawals (855,000 gpd 752,000 gpd evaporation loss), because the hot ambient air mix will require more water for the evaporating cooling process, and this is at a time when the river is under much stress from already diminished water flows.

Yes, the river's water removal will be less in the winter months because of the cool ambient air mix. To cite the method of yearly averaging is misleading in that it hides the extremes that result from algae depleting oxygen blooms and higher coliform counts that are inevitable when there is very little water in the summer drought period. The averaging method would include flood waters in the spring run off. And therefore yield deceptive results.

<u>Water withdrawals</u> The dated registered deeds of transfer on water withdrawals and the dated Water Management Act is self explanatory. Legal proceedings need to be properly implemented.

<u>Fuel Mix</u> In the requested independent study report on the LLC biomass project (Country Journal news article of 9/20/2007) the study states that currently the company has consented to the exclusion of construction and demolition fuel mix (C&D), but the agreement isn't enforceable, according to Minott.

Much was excluded from the Tighe & Bond report and had to be provided by the interveners, so that the Department of Public Utilities could more thoroughly evaluate the proposed project with sufficient information to make some reasonable judgments in their deliberations.

Chronology of events In Sept. 21 1999 before a joint meeting of the Russell Select Board and Zoning Board Mr. Hull said he would probably tear down part of the existing structure and ultimately replace it with a modern wood processing plant. (Country Journal 9/30/1999). In the same time frame a Draft Environmental Notification Form for the Russell Biomass Power Plant was filed. Revised 10/99.

The effects of continuous permitting that removes water from a rivers watershed is well documented, as illustrated in the web site - <a href="http://ma.water.usgs.gov/ipswich/">http://ma.water.usgs.gov/ipswich/</a> -

and the book *Water Follies* by Robert Glennon.

#### **ASERP**

By Mike Young

This will be the seventh consecutive year during which WRWA has sponsored local schools' participation in the Atlantic Salmon Egg-Rearing Program (ASERP). program has grown to seven schools this year, with the addition of Abner Gibbs Elementary School in Westfield. Returning schools include the Fausey Elementary School in West Springfield, the North Middle School and the South Middle School in Westfield, Powder Mill Middle School in Southwick, Gateway Middle School in Huntington, and the Chester Elementary School. WRWA has provided each school with a 30-gallon aguarium tank and a chiller that's capable of keeping the tank cooled to just above freezing (the natural stream temperature for February!). hundred eyed-up salmon eggs are delivered to each school and the students monitor their development throughout the spring, gradually increasing the tank temperature to mimic the conditions outdoors. By late April the young fry are ready to begin feeding and most schools provide a brine shrimp diet for several weeks before stocking their parr into local streams in May or early June.

In mid-January the teachers gathered for the ASERP orientation, which has been held at Greenfield Community College for the past several years. Approximately fifty western Massachusetts' schools are now participating in this program, so there was a good crowd. The ASERP organizers, including the US Fish & Wildlife Service, the MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, and Trout Unlimited, provide updates on the salmon restoration effort and hands-on workshops on how to maintain the tanks, keep track of the development of the fry, and produce enough live brine shrimp to

keep the young fry fed. Caleb Slater, of the MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, reported on studies of the survival of parr in our streams after they've been stocked out. That aspect of the salmon restoration program appears to be very successful, with about 25% of parr surviving through their first summer, and about 20% of those surviving for two full years, the point at which many would turn to smolts and migrate downstream to the ocean. returns from the ocean have, of course, been more disappointing. Jan Rowan, of the US Fish & Wildlife Service, described the life-cycle of salmon and the history of salmon restoration on the Connecticut River, and Mike Cole, of ABR, Inc. - an environmental consulting firm, gave an overview of macroinvertebrate identification.



A particularly timely presentation, was given by Trish Barbash, a specialist on fish health and diseases, who discussed the coldwater disease (a bacterial disease) that infected some of the ASERP tanks in 2007, and also infectious pancreatic necrosis (IPN, a viral disease) that was found in two of the adult salmon at the Sunderland hatchery last fall. Unfortunately, all of the adult salmon at Sunderland and their eggs from this year had to be destroyed to prevent transmission of this very contagious pathogen into local streams. Those adult fish, which had returned to the Connecticut River in recent years, provide only about 10% of the eggs that are used for stocking, so their loss will not have a significant impact on the numbers of fry to be stocked out this spring.

The ASERP program provides a wonderful opportunity for students to learn about their natural environment, and WRWA has tried to provide support for our schools' stocking days in May or June. In addition to

releasing their fry, most of the schools complete an environmental assessment of their sites, including identifying some macroinvertebrates and measuring the stream flow. Volunteers are always needed for those days – please contact Mike Young at (413) 572-5741 or via email to myoung@wsc.ma.edu if you'd be interested in helping out.

#### **Youth Committee Update**

By Bill Rose

There will be a storm drain labeling activity on April 19, 2008. This will be held in Agawam, in the area known as north Agawam. We will be stenciling storm drains that discharge directly into wetlands or the Westfield River. The Agawam DPW is allowing us to use their label and adhesive as this method is not as messy as the stencil and paint method. We have the pamphlets to pass out that belong to the WRWA and others that came with the labels. The pamphlets explain the don'ts of throwing wastewater in the storm drains.

The next item on the agenda is to set -up a Fly fishing derby and clinic in April Or May (probably in May) .We are working with BG Sports on Route 20 in Westfield to let us use his parking lot. This derby consist of the fly fishing, fly tying demonstrations, and fly tying instructions as well as identifying aquatic insects (both in and out of the water).

In the fall, we will look into etting up a storm drain labeling project in Westfield. The salmon fry stocking is a great youth activity in the spring and we will try to get the youth involved.

The youth committee can use all the help it can get to monitor these activities. We especially need help with the fishing derby. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Bill Rose at brose1525@comcast.net.

## The Westfield River and National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act 15 in 40 Wild & Scenic Anniversary

By Carrie Banks Westfield River Wild & Scenic Coordinator

"The affluent society has built well in terms of economic progress, but has neglected the protection of the very water we drink as well as the values of fish and wildlife, scenic, and outdoor recreation resources. Although often measureless in commercial terms, these values must be preserved by a program that will guarantee America some semblance of her great heritage of beautiful rivers."

Senator Frank Church from Idaho, Arguing for passage of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968)

In 1968, Congress passed the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act to safeguard the special character and heritage of our nation's rivers. For years, unchecked dam building and river habitat destruction had been occurring on rivers and streams throughout the country. Through the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System, "certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic. recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and eniovment of present and future generations (Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, 1968)".

Forty years later, over 11,400 miles of 168 rivers in 38 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have been protected under the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System. This represents only one-quarter of one percent of the total 3.5 million river miles in the United States. By comparison, currently over 600,000 miles of river lie behind 60,000-80,000 dams.

The Westfield River became Massachusetts' first National Wild & Scenic River when forty-three miles were designated on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1993. Fifteen years later, this designation was expanded to over 78 miles of the Westfield River's three major tributaries and headwater streams.

As a state-administered Wild & Scenic River, the Westfield River is unique in that the management of the National Wild & Scenic designation is accomplished through locally-based and state protection. Since a mix of public and private lands border the designated reaches of the Westfield River, state and federal agencies, landowners, business owners, and other community members share responsibility for the Wild & Scenic River designation and management.

The importance of local river stewards is evident in the recent participation of over 65 Stream Team volunteers who surveyed over 70 miles of the Westfield River. protocols developed by the Riverways Adopt-A-Stream Program, volunteers documented and assessed the Westfield River's outstandingly remarkable scenic. historical, recreational geological, ecological resources. Survey findings have been compiled into Shoreline Survey Reports and Executive Summaries, as well as large format maps which depict the problems, assets and priories for action identified by the volunteers. These will be incorporated into the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Plan.

As the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Westfield River designation and the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act approaches, the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee is gearing up to celebrate this momentous occasion. In the meantime, plan on joining us at the upcoming Westfield River Symposium!

See you on the river, Carrie Banks

## Water Quality Monitoring Within the Westfield River Watershed

By Robert Thompson

Dr. David Doe of the Biology Department at College is currently Westfield State developing a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) based on the recommendations of the 2005 Five-Year Watershed Action Plan for the Westfield River as well as input from the PVPC, the Massachusetts Department Environmental Protection (MA DEP), faculty members of the Westfield State College Westfield River Environmental Center (WREC), the Westfield River Watershed Association (WRWA), the Westfield River Wild and Scenic Committee, and MA Riverways personnel. Input is also being solicited from local Conservation Commissions.

The goal of the QAPP is to design an approach that will provide useful data and generate awareness of water quality problems to better identify sources of contamination. While the PVPC report stresses bacterial monitoring, the QAPP committee identified the need for monitoring selected physical and chemical parameters at almost monthly intervals for at least a year at traditional sites such as the four USGS gauging stations in the watershed as well as sites of concern identified in the MassDEP 2001 report and the PVPC report. While local groups and students at Westfield State College have conducted sporadic samplings in the watershed and DEP conducts a concentrated sampling of many parameters at selected sites once every five years, there is no consistent data at specific sites at monthly intervals for consecutive years. The development of the QAPP is not part of this project and no funds are being requested for it. The QAPP will be submitted to DEP and EPA by January 2008 for comments and approval.

#### **Spring Outings**

Holland Glen, Belchertown

Date and Time: Sat, March 15, 9:00 – 1:00

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: McDonalds on Route 9 in South

Hadley.

This hike will take us along the M-M Trail above Belchertown. We'll stroll along an oak covered ridge, which provides excellent views of the surrounding hills. We'll hike past abandoned farms marked by cellar holes and stonewalls. Eventually we will enter a dark primeval hemlock forest. The forest is home to Holland Glen Falls, a series of cascades that have carved a deep gorge through the grey bedrock. Hiking here in the spring should allow us to enjoy the falls at its thundering best.

The trail is relatively flat, but has some short steep rocky spots. Good footwear is essential. A walking staff might also be of assistance. We must cross a small creek 2 or 3 times to reach our destination. The creek might require a wet crossing, so be prepared. Bring a lunch, water, and camera or binoculars. Dress for the weather and come enjoy this wonderful spot hidden in the Belchertown hills.

Birding at the Sofinowski Land Preserve, Southwick

Date and Time: Sun, April 13, 8am to 10am Leader: Tom and Nancy Condon

Registration: Please call Tom or Nancy to sign up (413-564-0895). Meeting Place: Sofinowski Land Preserve, Mort Vining Road, Southwick.

In 2002, the town of Southwick set aside this old farm as part of their open space plan. We'll be exploring the established trails that meander from fields to wetlands to upland forests. The diversity of ecosystems offers a wonderful opportunity for birding, so

strap on those binoculars or grab up that spotting scope. We'll travel slow to observe as many signs of spring as we can. Dress for the weather and wear comfortable shoes. Bring along some water and a snack. Heavy rain cancels.

The Appalachian Trail, Route 20 to Goose Pond. Lee

Date and Time: Sunday May 4 9am to 3pm Leader: Tom and Nancy Condon Registration: Please call Tom or Nancy to sign up (413-564-0895). Meeting Place: Route 20, Lee where the AT crosses.

We'll be hiking south on the AT from Route 20 to Upper Goose Pond. The round trip distance will be about 4 miles. We'll start with a meander through a wetland and then cross the Mass Turnpike on a footpath over the traffic. Soon we'll leave the sound of traffic behind us as we climb up and over a small ridge. The forest closes in around us as we make our way to the eastern end of Goose Pond. Along the way we'll look for signs of spring. The wilderness character of the trail is outstanding. Some places are quite rocky, so wear some solid shoes and maybe bring along a hiking staff. Dress for the weather. Bring along some water and a lunch. Heavy rain cancels.

#### Salmon Fry Stocking

By Mike Young

From mid-April to early-May each spring the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife stocks about a million salmon fry into the Westfield River and its tributaries. This annual ritual, locally organized and led by Dr. Caleb Slater, is part of the Atlantic Salmon restoration program that's been carried out by MA Wildlife and the US Fish & Wildlife Service for more than two decades. The goal of the program is to produce a self-sustaining run of Atlantic Salmon in the Connecticut River and its tributaries. The natural salmon runs disappeared in the early 1800s as dams

were constructed along the rivers of western New England, preventing the returning salmon from reaching their spawning grounds. The effort relies to a considerable extent on volunteer help, and the stocking schedule is published on MassWildlife's website (http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/) by late March. You'll also find a link to the stocking schedule, and information about two Saturdays when WRWA has committed to providing volunteers, on the WRWA website (once the schedule is out).

If you choose to help out (and we hope you'll give it a try!) expect to spend a morning, and perhaps a part of the early afternoon, wading along a scenic section of stream in the local area. WRWA is seeking volunteers for a Saturday in mid-April (likely April 12), when stocking will be done along Dickinson Brook and Munn Brook in Granville and Southwick, and for a second Saturday (usually in late-April, likely April 26) when stocking will be done along the Middle Branch of the Westfield River above the Littleville Lake. MassWildlife provides waders if you need them, and some stream sections are suitable for middle-schoolers. The fry arrive in a large tank on the back of a pickup truck. MassWildlife personnel weigh out the fry for each stream section (habitat suitability has been assessed for each segment) and send you off with a bucket of water holding a few thousand fry and instructions on where to enter and Individual stream leave the stream. segments are generally about a kilometer long and volunteers typically work in groups of at least two. Help is needed during the week too, so if you've got some free time on weekday mornings, check the Mass Wildlife site for other opportunities to help out. It's a great way to contribute to an important cause, and a great chance to become better acquainted with some of the natural treasures our watershed offers.

#### **Purple Loosestrife Control**

By: Mark Damon

You may have noticed a purple flowering plant which has displaced cattails (*Typha* spp.) in many of our wetland areas. This is the purple loosestrife, *Lythrum salicaria*. While it's a beautiful plant, it can cause some severe ecological problems, since much of our wildlife depends on the cattails for food and habitat. Because loosestrife is an invasive species from Eurasia, there are few if any native North American species which eat it. One control measure involves the introduction of Eurasian beetles which feed exclusively on the loosestrife. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has tested three species of beetle to be sure their introduction won't cause more problems, and in 1992 they approved the use of three species as biological control agents for loosestrife: *Galerucella calmariensis*, *Hylobius transversovittatus*, and *Nanophyes marmoratus*. The Connecticut River Watershed Council will be rearing and dispersing *G. calmariensis* beetles for use in our area. If you're interested in helping, go to their website at www.ctriver.org for contact information.

#### Here are the names and addresses of our officers and directors for 2008.

Officers:					
President:	Mark Damon	54 Pleasant Street	Westfield	01085	572-9991
Vice President:	Bill Rose	39 Sunset Terrace	Feeding Hills	02030	786-0195
Second Vice Presidents:	Sheryl Becker Heather Comee	101 Regency Park Dr. 10 Maple Street	Agawam Southwick	01101	821-0818 427-5089
Treasurer:	Kenneth Taylor	8 Greylock Street	Westfield	01085	562-4947
Secretary:	Dave Lovejoy	P.O. Box 219	Blandford	01008	572-5307
Directors:					
	Mike Young	721 West Road	Westfield	01085	562-8498
	Henry Warchol	2 Sackville Road	Westfield	01085	562-3467
	Kathy Meyer	87 Old Farm Road	Westfield	01085	568-4252
	Philip Sousa	29 Yankee Circle	Westfield	01085	568-3982
	Stanley Warren	51 Southgate Avenue	Westfield	01085	562-3338
	Tom Condon	80 General Knox Road	Russell	01071	564-0895
	Bob Thompson	10 Lyon Hill Road	Chester	01011	354-9636
	George Reichert	75 Blair Road	Blandford	01008	848-2074
Honorary Directors:					
	Dave Pardoe	25 Sampson Road	Huntington	01050	
	Dan Call	777 College Highway	Southwick	01077	569-9677