

Local Watershed Council Activity Reports

Taken from: RI Rivers Council Meeting Minutes, February 8, 2017

Narrow River Preservation Association – as reported by Richard Grant:

Stormwater Best Management Practices in Narragansett -

Last night the NRPA Board heard a presentation from the Town of Narragansett and engineers from Fuss and O'Neill and Beta Engineering regarding stormwater treatment in Narragansett. This informative presentation reviewed the history of managing stormwater runoff and sewage treatment since 1997 and the continuing plans to install more stormwater treatment systems to protect the Narrow River. For 20 years, NRPA has been working with the Town, DEM and local residents to promote stormwater BMPs to prevent bacteria, particulates and floatables from entering the watershed. Going forward, NRPA's role will be to advocate for adequate funding of the ongoing maintenance of these systems, which is critical to their effective functioning and usually a low-priority budget item. There is also no current water quality testing of the effectiveness of these systems and NRPA will consider taking this on.

Narrow River Dredging and Salt Marsh Restoration Project complete -

The Dredging and Salt Marsh Restoration project in Narrow River undertaken by US Fish & Wildlife has completed its current phase. It is likely that USFWS will be seeking volunteers to help with planting salt marsh grass plugs in early Spring as part of the restoration efforts. NRPA plans to be at the head of this effort.

Little Red Shack on Sedge Island Educational Panel -

As a part of the Dredging and Salt Marsh Restoration project, US Fish and Wildlife removed a dilapidated, but well loved shack in the Narrow River. NRPA is working with US Fish & Wildlife to install an interpretive panel noting the history of the shack, complete with photographs and artwork of the landmark. A spring installation is planned.

Science Fair -

This week, NRPA Board Members judged 9th grade science projects at South Kingstown High School. They named Emily Kaczynski the NRPA Science Fair winner for her project "Investigating Invasives, Asian Shore Crab Population". Four Honorable Mentions were also awarded. Emily will be invited to present her project and receive a certificate and \$50 check at the March NRPA Board meeting.

On Pettaquamscutt Speaker Series -

On January 29th, NRPA hosted presentations by Dr. Jennifer White and Dr. Craig Swanson titled "Improving the Health of the Narrow River Estuary" as a part of the *On Pettaquamscutt Speaker Series*. PowerPoint versions of both presentations are available on the *On Pettaquamscutt* website.

SciWrite Intern -

NRPA is taking on a URI PhD candidate this summer through the SciWrite@URI program. SciWrite is funded by the National Science Foundation and is an effort to train graduate students to effectively communicate scientific research and ideas to the general public. Although still in the planning phases of the project, NRPA proposes that during her internship, the intern will concentrate on three areas:

- 1) converting 25 years of River Watch water testing data and observations into a coherent and understandable presentation to the public,
- 2) preparing an NRPA brochure that captures the essence of NRPA, our history and priorities, and
- 3) compiling a comprehensive history of NRPA through interviews with founding and current members and leaders, archived information and scientific findings regarding the watershed. As NRPA looks ahead to our 50th Anniversary in 2020, we want to educate the public about the critical nature of our work.

More information about SciWrite can be found here:

<http://web.uri.edu/cels/sciwrite/>

NRPA Events -

NRPA is gearing up for the following spring and summer events:

30th Annual Narrow River Road Race – May 20

What Lives in the River – June 17

12th Annual Turnaround Swim – June 24

Pettaquamscutt Paddle – July 21 (tentative)

Communications

In 2017, NRPA is increasing our efforts and ability to reach the local community. We have already increased engagement through our Facebook page, set up MailChimp for mass emails and plan to upgrade our website, adding online donation functionality.

Our January 2017 newsletter is available at our website: www.narrowriver.org

Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council as reported by Mr. Horbert:

After a long process, we are finally going to be activating the "Donate" button on our web site and are hoping to use it in conjunction with social media outlets and other communication efforts to target funding for a number of pending projects.

We are in discussions with the Town of West Warwick to potentially enter a custody and care agreement for a property on the South Branch Pawtuxet where the Town has just finished constructing a canoe access and fishing pier. There are a number of issues to be worked out.

We are exploring some new ideas for an update to our travelling display, including incorporating some drone footage of various spots in the watershed into a looping video presentation that we can present on a digital display.

We have tentatively scheduled 6-8 cleanups at various properties, mostly owned by us, but including scheduling 2 major clean up events at Tongue Pond in Cranston and on a section of the Pocasset River in Johnston. We will be purchasing a couple chain saws to assist on some of these cleanups.

We are still trying to identify whether a neighbor's sign is on our property at Pawtuxet Falls. This may require a property line survey, and we've recently been informed that RIDEM would be willing to provide half of the cost of the survey.

Our next event will be attendance and setting up a booth at the RI Saltwater Fishing Show from March 1- through the 12th at the RI Convention Center.
<http://www.pawtuxet.org/>

Salt Ponds Coalition – as reported by Ms. Eichinger –
SPC's 2015 Water Quality Data is posted online!

SPC's Pond Watcher Coordinator is beginning to prepare for our 2017 sampling season.

The salt marsh restoration project in Charlestown Breachway in Ninigret Pond is complete. Sand was deposited on both the adjacent marsh and on a nearby beach. The next step will be to begin planting marsh grasses in the spring. Planning is still underway for similar projects in both Quonochontaug and Winnapaug Ponds.

"Friends of Green Hill Pond" continues to meet with different towns and state agencies in regards to the issues that Green Hill Pond faces.

SPC is preparing for its annual membership drive, we should be sending out letters by the end of this month. We are also preparing for our first newsletter of 2017 to be sent out shortly as well.

www.saltpondscoalition.org

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association as reported by Ms. Torello:

Water Quality Monitoring -

In 2016 WPWA completed a full assessment of its water quality monitoring sites throughout the watershed. The assessment recommended minor changes to the monitoring sites and addition of specific conductivity and temperature monitoring in select areas. Water quality sampling locations were divided by priority into three tiers. Monitoring tiers 1 & 2 provides a watershed wide perspective on the annual health of the watershed. Tier 3 provides a higher level of detail that helps better track sources of nutrient loading on streams.

The cost to monitor all tiers, along with specific conductivity and temperature is nearly \$40,000! WPWA simply does not have the financial resources to implement all of the assessment's recommendations. Therefore the Board of Trustees authorized monitoring at tier 1 & 2 sites in 2016 at a cost of \$20,000. They also authorized the purchase and deployment of specific conductivity meters and temperature loggers at select locations. At year end the WPWA board determined this monitoring strategy is not sustainable in the absence of grant funding to offset the cost. The difficult decision to suspend monitoring in tier 2 had to be made and deep discussions were had as to how many tier 1 sites would also have to be cut to reach a maximum expense of \$12,500 for monitoring year 2017.

During those discussions WPWA received verbal confirmation that remaining Bays Rivers & Watersheds Coordination Team funding will be diverted to URI's Watershed Watch to provide a one-time discount in 2017 to those who have their samples analyzed by WW. This provided the WPWA board a high enough level of confidence to preserve monitoring in all of tier 1. The board will focus attention in 2017 on a plan to preserve tier 1 into 2018 and begin to add tier 2 monitoring sites back in over the coming years.

Also in 2017, WPWA will provide funding to WW to integrate data gathered by specific conductivity meters and temperature into the Watershed Watch database. WPWA is hopeful this will increase the capacity for others outside the watershed to begin to monitor these valuable climate change and stormwater runoff indicators to their monitoring programs. We are hopeful that URI will find the funding to make this database accessible via the web in the coming years.

Staffing -

In 2017 WPWA will once again be making staffing changes to meet budgetary constraints. While we will be eliminating a higher level part time position, we are actively seeking two part time Member Services Representatives to work 9am-2pm on Saturdays and Sundays from mid-April until September. If you know a high school graduate looking for well-paying part-time work this summer please encourage them to contact Chris Fox at chris@wpwa.org.

Public Access -

The watershed has seen an increase in demand for public access over the past years and in response WPWA has elevated the priority of improving public access in the watershed. Since 2008, three access areas on the Wood River and three on the Pawcatuck have been improved. WPWA will be partnering to improve existing and create new river access sites on the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers. We expect that at least three new access areas will be constructed and three existing will be rehabilitated on these two rivers in 2017.

Wild and Scenic River -

The Study Committee has developed four subcommittees who are reviewing the rivers to classify the segments and identify Outstandingly Remarkable Values for each. This information will be used by the National Parks Service to begin their draft report. We will start work on a Stewardship Plan to protect the values of the rivers. The intent is to have the work for the study report and stewardship plan completed by early 2018. The committee will reach out to each town in the watershed to ask them to pass a resolution supporting Wild and Scenic designation for the rivers and adapting the stewardship plan. A website for the study, WPWildRivers.org, should be live by the end of February.

Flood Resilience and Management Plan (FRMP) -

WPWA's consultant is in the process of writing the final draft of the Plan. Once the draft becomes available we will be holding three or four public meetings to roll out the plan and garner feedback. The final plan will have detailed information about impacts to flooding from structures in the rivers, including culverts, bridges and dams. It will also examine public policy as it relates to land use practices. There will be sections for each of the towns in the watershed with recommendations for eliminating or mitigating flooding potential based on this information. In addition the plan will also have some recommendations for green infrastructure that could be developed on public properties.

WPWA has met with RIDEM Director, Janet Coit, and several of the Deputy Directors to discuss how this information from this plan can be incorporated with the Watershed Management Plan they are required to develop for the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed. The Director is setting up a meeting with members of the RI EC4 Committee and WPWA to present them with details of the plan.

<http://www.wpwa.org/>

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council – as reported by
Kassi Archambault

Educational Programs: Fish in the Classroom Elementary program and Environmental Leaders High School program will continue through June. River Adventures Middle School program and another elementary group will begin in March.

Red Shed and Bike Camp: We plan to add a few more programs, including two adult “Smart Cycling” classes, an April vacation week bike camp for girls, and a fall after-school program with the Manton Avenue Project.

Green Infrastructure: With the Green Infrastructure Coalition, we have completed some draft signage to use throughout the state at Green Infrastructure locations. We plan to put some in this spring for our Olneyville and Pleasant Valley Projects.

River Rangers: The Rangers and Greenway Leadership Team wrapped up the 2016 season and are now in planning mode for the 2017 season. Ranger hiring will begin again in March, with a full Ranger team back in place by end of March, in time for the first Clean Days activities.

Upcoming Events:

- First Annual WRWC Yellow Perch Cocktail Party – Thursday, March 2nd, 2017, Skyline, details at <http://wrwc.org/cocktails.php>
- Clean Days Kickoff – Saturday, April 22nd
- Woony River Ride – Saturday, September 16th

Also, Eugenia Marks reported that an Alternatives Analysis had been conducted with respect to proposed new highway ramps from Rte 295 to Greenville Road (Rte 5) for the new Citizen’s Bank headquarters being constructed.

www.wrwc.org

Note: February 2017 Activity Reports were not available from:

- Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone
- Buckeye Brook Coalition
- Kickemuit River Council
- Ten Mile River Watershed Council
- Friends of the Moshassuck