

## **Local Watershed Council Activity Reports – April 2017**

Taken from: RI Rivers Council Meeting Minutes, April 12, 2017

### **Narrow River Preservation Association** – as reported by Mr. Grant:

#### Collaboration with Jenny Paquet from RI DEM

Jenny Paquet, Senior Environmental Planner with RIDEM, attended the NRPA Board Meeting on April 4 to introduce herself and discuss the Narrow River Watershed Plan, now under development.

The NRPA Board and Jenny Paquet exchanged information and thoughts on many issues affecting the Narrow River Watershed, including:

- identification of the sources of contamination and pollution in the Narrow River,
- recommendations regarding contamination and pollution remediation,
- BMP activities in Narragansett, South Kingstown and North Kingstown,
- algal blooms in the Narrow River,
- shell fishing and the potential of using Narrow River as a nursery for young (non-edible) oysters,
- water quality data available from sources including NRPA's River Watch, DEM, CRMC and USFWS,
- NRPA's ongoing efforts to communicate issues and activities with Narrow River Watershed residents and other stakeholders,
- NRPA's educational activities,
- recent modeling study regarding proposed dredging at the mouth of the Narrow River and
- invasive plant species and their removal and chemical treatment.

All expressed a great appreciation that Jenny attended our meeting and is collaborating with NRPA and other stakeholders as she develops the plan.

#### Narrow River Salt Marsh Restoration Project volunteers

NRPA is coordinating volunteers to plant 35,000 cordgrass and seagrass seedlings (plugs) into the areas where dredge material was deposited as a part of the Salt Marsh Restoration Project. To date, over 200 interested individuals and several groups, including High School, Middle School and Elementary School groups, homeschool groups and local fly fishing and kayaking clubs have signed up to volunteer.

Once USFWS sets dates for planting, NRPA will organize shift signups for volunteers.

#### River Watch

River Watch field trainings, which are required, are scheduled for April 22 & 29. Several new volunteers have reached out to us and we are hoping that many of our 2016

volunteers will return.

Osprey Tracking Education Program for 4<sup>th</sup> Graders

NRPA Board Member Craig Wood has been leading Fourth Grade classes at two local schools in a program about Osprey. The students learn basic information about Osprey, then track two specific birds who are outfitted with radio transmitters as they make their annual migration from the Amazon rain forest back to New England for the summer. In future years, we plan to expand this program to all of the Fourth Grade classes in our area by training several Board Members as Osprey Program Leaders.

Narrow River Notes April 2017

NRPA's current issue of Narrow River Notes will be sent this week. All RIRC Watershed Councils and DEM contacts will receive an issue of this newsletter.

NRPA upcoming summer events

30<sup>th</sup> Annual Narrow River Road Race – May 20

What Lives in the River – June 17

12<sup>th</sup> Annual Turnaround Swim – June 24

10<sup>th</sup> Annual Pettaquamscutt Paddle – July 21

Art on the River – August 5

What Lives in the River and Marsh Walk in concert with 'Gansett Days–September 16

In addition, NRPA will have a presence at three local fairs:

- Spring Fair and Fish on the Run Event, Saturday, April 23 at Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum in North Kingstown, RI
- Eco-Fair on Saturday, May 20 at Compass School in Kingston, RI
- Environmental Awareness Day – Saturday, July 15 at Narragansett Town Beach

[www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org)

**Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council** – as reported by Mr.

Horbert:

The weather has set us behind schedule for our spring cleanups, but we have been gearing up for the spring, and have already done a couple cleanups. Last weekend we did cleanups at both our Pontiac Avenue canoe launch in Cranston/Warwick and our Riverwalk between Lincoln Avenue and Fairview Avenue in West Warwick. This coming weekend we will be hosting a major cleanup at Tongue Pond in Cranston, which has been abused and neglected for many years. There will be additional cleanups throughout this month into May, and a family fishing tournament again on Tiogue Lake in May.

We have three bids for survey work at our Pawtuxet Falls property and will be hiring a surveyor to establish the property lines between us and an adjacent automotive business. We hope to use the survey to have the businesses sign removed from our property.

The PRAWC met with the Town of Coventry regarding the closed Arkwright Bridge where Hill Street formerly crossed the river. The Town is exploring what would be necessary to spruce this bridge up as a pedestrian mini-park. The police departments of both Coventry and Cranston would prefer that the entire bridge be fenced off to prevent kids from using it to jump into the river. Evidently a young man died here not too long ago when he jumped in an area that was too shallow, and then was subsequently swept against an underwater pipe and drowned. Discussions are ongoing. The Town would prefer not to invest a lot of money into any project and does not want any responsibility for any improvements, so not sure if anything will come of this.

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

### **Salt Ponds Coalition** – as reported by Ms. Eichinger –

SPC's Pond Watcher Coordinator is preparing for our monitor training on April 22. We have all of our sites staffed, except for Potato Point on Ninigret.

Art Ganz (our president) was awarded the Blueways Award at the Land and Water Summit this year.

SPC did its first education/outreach event at the Westerly Library – we did a short talk about the ponds and answered questions that the attendees had.

SPC sent out its annual renewal letter to members, we are still processing memberships, but we have had a good response so far!

[www.saltpondscoalition.org](http://www.saltpondscoalition.org)

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

#### *The John "Jay" Cronan Access Area Rehabilitation Project*

The project was not fully complete by winter 2016. While work did resume in early spring, heavy rain and flooding again stopped work. Unfortunately WPWA was forced to keep the access area closed during Opening Day of Trout Fishing season on 4/08 to ensure the safety of the area's visitors.

#### *RIDOT Drops plans to build a new Welcome Center at exit 1.*

Many are not aware that WPWA worked quietly to urge RIDOT to alter or abandon their plans to build a new Welcome Center on the RI CT line. Our effort began in July 2015 with a WPWA comment letter included in RIDOT's federal application for project funding. Unlike the Town of Hopkinton's letter of support, WPWA submitted a letter of environmental concern.

When the funding application was approved, WPWA shifted to working with RI's US

congressional delegates to pressure RIDOT to minimize the project's potential negative environmental impacts. In late 2015 we also recommended, through congressional channels, that RIDOT consider relocating the project to the already contaminated aquifer at Exit 3. Months later, representatives of the Town of Richmond began talks with RIDOT to do exactly that. When that location was deemed unfeasible, WPWA shifted to advocacy for the redevelopment of the closed Welcome Center between Exit 2 & 3. Months later (yesterday), this option surfaced as the selected and most reasonable compromise.

WPWA will continue to engage with the project to ensure the surrounding wetlands are protected to the greatest extent possible. I'm confident that the RI Water Resources Board will also be closely watching and commenting on the redevelopment project. They will certainly want to ensure there is no possibility for negative impacts to the underlying aquifer by the redevelopment project because of their recent property acquisition across route 95 where they intend to install a public well. WPWA is grateful for the efforts to affect change that was put forth by the concerned citizens. Protecting the integrity of our environment from large development threats requires just the sort of emotional outcry we saw from the public.

#### *Paddle Programs for Underserved Youth*

WPWA received a grant from the RI Trail Advisory Committee to conduct up to 10 paddle programs for underserved youth. As in the past, we will target groups from urban areas of Providence, Woonsocket, Pawtucket and Central Falls. The paddles, which take place from late June to early August, are made possible by the dozens of WPWA volunteers who help with the kids on the water.

#### *Wild and Scenic Rivers*

The Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Committee now has 22 members appointed by 12 towns in the watershed. Representatives from RIDEM, CTDEEP, STB, TNC, ASRI, and NPS also sit on the committee. They have developed the classifications and Outstandingly Remarkable Values for 11 segments of 7 rivers: Wood, Pawcatuck, Shunock, Green Falls, Beaver, Chipuxet, and Queen/Usquepaugh Rivers. The committee is now tasked with developing a stewardship plan to help protect the rivers. Plans are being made to hold a workshop with agency and town personnel to assess how to start the plan. A website for the Wild and Scenic Rivers study has been developed and will be going live next week. We are also developing outreach materials and will begin presentations to town committees and local groups in June.

#### *Flood Resilience and Management Plan (FRMP)*

The final Flood Resiliency Management Plan is still under development. A draft should be ready for review around the beginning of May. It will be sent around to our partners and steering committee. After that we will hold two public meetings for comments. The final plan will be ready in July. We have received a grant extension from NFWF to complete the project by August.

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

## **Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council** – as reported by Doug Stevens:

*Educational Programs:* We are planning a magnificent fish release celebration with two elementary schools. They will take place at Riverside Park and we hope to offer canoe rides and habitat assessments. Elementary programs will continue through June, Middle School program begins end of April and continues till early June and High School projects are being developed. Youth are creating t-shirts to sell, presenting to their peers and presenting to younger students what they've learned about environmental science. High school program will be complete in late May.

*Adult and Young Adult Education Event:* "Climate Change and Building Resilient Communities." US Senator Whitehouse and Grover Fugate, Executive Director of the RI Coastal Resources Management Council, joined 200 + people for a discussion about the threats we face from climate change and the innovative work being done to protect Rhode Island communities. This event was hosted by the Building Climate Action Communities (BCAC) Coalition. To explain the Coalition, Larry Taft Executive Director of RI Audubon does it best, "[this coalition] shows how eight organizations, by leveraging their expertise and resources, can move the broader community to take positive action on climate change."

*Red Shed and Bike Camp:* Bike Camp registration opened Saturday, March 18 (<http://www.wrwc.org/gwybikecamp.php>). We are preparing for April vacation bike camp; this is filled with third graders from Olneyville, recruited mostly from William D'Abate Elementary School. This is the first time we are having spring recess bike camp, it is a response to a need expressed by youth in Olneyville. We are seeking camp counselors in March, for hire on June 19th. Status on this?

*River Rangers:* Senior River Rangers have now been hired (1 new, 1 returning) and are currently training on the job. The Ranger season has begun! The GWLT is recruiting for the Junior River Ranger crew, aiming at 4 new recruits for the long season. We hope to have a full team in place by the April 22nd Clean Days Kickoff Event.

*Urban Fish Monitoring-Water Quality Monitoring:* Doug Stephens was just honored by Watershed Watch for completing his 10th year as a water quality monitor. Congratulations Doug! Doug is now organizing the 2017 monitoring season, checking in with past volunteers, making sure we have all of our sites covered and our training and collections coordinated. Many thanks to Doug.

*Herring Return Count:* Thanks to John Hake, our volunteers have already been trained and started counting fish at Rising Sun Mills. Eugenia Marks, one of our dedicated volunteers spotted 3 fish on March 30th and 5 on March 31st crossing the fish ladder. It's on! The Johnston Sunrise also ran a great article about fish counting in the March 30th issue. People are seeing tons of fish right now and even coming through at our brand new Manton Dam nature-like fishway. Contact John Hake to volunteer! [jhake@wrwc.org](mailto:jhake@wrwc.org)

Upcoming Events:

Migrating Fish and Dams Gallery Talk-Rachel Calabro and Alicia Lehrer, 6-7:30 pm April 13th at Sprout, 166 Valley St, Building 6M, Rising Sun Mills, Providence

*Clean Days Kickoff – Saturday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>*

[www.wrwc.org](http://www.wrwc.org)

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Note: April 2017 Activity Reports were not available from:

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