



Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association



2004 Annual Report

**Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
2004 Annual Report**

Congratulations to

Sandra M. Poirier

Chairperson, Richmond Rural Preservation Land Trust

This year's recipient of

The Salomon Award

Presented in recognition of her exemplary efforts to preserve, protect and conserve the natural resources of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, in furtherance of the goals of The Mitch and Betty Salomon Endowment

Presented at WPWA Annual Meeting
May 12, 2005

Front cover:

Students from Dan Potts' 8th Grade Science Classes at Chariho Middle School deliver ten kayaks to WPWA in September 2004. The students spent the summer raising funds to purchase the boats for educational and recreational use.

**Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
203 Arcadia Road
Hope Valley, RI 02832
www.wpwa.org**

Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
2004 Annual Report

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Chariho MS 8 th Grade Science Classes - 10 Kayaks	Trout Unlimited Narragansett Chapter – Canoe Rack

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The Champlin Foundations	\$ 10,000	Capital Renovations
Community Foundation of Southeastern CT	12,000	Scientific Study on Shunock River & Park Pond
Miriam C. Horton Trust	7,000	Recreational Programs
Horace A. & S. Ella Kimball Foundation	26,000	Capital Renovations and Operational Support
The Forrest C. Lattner Foundation	40,000	Capital; Scientific Study; Operational Support
John Wald Science Grants	3,000	Small Dam Study
WPWA Mitch & Betty Salomon Endowment	900	Operational support

GOVERNMENT GRANTS

EPA Education Grant	\$ 5,000	Town of Charlestown	600
RI Rivers Council	11,000	Town of Stonington	1000
RI General Assembly	5,000	Town of Hopkinton –	
Town of So. Kingstown	500	Property Tax Exemptions ~	4000
Town of Richmond	800		

↻ ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS ↻

The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) is a 501(c)(3) conservation organization founded in 1983. WPWA is governed by a board of trustees, and employs a full-time executive director, full-time program director, a part-time program assistant, and in the summer a college intern. More than 100 individuals comprise WPWA's volunteer force.

WPWA enjoys the support of more than 850 members from within the watershed, throughout the states of RI & CT, and nationwide.

In 1999, WPWA was designated Watershed Council for the Pawcatuck by the RI Rivers Council, pursuant to RIGL 46-28-8, giving it legal standing to advocate on behalf of the Pawcatuck Watershed resource. This status was renewed in 2004 for an additional five years.

The campus is situated on the banks of the upper Wood River at the Barbersville Dam and Fishing Access in Hope Valley. In 1993 WPWA established its permanent headquarters, and in 2001 dedicated an easement to the State of RI for the the handicapped-accessible fishing pier and canoe launch on our property.

↻ PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS ↻

INTEGRATED STUDY OF SMALL STREAMS

Over the past few years, WPWA has embarked on a series of monitoring and research projects, integrating the studies of fish and macroinvertebrate assemblages, stream temperature, nutrients. In 2004, the study of small dams in low-order, or wadeable, streams was added to this list, evaluating them for impacts on stream temperature and flow, and general habitat quality.

The primary concerns associated with our studies of small streams include minimum flows, temperature, sedimentation, nutrient loading, and introduction of pollutants. Here is a brief look at each study, conducted in low-order streams of the Beaver River in Richmond, Queen River and Parris Brook in Exeter, and Shunock River in North Stonington.

Small Dam Study

Launched in 2004 with funding from John Wald Science Grants, and under the volunteer leadership of Dr. Saul Saila, this study examined conditions at nine different sites. Fish and macroinvertebrate assemblages, temperature, flow, and the physical parameters of the dams were measured. The research focused primarily on examining the effects that small dams have on habitat characteristics and quality. Other studies included measuring the capability of certain fish to overcome small obstacles, such as weirs, culverts, and impoundments.

It was clear from the study that brook trout, which do not have the capability of jumping obstacles, could be impeded in their upstream migration to spawning areas by seemingly insignificant barriers such as road culverts. Next year WPWA will focus on identifying problem culverts as the next step in this study.

Stream Temperature

WPWA expanded this study, initiated a year earlier in order to generate more data on temperature as a requirement for habitat, and as a factor in determining minimum stream flows needed for suitable habitat. Using small "i-button" temperature loggers deployed at 19 different sites, WPWA was able to record over 1000 points of temperature at each site. By recording the daily, weekly, and monthly fluctuations of stream water temperatures, WPWA hopes to identify

good brook trout habitat, and with further study, to locate and document sources of unusual thermal warming.

On the Beaver River we were able to see conclusively that a small dam near New London Turnpike (about 4 feet in height) dramatically increased water temperature immediately downstream. In addition, a distance of about 5 miles was required before the stream water temperature recovered to more moderate levels. To verify these results, a repeat study will be conducted next year.

Benthic Macroinvertebrates

Volunteers used kick nets to collect macroinvertebrates above and below impoundments at twelve different sites. The samples were identified under microscope at WPWA and classified down to family. The population of specific macroinvertebrates at a given site serves as an indicator of water quality and habitat suitability.

Preliminary analysis indicates that there is some change in the macroinvertebrate communities immediately below an impoundment. However, the communities seem to recover in relatively short distances. Biological monitoring will continue on several sites next summer.

Surface Water Quality

WPWA sponsored monitoring at 65 sites in the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed through the URI Watershed Watch Program. Fifty volunteers conducted weekly monitoring in RI and CT streams and ponds for clarity, bi-weekly monitoring for dissolved oxygen, temperature, chlorophyll, and bi-monthly for bacteria.

Among the watersheds 20 lakes and ponds that were monitored, generally there were no major changes in the trophic (combined clarity, chlorophyll and phosphorous) levels, with almost all categorized as mesotrophic. Chapman, Meadowbrook, and Spaulding Ponds were categorized as weakly eutrophic, a change from the last couple of years. White Brook Pond, a new site this year, tested high in nutrients, rendering it eutrophic.

Conditions at Yawgoo and Barber Ponds continue to be of concern, with very high levels of phosphates and nitrates. Yawgoo Pond in particular shows signs of being hyper-eutrophic from 2001 to 2004. The state established TMDL (total maximum daily load) limits for the ponds in 2003 with recommendations to reduce phosphorus loading. In late 2004, WPWA applied for 319 funding to develop a watershed plan for these ponds.

Stream and river sampling revealed some elevated nutrient levels. Several sites on the Pawcatuck River showed high levels of both nitrogen and phosphorus. Nitrogen is a concern in the Pawcatuck Estuary and could contribute to algal blooms under the right conditions. Unusual spikes of high phosphate levels were also seen on Sherman Brook, Taney Brook, and the Queen River.

Research Publications

Saila, S., M. Cheeseman, D. Poyer, "Maximum Stream Temperature Estimation from Air Temperature Data and its Relationship to Brook Trout Habitat Requirements in Rhode Island." Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, February 2004.

Saila, S., E. Lewis, M. Cheeseman, D. Poyer, "Assessing Habitat Requirements for Brook Trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) in Low Order Streams." Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, February 2004.

STEWARDSHIP ↗ OUTREACH ↗ PUBLIC ADVOCACY

Numerous development proposals, including large-scale commercial plans, kept WPWA active in public hearings, planning meetings, and development reviews. Parcels of land at highway interchanges along Route 95 corridor have attracted the most attention. And the affordable housing issue earlier in the year led many to cry foul on density bonuses proposed for several subdivisions.

WPWA participated in public hearings and planning meetings regarding zoning changes at Exits 92 in Stonington, a proposed racetrack at Exit 93 and Route 184 in North Stonington, large-scale commercial developments at Exit 1 in Hopkinton and Exit 3 in Richmond, a proposed ATV park in Charlestown, and assorted subdivision of varying densities throughout the watershed. Affordable housing plans were reviewed for several watershed towns and, where appropriate, participated in workshops at the local level.

Air and water issues in the village of Alton, proposed landing of Black Hawk helicopters in Black Farm Management Area, and an illegal Hopkinton dump are some of the active land use issues that WPWA has joined forces with other community groups in opposition.

Ordinance and Regulation Reviews

WPWA staff participated in the review of draft water quality regulations for the State of RI, and the Hopkinton groundwater protection ordinance. Regional wastewater management planning in the towns of Hopkinton, Richmond, and Exeter has been a focus area as well.

As other watershed councils have done in other areas of RI, WPWA actively worked for the successful passage of the Question 8 Bond Issue for Open Space by meeting with local reporters, submitting an op-ed piece, and through our quarterly newsletter.

Institutional Capacity Building & Watershed Council Mentoring

Workshops in which WPWA participated, or presented projects, include the RI Rivers Council Fishable/Swimmable workshops, strategic planning for The Nature Conservancy, the RI Land and Water Conservation Summit Membership Panel, and the Rhode Island Natural History Survey Conference, and the Social Venture Partners - New Business Ventures for Non Profits workshop.

Working in Partnership

CT DEP	Thames River Basin Partnership
Narragansett Bay Project	Trout Unlimited Narragansett Chapter
The Nature Conservancy	University of Rhode Island
RI DEM	USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
RI Trail Advisory Committee	U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife
RI Environmental Education Association	US EPA, Region 1
RI Rivers Council	Washington County Land Trust Coalition
Southern RI Conservation District	Washington Cty Regional Planning Council

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RI Water Resources Board Implementation Team for Water Allocation
RI WRB Streamflow Standards Committee
RI Renewable Energy Fund Advisory Board
RI Greenhouse Gas Stakeholder's Group

NEWSLETTER BROCHURE RIVER AND HIKING GUIDES

Four quarterly issues of *Watershed* were published, with a total distribution of over 4000. Through this quarterly publication, WPWA conveys news, events, issues, and proposals that impact our watershed and natural resources, and has done so for the past 22 years.

The WPWA membership brochure was redesigned in 2004 to reflect the years of growth and maturity as an organization. Nearly 3500 have been distributed to date.

The *Wood-Pawcatuck River Guide* and *Walks in the Watershed* continue to sell at retail outlets throughout the area, as well as directly through WPWA. Walk-in sales have increased as a result of advertisements posted at our Barbersville public kiosk.

RECREATION

Public Access Improvement River and Hiking Trail Maintenance

WPWA continued work on the planning and design for an enhancement of the Switch Road access, and has pending the improvement of portage around the Bradford dam as part of the proposed fish ladder repair at that site.

Six volunteers helped keep Browning Mill Pond trail clear for hikers, and eight volunteers worked on keeping blow-downs across the river from limiting passage to canoeists and kayakers.

Chariho Middle School Science Class Kayak Donation

Community-minded students of Dan Potts eighth-grade science classes spent their summer raising funds to purchase 10 new kayaks for WPWA. This donation brings our fleet to 24, enough to accommodate their and future classes for water quality studies, and also enough to expand recreational and educational opportunities for other classes and groups to have as well.

Recreational and Community Service Events

The slate of recreational programs for 2004 brought out over 250 participants in a variety of paddle and fishing programs, including 60 on our annual Source to Sea paddle over 4 Saturdays in June. Seventy-nine of those participants came for fishing instruction, many of them children.

On Opening Day, our annual litter awareness initiative reached out to hundreds of fishermen on the need to carry trash home, encouraging them to use refillable coffee mugs instead of disposable styrofoam cups that are found all over our rivers and access areas.

Fifty volunteers participated in Earth Day cleanups throughout the watershed, led by our Chariho Community Service students.

Summer Camp Program

Participants in Roger Williams Park Zoo Camp made a weekly visit to WPWA campus for seven consecutive weeks for kayak instruction and aquatic explorations. Over 130 campers took part in these fun outings.

EDUCATION

Program director Denise Poyer worked directly with elementary school students in the classroom and in the field. In all, 360 students participated in educational programs conducted in Hope Valley, Exeter, Charlestown, and Ashaway schools.

Middle and high-school students from Chariho, Coventry, and Pawcatuck participated in field tips and explorations led by Denise. Over 300 students participated in river kayaks and

clean-ups, biological sampling, and water quality monitoring. WPWA sponsored 8 different students throughout 2004 in the Chariho High School Community Service program, and one from the Exeter-West Greenwich SAS Program.

In the areas of adult, professional, and alternative learning, WPWA sponsored several programs for 150 participants from URI and UCONN, AmeriCorp volunteers, Groton and Avolonia Land Trusts, and the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Denise conducted GEMS-Net training sessions on the Land & Water Kit for eight elementary school teachers in South County. In addition, she helped organize the annual conference for the RI Environmental Education Association for 65 teachers.

~ FINANCIAL STATEMENT ~

As of December 31, 2004

ASSETS	
CURRENT ASSETS	
Checking	\$ 1,123
Savings	64,809
Investments	197,994
Inventory	<u>2,428</u>
Total current assets	<u>266,354</u>
PROPERTY	
Buildings	187,724
Improvements	158,245
Accumulated depreciation	<u>(8,858)</u>
Total property	<u>337,111</u>
OTHER ASSETS	
Land	<u>146,000</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>\$ 749,465</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	
CURRENT LIABILITIES	
Rental security deposit	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
NET ASSETS	
Unrestricted	
Designated by the trustees for long-term investment	161,081
Undesignated	394,471
Temporarily restricted	10,000
Permanently restricted	<u>182,913</u>
Total net assets	<u>748,465</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	<u>\$ 749,465</u>