

WATERSHED

A Newsletter of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Volume 27 No. 1

Winter 2010

A Fond Farewell to a Partner in Preservation *by Lori Urso*

I begin this piece aboard an Air Canada flight from Toronto to Quebec. As I look down upon the snow-covered terrain and the visible ski slopes, I think of Ray.

Two weeks ago, amidst a line of mourners waiting to pay their respects to, I viewed numerous awards, accolades, and photos - photos of Ray on skis, atop high peaks he had just scaled, photos of him riding the rapids of northern rivers, and crossing the finish line at numerous races. He lived life, and loved the outdoors, like no other.

Of all the grand-scale adventures and accomplishments of this man, I'm certain he would say his most treasured were those that took place in his home community, where he relentlessly pursued a better quality of life for his friends and neighbors.

Raymond F. Cherenzia was, for nearly 20 years, my partner in preservation. For all the projects and pursuits that I undertook for WPWA, Ray was by my side. From the early beginnings of WPWA's Arcadia Road headquarters, to the early discussion of improvements to the Bradford fishway, to the acquisition of the Jay Cronan access, and through the laborious (and seemingly endless) adventure that the Switch Road access had become before its final completion, Ray was by my side. And not always at my request, but often, at his own request. He wanted to be in-

involved, he wanted to leave his mark, and indeed he did.

For as busy as he was, running a substantial engineering and construction firm with his brother Sam, and enriching the lives of his beloved children with his devotion, Ray was just a phone call away for me. Whenever I got a "bright idea," (or whenever he got one), we quickly plotted our course to make a difference. And mind you, his services in this regard emerged gratis.



Raymond Cherenzia receives an award from Lori Urso at the 2005 WPWA Annual meeting

I chuckle when I recall our short wait outside the office of the newly-appointed director of the RI Department of Transportation, for the "final" showdown regarding the Switch Road access. To this meeting came the heads of RIDOT and RIDEM, a state senator, two chief engineers, WPWA then-president Bob Schiedler, and me. As we waited I turned to Ray and said "thanks so much for taking the time to be here, Ray," to which he replied, "Are you

kidding? I LOVE this stuff. How often do I get to meet with all these heads of state? Only you could pull this one off, Lori."

And of course, out of this meeting, came more "pro bono" work for Ray. But he didn't seem to mind. He loved a worthwhile project as much as any of us.

One of my proudest personal moments came in 2003, when I received the Key Award for community service from the Westerly-Pawcatuck Chamber of Commerce. What I loved most about this award was that Ray had been a past recipient, and winning it meant that each year forward in the Annual Meeting booklet, my name would sit aside Ray's as a past recipient. Never did I believe I would appear in the same class as he for service to the community. I still don't believe my offerings will ever compare to his, but becoming a member of this "club" with him will forever mean so much to me.

Ray was a good friend, and partner, and I am so very proud of the work we did together. I so admired and respected his giving nature and his willingness to so freely share his expertise and talents to make our corner of the globe a better place.

Rest in peace Ray - your legacy of giving and your love of community will forever grace our watershed, as your memory will grace our hearts.

South County Collaborative Groups Join Forces

At a recent meeting of the SCC several non-profit groups met to join forces in order to spread a message that they can all support. Representatives from WPWA, The Nature Conservancy, Salt Ponds Coalition, Clean-Up Stonington Harbor and Save the Bay among others were present.

The meeting's focus was to create a campaign that could be adopted by all and be promoted through literature, web sites and other avenues for learning. Whether sampling, monitoring, creating policy standards, or educating our youth, all groups are concerned with and advocating for cleaner, healthier waters in our watersheds and bays. It should come as no surprise that the mutual issue is Water Quality with nitrogen being the leading pollutant of concern.

Nitrogen - *Too Much of a Good Thing*

We do need to recognize though that nitrogen is an important part of our ecosystem. It is present in the atmosphere and ground. All plants, animals and human beings that comprise the Earth require this naturally occurring element. However, just like carbon and methane, too much nitrogen can cause problems. Storing and processing nitrogen efficiently becomes an incredible challenge.

The reasons for this overabundance are primarily caused by human influence. Solutions range from complex to simple, tangible practices that everyone can do in an effort to correct this issue. In the next issue of *Watershed* WPWA will publish some of the major causes and a few simple solutions anyone can practice.

Wild & Scenic Rivers Designation for Wood- Pawcatuck Watershed Rivers *by Denise J. Poyer*



When you hear the phrase Wild and Scenic River, you may think of large free flowing rivers, such as the Colorado or Snake River. The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) believes that we have several rivers that qualify for Wild and Scenic designation here in southern New England. Recently, WPWA started a committee, the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Wild and Scenic Rivers Designation Committee (Wild and Scenic Committee for short), which consists of representatives from The Nature Conservancy, Save The Bay, and Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management. All of these groups are advocating for Wild and Scenic designation for several rivers in the watershed.

After the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was passed by Congress in 1968, the National Park Service (NPS) did a study of the nation's rivers to identify those which potentially qualify for designation. In 1982 they found three in RI: the Chipuxet, Wood, and Pawcatuck rivers. In fact, one impetus for the creation of WPWA was to get these rivers designated. This did not happen in the '80's because the criteria for a Wild and Scenic river were not formulated with the typical New England river in mind. NPS was looking for rivers that were inaccessible, primarily on federal lands, and contained no dams. Here in southern New England all our rivers are near major populations with many access points, predominantly on private property, and contain numerous small mill dams.

In the '90's, it was recognized that rivers in the east that did not

meet the traditional standards still possessed "outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values" which needed to be preserved. Congress amended the act to allow for smaller rivers with some impoundments and added "Recreation" as a third designating quality. Grassroots organizations began partnering with local, state, and federal agencies to acquire Wild and Scenic status for their rivers and, at the same time, develop management plans. Using this partnership approach, eight rivers in New England have received Wild and Scenic designation, most recently the Taunton River in MA and the Eight-Mile River in CT.

With this in mind, the Wild and Scenic Committee started working with Jamie Fosburgh, an agent for the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Program in New England, to begin the process towards obtaining Wild and Scenic designation for the Wood, Chipuxet, Beaver, Queen, and Pawcatuck Rivers. The first step is to ask our Congressional Representative, in this case James Langevin, to introduce a bill that would direct the NPS to conduct a study to determine if the rivers meet the criteria for designation. Once the bill is passed, NPS will approve a three year study which will identify any outstanding values of the rivers. To do this, a new committee will be formed, consisting of the current partners and many additional stakeholders. We hope to have a representative from all the towns in the watershed along with state and federal agencies, non-profit conservation organizations, and local interest groups such as agriculture, business, and recreational groups. This new study committee will be tasked with identifying the outstandingly



If you have read the article in the WATERSHED TECH CORNER then you already know that the redesigned WPWA website offers the ease of registering for events right online. Please visit the site today at: www.wpwa.org to view the list of upcoming events for Spring and Summer 2010.



We hope you will consider joining us for a Kayak & Canoe Paddle in June or a Learn to Fish event in July!

RAISING MONEY FOR WPWA HAS NEVER BEEN MORE EXCITING!

WPWA Auction – Bid Early, Bid Often, Bid High!

The WPWA is hosting an auction to raise funds for the organization. We have an incredible array of items to purchase and bids open on the opening day of the trout fishing season (10 April). Bidding will officially close at the Annual Meeting on the 20th of May.

Full descriptions of the items for sale and instructions on how to place a bid (phone, email, mail) can be found on the WPWA web site (www.wpwa.org) under “What’s Happening”. The current high bid price will be posted on the web site each day.

Auction Treasures Include

- Fly fishing lessons from WPWA Trustee and living legend fisherman Ed Lombardo
- Fly fishing in Little Narragansett Bay with Master Caster and WPWA Trustee Alan Desbonnet
- A beautiful Thomas and Thomas fly rod (fresh or salt water)
- A case of Hopkinton’s premier wine from the *Over the Hill Vineyard*
- A custom-made GIS map of your neighborhood
- A guided kayak trip down the Wood River with WPWA naturalist Denise Poyer
- A tour of a working dairy farm with WPWA Trustee Kevin Breene
- An original piece of photographic art by *Comfort Zone*
- 40 hours of handyman work provided by WPWA President Mal Grant
- Dinner for six by gourmet chef and WPWA Trustee Dante Ionata
- Guided hike lead by WPWA naturalist Danielle Aube and geologist and WPWA Trustee Tom Boving

We have great auction items, for a great cause!



Join the fun and get your bids in early!

Fly Rod Building Continues with Chariho Middle School Students

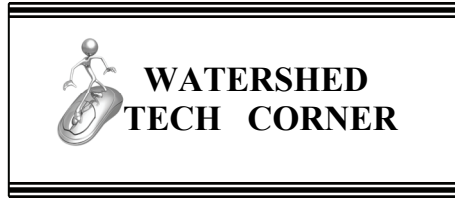
On back to back Saturdays in January, Jay Boyer, 2009 WPWA Volunteer of the Year, lead a group of four to learn to build their own fly rods. The successful group gathered in the WPWA conference room and worked laboriously to create not only their very own piece of fishing equipment but beautiful works of art.



WPWA is looking forward to learning that the next group, also under the leadership of Boyer, will be just as successful. Four select Chariho Middle School (CMS) students will assemble at the WPWA campus in order to undertake the same effort.

"The more our students learn about fishing, the more they learn about fish; the more they learn about fish, the more they'll learn about their habitat and their requirements for a healthy ecosystem. We hope the result will be that they develop a passion for the outdoors and an equal passion for conservation." says Dan Potts, CMS Science Teacher.

The four students were chosen by entering an essay contest. "These students are young, motivated, and interested anglers – they are our future teachers and legislators – who will hopefully pass on the rich legacy of fishing that we have come to love – and preserve our opportunities for continued enjoyment. This rod building session is another very valuable opportunity in passing on the legacy" says Alex MacLeod, CMS Guidance Counselor.



Reinventing the WPWA Website

By Peter V. August, WPWA Trustee

After years of planning, designing, and creating new content, the web site, www.wpwa.org, is ready for prime time. The new web site went live in early February and users are giving it a 5-star, thumbs-up review! The site designer, Bruce Hooke, is no stranger to the environmental community. He is the web genius behind the RI Land and Water web site and the ExploreRI site. Bruce and WPWA Staff, Danielle R. Aube and Denise Poyer oversaw the project; their explicit goal was to make the site interesting, informative, and easy to navigate.

The opening page of the web site is brilliant. It is a pleasure to look at and directs you to sections of the web site that will be popular destinations for all web surfers interested in the organization or the watershed.



A screen shot of the WPWA home page

The web site has a number of new features for the organization. It is now possible to join the organization or renew your membership on-line. Secure payment can be made using PayPal or any major credit card. WPWA publications can be pur-

chased in the on-line store. Members will find this feature incredibly handy.

Everything you want to know about the organization, its history, staff, and current projects can be found in the "About Us" tab. "The Watershed" tab is a treasure trove of information about the watershed. The photo gallery has a fun potpourri of pictures of various WPWA events and the "River Condition" page is a terrific resource to learn real-time water levels and hazards on the rivers in the watershed. This is going to be my go-to web page when I want to see the condition of rivers in the area.

The "Water Quality" page is a new addition to the web site and represents two years of work by WPWA consultant Elise Torello. Using the familiar Google Map mapping engine, all the water quality monitoring data in the watershed is at your fingertips! The WPWA is pushing the cutting edge of web technology with this application.

The fishing page is a special treat and contains thoughtful pieces by master fishermen (and WPWA Trustees) Ed Lombardo and Alan Desbonnet. Danielle provided a helpful piece on fishing with kids. The fishing page will showcase fishing reports as the season approaches.

The web site conveniently navigates you to the WPWA store, blog, membership information page, and useful links. The "Events" tab is terrific and concisely presents all the upcoming activities and includes the ability to register online.



Weasels in Winter

By Denise J. Poyer

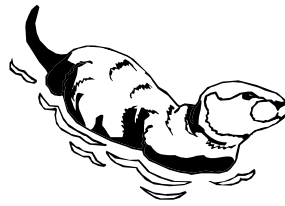
One of the most fascinating and least understood mammals in our watershed is the weasel family or *Mustelidae*. Local members of this surprisingly diverse group include ermine, long-tailed weasel, fisher, mink, and otter. Winter is a great time to catch a glimpse or at least some signs of one of these furry animals. They are very active at this time of year, using slightly different strategies for surviving the cold.

The ermine, *Mustela ermine*, also known as a stoat or short-tailed weasel, and its slightly larger cousin, the long-tailed weasel, *Mustela frenata*, are distinctive for the physical changes they undergo in winter. During the fall molts ermine and long-tailed weasels change the color of their coats from dark brown to almost pure white and only the tip of their tail remains black. It's thought that this black tip is a distraction to their predators. Chasing just the tail tip, predators can misjudge where the rest of the animal is. Weasels are very aggressive, standing up to animals such as bobcats and even small bears. Look for them in open woodlands, brush lands, and stone walls. The ermine tends to prefer upland but the long-tail weasel could also be found near water.

Mink, *American vison*, well known for their beautiful dark brown fur, can be found along river corridors, forested swamps, and other wetlands. These extremely inquisitive animals hunt in a zigzag pattern, checking under logs and rocks along their paths. We often observe mink along the banks of the Wood River opposite WPWA headquarters during the winter, poking around the edges and swimming easily in the river.

A common favorite, the river otter, *Lutra canadensis*, can be found

near rivers, swamps, and lakes. In winter otters may travel miles overland looking for places to get into the water and fish. Otter signs may be easier to see in winter, especially the tail drag in the snow and slides down embankments near water. Look for piles of fish scales and scat near water. Otters have been spotted spending a couple of days fishing in the well stocked area above Barberville Dam.



Fisher or fisher cats, *Martes pennant*, are relatively new on the winter scene in the Pawcatuck Watershed. They were extirpated from most of their range in New England through excessive fur trapping and habitat destruction by means of logging and clearing fields for farming. It is believed that fisher in RI have reintroduced themselves from existing populations in Maine and New Hampshire. The change over from primarily agricultural land use to primarily forested land provided the fisher with their preferred habitat of thick hard and soft wood forests. Second to otters, fisher are the largest members of the weasel family in the watershed. Fisher have been observed by the author up in trees in a forested area of Richmond.

All Mustelids share the same general shape of an elongated body and short legs. This enables them to get into the burrows of their prey. Due to this shape they cannot preserve heat as well as other mammals and must actively hunt all winter. An interesting fact about the weasel family is that they have the ability to delay implantation of fertilized ovum. This allows them to mate at certain

times of the year, but wait several months to begin gestation, ensuring that their young will be born at an optimal time in late spring. Mustelids are truly wild animals and a sighting of them is a rare and enjoyable event. Even if you never see one, their presence in our watershed means we are preserving and protecting import habitat for them and many other native species.

Information sources:

Godin, J. 1977. *Wild Mammals of New England*. John Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, Maryland. 207 pp.

Nowak, R. 1991 5th Ed. *Walker's Mammals of the World, Vol. II*. John Hopkins University Press. Baltimore, Maryland. Pp 1106 - 1143.

RI Department of Environmental Management. 2008. *Fishers in Rhode Island*. <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/fishwild/pdf/fishers.pdf>

Getting To Know Your Watershed Lecture Series Coming to a Close

The past presentations in the lecture series were both a huge success. It is now time to prepare for the last talk in the series. This final lecture will take place during the **WPWA Annual Meeting**.

Fishing legend and WPWA Trustee, Ed Lombardo will present a special lecture on recreational fisheries in the Wood River titled:

“The Natural History of Trout and Trout Fishing in the Wood River”

May 20, 2010, 5:30pm to 8pm
WPWA Annual Meeting, at the
South Kingstown Land Trust Barn

Lectures are **free for members** of the WPWA **and their guests**.

Be sure to RSVP by calling the WPWA office at 401-539-9017

**WATERSHED
KIDS
CORNER**

This Watershed Children’s Page features a word search with terms that focus on Nitrogen. Please spend a few minutes with your child to read the article together before trying the puzzle. Have Fun!

Nitrogen - Too Much of a Good Thing

If you breathe air then you inhale nitrogen. About 80% of the air in our atmosphere is composed of it. Our bodies needs nitrogen in order to live but strangely we cannot use the kind we get from breathing.

Plants need nitrogen to live and grow, too. They get it from the soil they are growing in. In order to make plants grow stronger and faster sometimes a farmer or gardener might add nitrogen to the soil.

When the plants get nitrogen from the soil they store it in their cells. When we eat the plants (vegetables - Yum!) our body takes the nitrogen from the plant cells and stores it in our own cells. Plant and human cells are really tiny and you can’t see them unless you use a microscope!

When too much fertilizer is added to the ground it piles up because the plants can’t use it all. This extra fertilizer, which don’t forget - is loaded with nitrogen, ends up getting washed away when it precipitates (that often means rain). The rain, which is carrying the nitrogen, ends up in our rivers, lakes, streams and bays and oceans.

Water that is full of nitrogen causes aquatic plants and algae to grow really fast. While they are growing they are taking too many of the nutrients that animals like fish and oysters need in order to live. These animals and other aquatic plants might die because they are not getting their share of the nutrients.

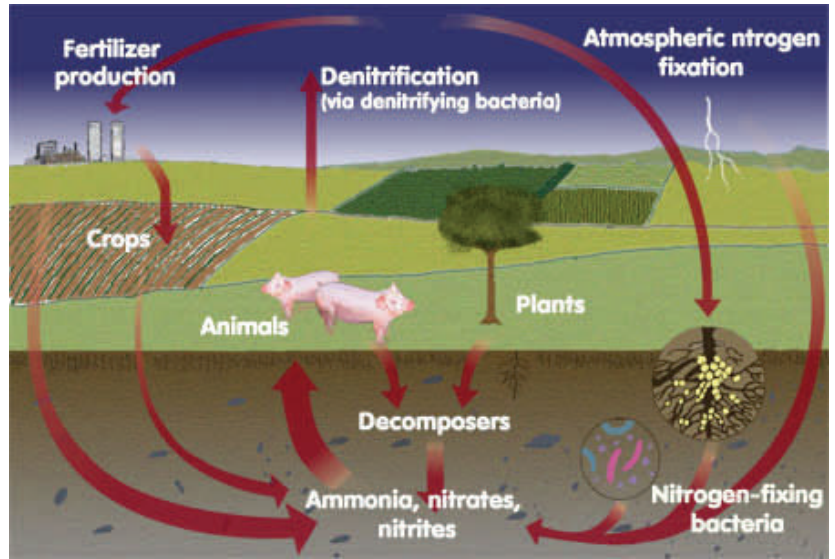
There are many ways that too much nitrogen can get into our environment but most of the time it comes from humans. Here is a list of a few common ways we add nitrogen to our ecosystems:

- Using too much fertilizer to make plants grow or to make grass very green
- Not taking proper care of septic tanks which store collected wastewater from houses
- Improper discharge from boats emptying collected wastewater into the ocean (can you imagine doing that? Yuck!)

Here are a few simple remedies to this problem:

Encourage your friends and family to use non-chemical (organic) fertilizers and pesticides on their lawns and gardens. Ask them if they have had their septic tanks pumped recently and if not or they don’t remember let them know that they should get it done soon. If someone you know spends a lot of time on a boat make sure they know the harmful effects of emptying their wastewater discharge into the water.

Keep up the clean, green, work!



The Nitrogen Cycle

The arrows in the diagram above show the routes that nitrogen takes through our atmosphere and into the ground. There are some pretty big words used, so you are encouraged to look them up and learn more about this essential element.

WORD BANK Find these words that are hidden in the puzzle!

- | | | | |
|---------|-------------|-----------|---------------|
| ALGAE | DISCHARGE | FARMERS | FERTILIZER |
| GARDENS | GREEN LAWNS | HEALTHY | NITROGEN |
| OCEAN | ORGANIC | PESTICIDE | PRECIPITATION |
| RIVER | SEPTIC TANK | SOIL | WASTE WATER |

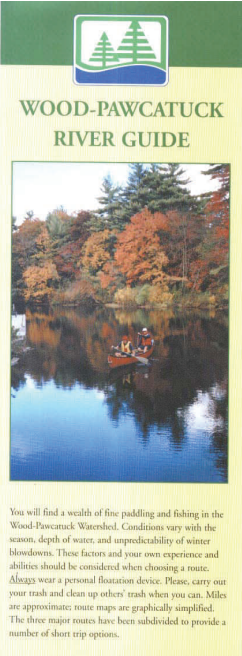
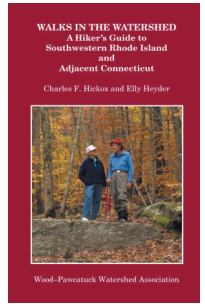
F A S K N A T C I T P E S L
 A E R O G R E E W G A D S E
 R P R E C I P I T A T I O N
 M H E T T E S W N R T S I I
 E A C S I A A C D D B C L T
 R O L R T L W N I E J H O R
 S I A G R I I E R N Q A Y O
 C C V M A K C Z T S A R F G
 A R N E B E S I E S U G A E
 R M Z E R W N E D R A E R N
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Continued from page 2

remarkable values of each river. At the same time they will be developing a stewardship plan to protect these resources. This assures that management of the rivers will have input from all interested parties and that local interests and needs will be an important component of the plan.

NPS will review the final report and develop their own to submit to the Secretary of the Interior with recommendations regarding the qualification of the rivers for the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. Assuming NPS recommends designation, we would have our Legislators sponsor another bill asking Congress to designate the rivers as Wild and Scenic.

In my next article I will discuss what "outstandingly remarkable values" are, as defined by NPS; which ones apply to the rivers in the Wood - Pawcatuck Watershed; and why we would like to see these rivers receive Wild and Scenic designation.

WPWA ANNUAL MEETING To Be Held at a NEW LOCATION



funds from the Champlin Foundations and the State Agricultural Land Preservation Commission. The title was then transferred to the SKLT for stewardship in perpetuity.

The old barn proved to be in disrepair, so a replacement was built, with funding generously donated by a private individual. In March 2003, SKLT began using the building in an effort to further their mission.

A Brief History of the Barn

For over a hundred years, an accessory building stood on this site, with the same external dimensions and footprint as the current building, and it was used by the Weeden family as a garage and living quarters for farm staff.

The barn is strategically located in the heart of land conservation work in South Kingstown, including farmlands in Matunuck, rare species habitats of the Matunuck Hills, and the geologic wonders of Perryville.

In 1999, the farm was subdivided, and 97 acres of farm fields were permanently protected by The Nature Conservancy, purchased with

SKLT hopes to share the use of this space with other like-minded organizations to inspire continuing work on protecting the valuable natural lands of South Kingstown and South County.

Application for Membership

Name(s) _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

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- ____ Family \$40
- ____ Contributor \$50
- ____ Corporate \$100
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In addition to my dues, I am enclosing an extra contribution of \$ _____

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