

WATERSHED

A Newsletter of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Volume 18 No. 3

SUMMER 2001

DEM, Partners Dedicate Accessible Fishing Facility at Barberville Dam

Gail Mastrati

The RI Department of Environmental Management, in partnership with WPWA, the Governor's Commission on Disabilities, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Small Craft Access Trust (SCAT) dedicated the new handicapped-accessible shore fishing facility and canoe portage at Barberville Dam on the Wood River in Hopkinton on June 15, 2001. The site will give disabled anglers access to one of the state's prime fishing areas.

The newly-designed facility consists of an accessible fishing pier on the riverbank, a parking area for four vehicles transporting people with disabilities, a sidewalk leading to the pier and the riverbank, and a canoe portage on the west side of the pier. The design will allow an individual to park, travel to the pier, and fish or get into a canoe, all within an accessible route.

The Barberville Dam fishing access area was developed by DEM and is located on the WPWA's property at 203 Arcadia Road. In 1993, DEM and the WPWA entered into a cooperative agreement that allows the public to use the portion of its land that DEM developed. This had previously been all private property, and access to the river was limited. Since 1992, DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife has acquired three separate parcels of land at Barberville Dam to

improve public access to the Wood River.

The most popular trout fishery in Rhode Island, the upper Wood River offers excellent water quality, cool temperatures, and continuous flow.

The river is well-suited for trout, and is frequently stocked with hatchery-produced fish by DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife.

"This project could not have taken place without the cooperative effort of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association," noted DEM Director Jan Reitsma. "The Association's property offered an ideal location to develop a handicapped-accessible shore fishing area, and also provides a more suitable and safer location for portaging around Barberville Dam."

Lori Urso, executive director of WPWA, said, "Part of our mission is to promote recreational use of the rivers, something that has been very difficult and perhaps impossible for physically-challenged individuals. That is why this project has been so important to us."

Bob Cooper, executive secretary of the Governor's Commission on Disabilities said, "The Commission is pleased to have assisted in making one of Rhode Island's best trout fish-

ing sites universally accessible by all people, including those with disabilities. This site provides the first accessible canoe launch and fishing platform on the Wood River. The Commission looks forward to creating

more inclusive recreational opportunities available throughout the state, in partnership with DEM and the US Fish and Wildlife Service."



Federal and state officials, project partners, and the press gather for a formal dedication at Barberville.

Bob Sousa, Region 5 Chief of Federal Aid for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service lauded the project as "one more example of how the folks at DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife do a fantastic job of providing high-quality angling experiences."

The total cost for the project was \$75,093.88. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, through RIDEM, contributed \$35,967.93; the Governor's Commission on Disabilities provided \$15,000; SCAT provided \$24,125.95; and WPWA donated a conservation easement for the land. The facility was designed by engineer Jay McGinn of DEM's Division of Planning and Development, and was constructed by W.H. Peppes General Contractor, Inc. of Lincoln, RI.

Assembly Members, Councilors Celebrate Rivers' Day on the Wood

What a day, what a party! That sums up this years experience with members of the RI General Assembly and some of our local town councilors on June 16.



Rep. Don Lally and son Conner

The weather could not have been more gorgeous for the event, which began with a leisurely paddle on the Wood River from Switch Road, and ended at the river-front property of Kimball Foundation president Tom Black, the gracious and generous host of our post-canoe luncheon.

Leisurely, however, may not be the description of Senator Donna Walsh and partner Priscilla, whose canoe capsized twice along the quiet river stretch. Thanks to the assistance of two fearless kayakers who were out for a day of recreation, the novice paddlers salvaged the trip to an enjoyable end. Donna was not the only boater to experience the cold river waters first hand. At least three of our distinguished guests came out of their canoes soaking wet. But, as they say, all's well that ends well, and this paddle certainly did.

We would be remiss in not ac-



Priscilla and Donna pose for a keepsake with their saviors.

knowledging the efforts of Rep. Brian Kennedy and Senator Walsh for spreading the word on the Hill, resulting in a fantastic turnout. Though our South County legislators may be aware of our precious resource, those from the northern and eastern areas of our state are often unaware. With representation from Providence, Cranston, Johnston, Burrillville, Cumberland, and elsewhere, WPWA was able to introduce these lawmakers to our pristine watershed environment, which hopefully will help them make appropriate decisions regarding its welfare.

That is the real motivation for the annual event.

Capital Campaign, Renovations Moving Forward

Recent visitors to our Barberville headquarters have undoubtedly noticed our state of physical transition, namely- a mess! But this is a good thing, as our buildings, which have fallen into a bit of disrepair over the past few years, are getting a facelift.

Thanks in large part to the generosity of the Horace A. and S. Ella Kimball Foundation, which has helped to kick-off our capital campaign with a generous \$25,000 donation, we are well underway to beautifying our lovely Wood River-front home.

Of this donation, \$17,000 has been earmarked for the complete renovation of our rental property, which is expected to be finished and ready to rent in September.

The house was completely gutted, reinsulated, rewired, and now new sheetrock is going up. Following that, new doors and baseboard trim will be installed. The home's exterior will also be completed, and a new electrical service installed. Exterior electrical wires will be run underground.

An additional \$8,000 from Kimball is earmarked for a new gravel driveway for the office, education center, and rental house. The falling retaining wall will be removed and the land regraded and seeded. Already the difference is quite apparent.

The office building and education center are part of a \$150,000 capital project which aims to refurbish these buildings inside and out. Both will be shingled and re-

roofed. The office building will be made into a small ADA-compliant conference and meeting center for the use of other non-profits. Our offices will be relocated to the lower level. The education center will be spruced up for a delightful riverside program facility. We currently have several capital grant proposals under consideration, and have received

\$30,000 from Champlin Foundations and \$4640 from Ocean State Charities Trust to repair our river-front retaining wall and porch. Come by and take a look, and please consider a capital gift toward our fund-raising effort.



Our Watershed, On The Web

Harold Ward

Watershed-level thinking requires access to information about all of the towns in the watershed and can be enhanced by considering models of planning and improvement projects in other watersheds. The world wide web (www) on the internet provides an efficient forum for sharing information. Print reports usually have modest circulation which is limited by cost, a lag-time between preparation and publication, and are frozen in time when printed. A website is available to a global audience immediately on publication at very modest cost, and with proper maintenance can be kept current and relevant. Public-access networked computers in libraries and internet cafes are narrowing the “digital divide” that once separated computer owners and non-owners.

In the future, this newsletter will include as a regular feature a listing of particularly useful websites that we think our members will want to visit. We start this month with reports of four Brown University theses completed in May 2001 that address current issues in our watershed, all of which can be reached through: <http://envstudies.brown.edu/land>

Two of these, the work of Justin Huxol and Matt Amengual, were designed to assist the Charlestown Planning Commission in setting priorities for open space protec-



Justin Huxol, Matt Amengual, and Harold Ward

tion. Amengual reasoned that planners should know what use land could be put to if it is *not* protected. He developed a sophisticated method, using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to project what residential development could occur under existing land use regulation in Charlestown, if no additional lands were to be protected. (This is called a full “build-out” analysis.) He was able to do this, because Charlestown has

developed a parcel-level GIS coverage for their property records, one of two towns in the watershed to have done so (South Kingstown is the other). This kind of analysis (and many other important analyses) is possible only after parcel-level coverages are developed – something that other towns should consider a high priority.

Huxol designed a web-based survey to provide Charlestown residents with a convenient way to express their preferences for which types of open space and which open-space characteristics are most important to preserve. More than 120 residents took part in the survey, far more than would likely have attended a public meeting on open space planning. The combination of Huxol’s and Amengual’s work has been submitted to the Charlestown Planning Commission, and is expected to be incorporated in its open space plan.

Volunteers in South Kingstown

conducted an intensive survey of cultural features of the town in 1998 – but the report was available only in print, and so, like many planning studies, its results were not being used consistently in land use decisions. Nathan James put these results into a website that connects the qualitative results of the survey to the quantitative powers of GIS.

Recognizing that land trusts now play an essential role in open space protection in Washington County, Evan Goldsmith investigated to what extent land trusts had begun to work at a watershed level – i.e. outside of their town boundaries, and how frequently they worked cooperatively. He learned that communication between trusts was rare, and set about facilitating the creation of a Washington County Land Trust Coalition. All of the area land trusts have signed a memorandum of agreement to cooperate, and a group website has been created - <http://www.envstudies.brown.edu/thesis/2001/goldsmith/index.html>.

On a slightly different note – but still related to the Net – WPWA would like to move as quickly as possible to electronic distribution of information. This will reduce our costs significantly, so our limited funds can be used in better ways than subsidizing the US postal service, and will be far more efficient and quicker. If we don’t have your e-mail address – please send a note to WPWA@mindspring.com - and be sure to give your name and snail-mail address, so we can be sure to make the right connections. We expect to have a revised and more extensive WPWA website up by the end of the summer.

From the Executive Director

Keeping up with the happenings at WPWA is a challenge in and of itself these days. Hard to believe the year is half over. Why do I always feel like the time has been "wasted?" In fact it hasn't. So much has happened in six months it's easy to forget just how busy it has been.

Since I've written a great deal of the content of this newsletter, I hesitate to repeat myself. But I will say this: the support for this organization keeps getting stronger and stronger, and more and more progress toward our seemingly endless growth is being made.

Progress in the form of capital improvements. Progress in the form of increased funding—imagine, the state is giving us money as a watershed council now! Progress in the expanded access to our property for physically-challenged recreationists. Progress in the recent addition of several new members to our rolls.

Recently we had the pleasure of meeting a member from Mississippi. His name is Jim Lauro. He and his family are in RI for a month-long visit. Before heading north, Jim contacted me to say he was coming for a visit, wanting to meet us and see the facility. Jim is a native of Providence whose dad used to bring him fishing and canoeing on the Wood River as a child. In his words, though he has lived down south, where he works as an archeologist, for many years,

the Wood River and our watershed will always be an important part of his life. He and his son have been making daily visits to our headquarters for the past week, each day enjoying a different aspect of



Lori at Celebrate South County Day at the State House in Providence

the river. Sometimes they fish, sometimes they swim off the pier, or they paddle up river from our launch. I think it pleases us almost as much as it pleases them. We want our members to enjoy the river

and our property as much as we do. Jim has reminded me of this, and through him I have gained an even greater appreciation for the work we are doing. Thanks Jim!

Yesterday was the final day of our Source to Sea canoe. I take no credit for its success—it was all Denise Burgess' doing. Her planning, mapping, and preparation led to a most successful month of river exploration. Each week 30 or more paddlers came out for the trip. Ten of them canoed the entire 34 mile trek and were awarded certificates at our Saturday afternoon luncheon, hosted by Dr. Philo Willets on his India Point property. Denise gave a great speech about why we do this type of outreach, mistakenly taken for "fun" when it's really education. I was impressed by her comments and proud of her accomplishment. As we baked in the hot sun enjoying gourmet pizzas donated by PizzaPlace of Westerly, I think we both stood in disbelief that this is actually "work."

Lori Lauro

Summertime Stuff

Saturday, July 28, 9am-3pm

Pawcatuck Headwaters Paddle

From Taylor's Landing, paddle down the Chipuxet River, across Worden's Pond, and onto the wild Charles River to Biscuit City Landing. An interesting but arduous paddle for the experienced only. Abundant wildlife and thick vegetation will make you feel like your paddling the Amazon! 12 miles; no portage. WPWA, RICA, AMC members \$7, non-members \$10. (Postponed first leg of the Pawcatuck Source to Sea).

Thursday, August 23, 5-8pm

Volunteer Appreciation Picnic

All WPWA volunteers, from water quality monitors to office helpers, are invited to join us for a barbeque at our Barberville Headquarters. After dinner, take a canoe or kayak upriver for an evening paddle. Or bring your fishing pole and try out the new state pier. RSVP by August 20.

Saturday, September 8, 6-9pm

Gaia Dialogues Exhibit Opening

RI Foundation Gallery
One Union Station, Providence, RI
Collaborative projects between artists and environmentalists and the sources in the natural world that inspired both scientific inquiry and artistic creation. Gallery night September 20; panel discussion Sept. 25th. Show closes October 5.

Sunday, September 9

Art in Nature Benefit Auction

Our 7th Annual benefit wet-paint auction will be held at the historic Carolina Mill— a treat for any visitor. This juried invitational show will feature the works of well known local and regional artists. Early admission mill tour and art demonstration at 3:30pm. Cocktails and viewing at 4:30pm, live auction at 6pm. Only 100 tickets available. General admission \$40, Sponsors \$100, Patrons \$250.

The Trouble With Milfoil

Lori Urso

There's a creature looming in Connecticut's ponds. It has made its way into the Pawcatuck Watershed, threatening to cross over to the Rhode Island side. That creature is a highly invasive weed called milfoil, and it is wreaking havoc in Wyassup Lake.

Spread from lake to lake via recreational watercraft, milfoil, once introduced, can be a maintenance nightmare.



This is not just a Connecticut problem, but one that is plaguing freshwater ponds and lakes throughout the United States. Eurasian watermilfoil, or *Myriophyllum Spicatum L.* is becoming an increasing problem in the freshwater lakes of North America. An attractive plant with feathery underwater foliage, milfoil was once commonly sold as an aquarium plant. Milfoil originates from Europe and Asia, but was introduced to North America many years ago and is now found over much of the United States.

According to Wyassup Lake Improvement Association president John Wiellette, the less common form, Variegated Milfoil, is what is plaguing their lake, and combating the milfoil invasion has become a priority issue for the group. However, it is very unlikely that the milfoil could be eradicated, only controlled at this point.

In Wyassup Lake, the milfoil invasion began approximately five years ago, when it became evident that the plant had been introduced into the lake and was spreading. The problem first appeared in the cove areas, but is now evident throughout

the waterbody.

Milfoil can grow in waters up to ten to thirteen feet deep, depending on the clarity of the lake. And nutrients encourage its growth. Therefore, a lake such as Wyassup, with homes and lawns dotting its banks, is even more vulnerable to the spread.

Wyassup Lake is situated in the northwest portion of the Pawcatuck Watershed in North Stonington. Wyassup drains into the Green Falls River. It is 93 acres in size, with three major state-owned islands within it. Fifty cottages and homes, most seasonal, sit on its perimeter. It is a state-owned lake, with a dam, also state-owned, and a public boat launch.

At its semi-annual meeting on June 24, the Wyassup Lake Improvement Association voted to approach the state and town to draw down the lake during the winter. This is a control measure which causes the plants to freeze. Then as the surface of the lake thaws, it caused the plants to uproot.

"This is a control mechanism, not a complete solution," says Wiellette. "There are other methods, such as chemical treatment, but we're not ready to take that step."

The state of CT recommends a lake be drawn down three feet, however will allow five feet if the entity applying can prove a history of diligence in maintaining the quality of the lake. Wiellette believes Wyassup would qualify. Wyassup Lake has been monitored under the RI Watershed Watch program for eleven years, sponsored by the North Stonington Land Alliance.

Other steps the association has taken include the distribution of educational information to homeowners discouraging the use of pesticides and fertilizers on lawns, and septic system maintenance to pre-

vent excess nutrient loading.

The State of Connecticut is also exploring the use of sterile grass carp, which consume the plant, as a method of control. This method is not yet approved, however the state is experimenting with it.

One of the more intriguing biological control possibilities is the milfoil weevil, or *Euhrychiopsis lecontei*. These weevils occur naturally in many northwest lakes and love to eat milfoil. Early attempts to introduce the weevil into new lakes were disappointing but ongoing research is learning how to increase their effectiveness.

For now, prevention is the key, and boat owners must be aware of their role in the spread of milfoil from lake to lake. To prevent the spread of milfoil, be sure to check all parts of your boat, prop, anchor, and trailer for presence of the plant. Even your fishing tackle.

Thousands of websites have been devoted to milfoil education. Consult your favorite search engine for a list of sites.

South County Greenspace Protection Project Meetings

The Greenspace Project is taking shape in South County. Now comes the pitch for prioritization. You can help by attending an upcoming meeting in your community.

Hopkinton (final presentation):
Wed., July 11, 7pm Town Hall
Exeter (third workshop):
Tues., July 17, 7pm Wawaloam Sch.
Charlestown (third workshop):
Thurs., July 26, 7pm Town Hall
Richmond (third workshop):
Tues., July 31, 7pm Town Hall
West Greenwich (second workshop):
Thurs., Aug. 2, 8pm Town Hall
Westerly and South Kingtown:
Tentative late July - call us for dates.

Youth Initiatives in the Watershed

It's not just us grown-ups doing valuable work within our watershed. From elementary school students to high school students, young stewards are making a positive impact on the resource for the benefit of all its users.

Expanding on a long-term project to revitalize Browning Mill Pond

trail that WPWA initiated in 1998, a group of boy scouts, led by eagle scout candidate Bill

Farrell, completed a 100-foot section

of fencing along the western edge of the pond. The fence sits atop a berm that separates the trail from the Arcadia Warm Water Fish Hatchery. Hikers had been sliding down the berm, causing erosion of the area. The fence will help keep the hikers on top of the berm and away from the fish hatchery. Funding for the materials was made available by a Trail Advisory Committee Materials-Only Grant. Bill researched the project, ordered materials, rented a



Eagle Scout candidate Bill Farrell (far left) and his trail maintenance crew, with Mal Grant from RIDEM and dad Bill Farrell, Sr.

fence-hole digger, organized the volunteers, and supervised the project. WPWA served as advisor to Bill, securing permission to use the access to the fish hatchery, and obtained the funding.

Helping Bill were crew members Benjamin Lord, Jared Lombardo, Rob Grant, Nathan Potter, Rob Spears, Bill Farrell, Sr., and Malcom Grant of RIDEM.

For the 2000-2001 school year, Chariho High School students Caitlyn MacGlafin, Matt Houston, and Becca McVey worked as WPWA's pilot SWATeam (Student Watershed Assessment Team) as part of their Community Service Project. With

the help of their advisor Margaret Arsenault, and WPWA program director Denise Burgess, the students conducted assessments of natural, cultural, and recreational resources within the towns of Richmond and Charlestown, RI. They began by interviewing long-time residents

of the area to get a sense of the changes that have taken place over the past half-century. Using digital cameras, the students captured various images as part of the inventory process. With the information gathered, they created a powerpoint presentation about the Pawatuck River resources, with recom-



Chariho students Caitlyn MacGlafin, Matt Houston, and Becca McVey.

mendations on how to improve the community's awareness of the resource, as well as that of various stakeholders. The project was funded by a grant from REI (Recreational Equipment, Inc.).

Let's not forget the younger kids. Elementary school students from various RI districts participated in educational programs hosted by WPWA. Some focused on groundwater resources, some on habitat, and some on stream monitoring. Educational content aside, the opportunity to experience the rivers and habitat first-hand is what hopefully will result in a lifetime of appreciation for our watershed resources.



Fourth graders from Kent Heights School in East Providence explore aquatic insect habitat in Browning Mill Pond

Annual Giving Campaign / The Mitch and Betty Salomon Endowment

WPWA has come so close to its Annual Giving Campaign goal of \$10,000, raising \$9444 so far. Though this is a Y2K campaign, many donations have continued to trickle in this year and we are most grateful to all who have helped. Our endowment challenge, to establish The Mitch and Betty Salomon Endowment, is off to a nice start, with \$3500 raised toward the first year's required match of \$8000. As always, if you are considering a donation of any kind, ask your employer about a matching gift program to double your gift. You may also include WPWA on your United Way giving form. Thank you for your continued support!

Stream of Friends (up to \$49)

James M. Barr
Frederick Kenney
Nancy R. Weissmuller
Donald and Rose Robadue

Watershed Club (\$50 – \$99)

Dr. and Mrs. A. John Elliot
Mr. And Mrs. John R. Payne, Jr.
Bro. Kevin J. Kiernan
Henry A. Muller

Burt Strom

David and Carol Shilling

Director's Circle (\$100 – \$249)

Steven and Ruth Morgan

WPWA CANOE AND HIKING GUIDES

Order Form

Wood-Pawcatuck River Routes Map

By Charlie Hickox and Polly Matzinger

\$3.50 members (\$4.50 non-members)

Navigate the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers from source to sea with this colorful folded map.



Quantity:

_____ *Wood-Pawcatuck River Routes Map*_____ *Walks in the Watershed*_____ *Pawcatuck Watershed Report (free)**Add \$1.50 postage and handling per item.*

Name _____

Address _____

Mail form and payment to:

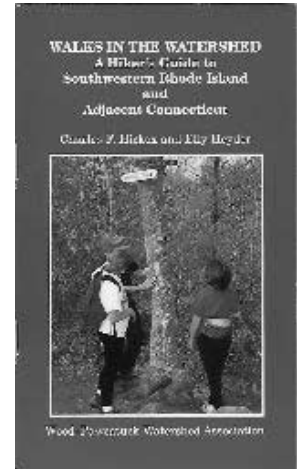
WPWA
203 Arcadia Road
Hope Valley, RI 02832

Walks in the Watershed

By Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder

\$3.50 members (\$4.50 non-members)

Sixteen of the watershed's best loop hikes contained in a handy pocket-sized guide

**Membership Renewals**

Rivers Day and Rivers Month are observed in June of each year. This is also the month for WPWA membership renewals. To date roughly 50% of our members have sent in their dues. By sending in your membership now, you will help us avoid the extra expense of reminder notices and postage.

If you have renewed, we thank you. Should you require a new vehicle decal please let us know. Only vehicles with posted member decals will be permitted to park on WPWA property.

Membership renewal is one of two annual events during which we ask members to contribute financially to the association (the second is annual appeal at the end of the year). If your company offers a matching gift program, you can double your pledge. Thank you!

Blues Benefit a Success

Thanks to the generosity of blues artist and WPWA member Paul Geremia, blues duo Ursula George, and our sponsor McQuade's Ace Home Center of Westerly, our recent benefit concert at the Chorus of Westerly Performance Hall raised \$2500 to support WPWA programs.

Equally responsible for our success are the concert-goers who, judging by the outpouring of positive reviews, thoroughly enjoyed the show. WPWA also thanks Mr. Lance Vars of Village Place Liquors, volunteers Larry Jennino and Jered Buck, Looney Tunes of Westerly and Looney Tunes II of Wakefield for helping with ticket sales, radio stations WBLQ and WRIU, and our friends at Southern RI Newspapers, The Westerly Sun, The New London Day, and the Providence Journal for their promotional support.

Grant Awards Announced

Horace & Ella Kimball Foundation
\$25,000 operational grant
\$25,000 capital grants

Ocean State Charities Trust
\$ 4,640 capital grant

Anonymous
\$25,000 matching endowment grant to establish The Mitch and Betty Salomon Endowment

The Freedom Forum
\$ 2,500 endowment grant

Forest C. Lattner Foundation
\$15,000 operational / wq monitoring

Municipal Contributions

Westerly Conservation Commission
\$600 toward water quality monitoring
Town of Charlestown
\$500 operational subsidy
Stonington Conservation Commission
\$150 contribution

Application for Membership

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

- _____ Individual \$25
- _____ Family \$40
- _____ Contributor \$50
- _____ Corporate \$100
- _____ Supporter \$100
- _____ Sponsor \$250
- _____ Patron \$500
- _____ Benefactor \$1000

In addition to my dues, I am enclosing an additional contribution of \$ _____

All but \$5.00 of your dues is tax deductible within the limits of the law.

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- Lori Urso, Executive Director
- Denise Burgess, Program Director

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