

WATERSHED

A Newsletter of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Volume 34-1

Spring 2017

Please forward this edition of WATERSHED to a friend!



Build Your Own Fly Rod

Tuesdays March 14th, 21st, and 28th, 2017, from 6:30 - 9:30 PM
Fishing season is right around the corner, so take your fly fishing skills up a notch by custom building your own fly rod. Everything you will need will be provided during this three day class, along with expert instruction and a few good laughs! The classes will be held three Tuesday nights in March: the 14th, 21st, and 28th. [Read more...](#)



Amtrak Expansion: A Wild and Scenic Rivers Perspective

When the Federal Railroad Administration published the Northeast Corridor Rail Line Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement, WPWA noted one important omission... [Read more...](#)

Please keep an eye out for your membership renewal notice in May!

JOIN/RENEW

Renewing your membership will ensure that our programs and advocacy continue for this year, and beyond. Membership of anyone who joins or renews NOW is good through May 31, 2018!
Thank you!



WPWA Receives Award for Historic Restoration Success

On Saturday January 21st 2017 you were awarded the RI Saltwater Angler's Association 2016 Environment Award for improving fish passage on the Pawcatuck River. [Read more...](#)



Busy Beavers Build a New Dam in the Pawcatuck

By David Smith. A family of beavers has built another dam on the upper reaches of the Pawcatuck River upstream from the state's Biscuit City landing... [Read more...](#)



Well Water Safety Workshop for Homeowners

If you and your family rely on a private well for your drinking water, you want to ensure that this water is safe. URI and RI Dept. of Health are hosting a free workshop... [Read more...](#)

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RI Rivers Council Update

By Veronica M. Berounsky, Ph.D., RIRC Chair. The RIRC coordinates, oversees, and reviews efforts to improve and preserve the quality of RI's rivers and other water bodies. [Read more...](#)



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Fishing season is right around the corner, so take your fly fishing skills up a notch by custom building your own fly rod. Everything you will need will be provided during this three day class, along with expert instruction and a few good laughs! The classes will be held three Tuesday nights in March: the 14th, 21st, and 28th. All participants will be making a Batson RX6 7.5/ 4 wt. graphite rod. These kits normally go for over \$120, and a new rod would cost \$250, so this class is a great deal!

WPWA Dragonfly and Trout members get the discounted price of \$85 for all three class sessions (Otter, Osprey, and Eagle WPWA members are FREE). For non-members it will be \$110, which will include a one-year Dragonfly-level membership to WPWA as well! Space is limited to four people.

Register online by clicking [here](#). On the registration page you will be registering for the class held March 14th, but you will be automatically registered for the following classes on March 21 and 28. Act fast--there are only two spots left!

This program will be held at the WPWA Campus, 203 Arcadia Road, Hope Valley, RI. For more information contact Denise Poyer at denisep@wpwa.org, 401-539-9017. [Return to Top](#)



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Amtrak Expansion: A Wild and Scenic Rivers Perspective

When the Federal Railroad Administration published the Northeast Corridor Rail Line Tier 1 Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), WPWA noted one important omission. There was no mention of the Pawcatuck River as a Wild and Scenic River. This likely occurred because the EIS was started before the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Protection Act passed in December, 2014. The bill appointed the National Parks Service to undertake a three-year study to determine if the Pawcatuck River, and six others in the watershed, would qualify for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. One provision of the Act requires rivers under study be treated as if they have already received Wild and Scenic Rivers designation. This is to provide for the protection of any Outstandingly Remarkable Values that existed at the time the bill.

In response to the EIS, the National Parks Service (NPS), through the Department of Interior, provided comments that stated "Coordination under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act should occur related to any new or expanded crossings of the (Pawcatuck River) as well as the general corridor through the Study area." A complete copy of the letter can be found by clicking [here](#). Essentially any construction using federal funding or requiring federal permitting must be reviewed by NPS and the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Study Committee to assure that no harm will come to the values of the rivers that make them outstanding. These values will include water quality, historical and cultural resources, fish and wildlife habitat, and recreation.

This letter demonstrates the importance of having a Wild and Scenic Rivers designation for the Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers. A Wild and Scenic River will always require additional oversight of federal projects that will make sure the natural and cultural substance of the rivers are maintained.

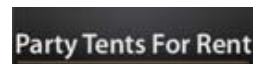
The Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Study the Committee is about half way through the study. We are establishing the Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV's) of the Beaver, Chipuxet, Green Falls, Queen, Shunock, Wood and Pawcatuck Rivers. ORV's are the values that the watershed communities determine are essential for protection for future generations. For more information about the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Study go to wpwa.org/wildandscenic.htm. [Return to Top](#)



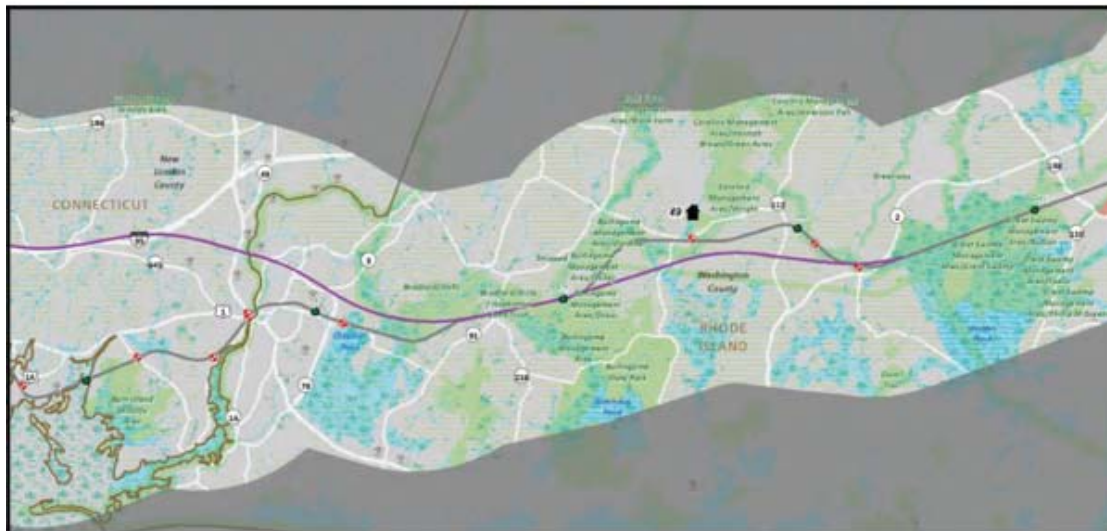
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WPWA Receives Award for Historic Restoration Success

On Saturday January 21st 2017 you were awarded the RI Saltwater Angler's Association (RISAA) 2016 Environment Award for improving fish passage on the Pawcatuck River. Our members made history in 2016 when river herring returned to Worden Pond to spawn for the first time in centuries!

It was years of hard work and partnerships that removed the last three obstacles to fish passage on the upper Pawcatuck River. This accomplishment matches with one of RISAA's missions which is "to support marine conservation and sound management of fisheries". WPWA executive director Chris Fox was proud to attend RISAA's annual banquet and receive this award on behalf of all our members, board of trustees and staff.



Dr. Jonathan Hare, Science Director for NOAA Fisheries Science Center also received an environment award for his decades of policy work to protect and increase the commercial fisheries stocks in the northeast region. It was a fun filled evening with lots of awards given to many deserving anglers and conservationists both in and out of the RISAA membership.

It was great to see so many young children receiving awards for their tournament catches in 2016. Congratulations to them all and bravo to the Saltwater Anglers for fostering and educating our future saltwater stewards. These young fishermen are the future of conservation and will ensure that the protection of our ocean resources will continue for decades to come. To learn more about the RI Saltwater Angler's Association visit them on the web at www.risaa.org or on Facebook. [Return to Top](#)

Passionate about water quality issues?

Interested in lawn care management and how those decisions affect our water quality?

Researchers at the University of RI are conducting a short online survey on lawn care and water quality. These survey responses will provide us with vital information for this research funded by the National Science Foundation.

We're counting on participation from residents like you. You can receive \$2 in Amazon credit for your participation. Please take the time to fill out the survey before March 31st.

Click [here](#) to take the survey, or type this in your browser: goo.gl/Jr5hBm

This research has been approved by URI's IRB.

Busy Beavers Build a New Dam in the Pawcatuck River

By David Smith

A family of beavers has built another dam on the upper reaches of the Pawcatuck River, about 150 yards upstream from the state's Biscuit City Landing off Kenyon School Road.

The dam, quite apparent during a January 22nd paddle, is just showing through the water on a sharp corner near the train tracks. It is at the site of an old and large beaver lodge. When the water level drops to normal seasonal levels in the spring, the dam will begin to hold back water and perhaps require a portage. See [WPWA's river conditions map](#) to see the location of the dam.

It is the second dam to be built between Biscuit City and the Great Swamp Management Area dike. The



other is located about 100 yards upstream from the confluence of the Pawcatuck and Usquepaugh rivers.

That dam has been built to about 5 feet in height and extends from the main channel 30 to 40 yards to the northeast and about 15 yards in the other direction. It requires a portage on upstream travel, but can be slipped over heading downstream.

The sound of water coming over the dam and flowing in from the sides can be heard about 50 yards away.

There are two other dams between the Great Swamp dike and Worden Pond. The dams will be an impediment to the migration of alewives and herring going to and from Worden Pond. The dams have also stopped the movement of largemouth bass and other species who come down the river during the warm summer months.

According to a 2013-14 Furbearers Report from the state Department of Environmental Management, 112 beaver were harvested during a 134 day season from November to March. That season the state issued 40 permits to trap beaver. The price of pelts decreased from the previous year and ranged from \$14.88 to \$17.38.

DEM officials were not available to provide information on the harvest of beavers for the ensuing years.

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Well Water Safety Workshop for Homeowners

If you and your family rely on a private well for your drinking water, of course you want to do what you can to ensure that this water is safe. To help you with this, the University of RI Cooperative Extension Water Quality Program and the RI Department of Health are hosting a free workshop for private well owners on Tuesday February 28, 2017 from 6 to 7 PM. The workshop will be held at West Kingston Elementary School, 3119 Ministerial Rd., West Kingston, RI.

This workshop will help you to protect yourself, your family, your property, and your investment by ensuring the safety of your well water. You will learn the importance of regular testing, how to protect your well water from pollution, and proper well maintenance.

Space is limited and pre-registration is required. To register, call URI at 401-874-4918. [Return to Top](#)



Rhode Island Rivers Council Update



By Veronica M. Berounsky, Ph.D., RI Rivers Council Chair

The RI Rivers Council (RIRC) is a quasi-governmental organization created by RI General Law Chapter 46-28 in 1991 to coordinate, oversee, and review efforts to improve and preserve the quality of the state's rivers and other water bodies. It does this by coordinating state policies to protect rivers and watersheds and by empowering state-designated watershed councils, including WPWA, as partners in river and watershed protection. It is the only organization in the state that specifically oversees rivers and their watersheds statewide. The RIRC is an associated function of the RI Water Resources Board, part of the Department of Administration.

The nine RIRC members bring diverse strengths to the council. They are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate, and have backgrounds in one (or more) of these areas: conservation organization, science, environmental law,

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or planning experience; communication, public outreach or education experience; is a member of a chamber of commerce. In addition, the six institutional members are heads of state agencies or their designees: from Department of Administration; Department of Environmental Management; Water Resources Board; Coastal Resources Management Council; Commerce Corporation; and League of Cities and Towns. There is no paid staff.

The RIRC also has ten Watershed Councils that have gone through the process to become the state-designated watershed council for a river and its watershed. These councils have legal standing to represent their watershed. In addition to Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association they are: Blackstone River Watershed Council / Friends of the Blackstone; Buckeye Brook Coalition; Kickemuit River Council; Friends of The Moshassuck; Narrow River Preservation Association; Pawtuxet River Authority and Watershed Council; Salt Ponds Coalition; Ten Mile River Watershed Council; and Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council. Although there are presently only 10 watersheds in the RI Rivers Council, 71% of the state of RI is encompassed by these 10 watersheds.

What are RIRC funds used for?

Up until this past year when most community service grants were removed from the RI State budget, the RIRC received an annual community service grant of about \$15,000 from the RI General Assembly. Almost all of those funds were used to conduct a competitive grants program for our designated watershed councils, as mandated in our founding legislation. Over the past three years RIRC was awarded approximately \$45,000 in grants and this was leveraged or matched more than triplicate by the watershed councils for an amount of \$150,000. This provided a total of almost \$195,000 in monies for the \$45,450 given to the RIRC over the three years. Those funds supported water quality monitoring, educational programs with students, outreach activities, and hands on projects such as tree plantings and fish passage rebuilding. Those projects and programs are in danger of ending without funding. If this were to happen, the loss to the state would be substantial. We need to again receive legislative funds in the upcoming budget to support the RIRC and watershed council activities.

The RIRC was fortunate to apply for and receive a 2-year grant from the Bays, Rivers, and Watersheds Coordination Team and this has been useful to have with the loss of legislative funds. About \$18,000 was used in the first year for stormwater projects in the watersheds. There is about \$22,000 left which will be available to the ten watershed councils for stormwater-related projects or water quality monitoring and the addition of stormwater information on their websites.

What are the goals of the RIRC?

One of the goals of the RIRC is to educate our RIRC members and designated watershed council representatives so they can better advise state agencies and municipalities concerning programs and measures to protect and improve river and watershed quality. To that end, the RIRC monthly meetings include presentations of pertinent topics. Recent presentations were on: the updated State Guide Plan on Water Quality, regulation and restoration with the Coastal Resources Management Council, and investigation and enforcement of environmental regulatory violations.

Another goal of the RIRC is to foster public involvement in river planning and decision-making. To that end, RIRC exhibits at public education and outreach events such as the "Party for the Planet" at Roger Williams Park Zoo, "Environmental Awareness Day" at Narragansett Town Beach, and the upcoming "Land and Water Summit" at the University of Rhode Island.

But our top goal for this year is to restore the stipulated legislative funding for our competitive grant program. In pursuit of this, RIRC officers Veronica Berounsky (Chair) and Rachel Calabro (Vice Chair) met with Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee, Lisa Vura-Weis, Governor Raimondo's Deputy Chief of Staff for Environmental Issues, and Steve Kavanagh, Governor Raimondo's Deputy Legislative Director on December 22, 2016. Gov. Raimondo's staff explained that the community grants, from which RIRC's funds came, have been re-distributed to other causes and that program is not coming back in the new budget. They were happy to hear that our grants program has good oversight and accountability and that our designation program identifies and promotes active watershed councils. The state budget was released on January 19 and there were no funds identified specifically for the RI Rivers Council, either through the Department of Administration (where our funding used to come from) or the Department of Environmental Management. On the urging of Rep. McEntee, and with her spearheading the effort, the watershed councils along with RIRC will approach their legislators about consolidating a group of legislative grants into funding for the RIRC before the state budget is finalized in June.

Please check out the RI Rivers Council website: www.ririvers.org. [Return to Top](#)

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December 01, 2016
By TODD McLEISH/ecoRI
News contributor

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