

WATERSHED

A Newsletter of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Volume 26 No. 2

Spring 2009

Watershed Science for Educators *By Denise Poyer*

With a grant provided by the Rhode Island Rivers Council (RIRC), Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) and Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) were able to conduct NRS 591, Watershed Science for Educators, a three-credit graduate level course offered to teachers. Twenty-four teachers from around the watershed took advantage of this informative and interesting course. The fact that the course was offered at no charge to the participants, thanks to the grant, was an especially big draw. Sixteen teachers took the course for credit, requiring them to pay a nominal fee of \$150 for registration through URI's College of Continuing Education.

Veronica Berounsky of NRPA was able to secure a classroom on the URI Bay Campus. This made a somewhat convenient central location. Class time was from 4 to 7 pm and lasted for 10 weeks, from February 5 to April 30, 2009. Watershed topics covered included geology, geography, social history as well as wetlands, soils, hydrology, and aquatic biology. Some of the issues discussed were water availability to towns and the environment, sources of pollution, and regulations governing water use and water protection. In addition, teachers attended two field trips. The first 1, Saturday, April 4, went to the Arcadia Management Area to examine wetlands, test for water quality, and learn to do vernal pool assessments. We

were able to use materials developed from last year's project, Vernal Pool Inventory and Assessment in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed, to train teachers how to assess vernal pools. Therefore teachers now have field assessment forms developed by RI Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) to use with their students. We also conducted a second field trip to the South Kingstown Waste Water Treatment Plant on Saturday, April 18. As part of this trip we took the teachers around the Narrow River Watershed to look at examples of point and non-point pollution and some of the current and future mechanisms in place to minimize and control inputs into the river.



Educators on their field trip to the SK Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Teachers were given the AWE-Some Curriculum, readings on wetlands, forms for water quality sampling, and lesson plans. Several posters from NRCS, RIDEM Aquatics Education Program, EPA, and other

sources were given to the teachers. In addition WPWA printed large format macroinvertebrate posters to distribute. WPWA also required teachers to be aware of watershed topics in the news and to discuss them at the beginning of each class. Frequently during the class teachers engaged in open discussions and cross sharing of teaching issues and techniques, as well as the topical issues of the course. Because of the time of the day, it was important to provide something to sustain the participants through to dinner. We provided the first class with snacks, but for the remaining classes participants volunteered to provide the snacks for everyone.

Denise Poyer was the course instructor while someone from NRPA, either Veronica Berounsky or Rosemary Smith, volunteered to help with each class and field trip. For the wetland field trip volunteers from WPWA also assisted. In addition, four guest speakers came to the class to discuss various topics. Jim Turenne from NRCS presented information on soil science in RI; Annette DaSilva discussed volunteer water quality monitoring in Narrow River; Bernard Bishop gave a tour of the South Kingstown Wastewater Treatment plant; and former WPWA Executive Director, Lori Urso, spoke about the history of the mills in the Pawcatuck Watershed and their effects on the landscape.

(continued on page 2)

From the Executive Director

Spring is a time for renewed growth and WPWA is no exception. We have grown our family of board members by four, expanded our recreational programs for families, and continued to expand our presence in Cyberspace. Program Asst. Danielle Aube has created a Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/event.php?eid=87962789359#/group.php?gid=87314814243&ref=mf> to help keep members in closer contact with all the latest WPWA news. While you're surfing the web why not visit our Riverwatch Blog at <http://wpwariverwatch.blogspot.com> to keep in touch with our watershed wildlife and WPWA activities. Our Barbersville Campus is now equipped with a free wireless internet connection so you can cruise the web while waiting for that big fish to bite.

We are preparing for a huge growth spurt in our fish passage project on the Pawcatuck River. WPWA has requested nearly 2.6 million dollars from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act for fish passage in the Village of Shannock. I have worked tirelessly with our engineers, the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), and the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to fine tune our proposal as it undergoes final review at the top levels of NOAA in our nation's capitol. We expect to be notified of our award status during the first week of July and realize the completion of these three large projects by November of 2011.

These are only a few examples of our ongoing program expansions. As WPWA's activities and initiatives grow, so does our budget and your continued financial support is critically needed. If you have not already, please take a moment to renew your WPWA membership by responding to our membership renewal letter or by completing and returning the

membership form included in this edition of *Watershed*. The staff and board members of WPWA wish you a happy and healthy summer and hope to see you all out enjoying the beautiful lands and waters of the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed.

-Chris Fox



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WPWA Student Volunteer wins Science Fair Awards

Sean Costello, a junior at La Salle Academy, won three awards for a project he developed with Denise Poyer. Sean took data from a temperature study WPWA had done in the summer of 2008 on the Tomaquag Brook in Hopkinton. Denise showed him how to download the raw data into excel spread sheets, analyze it for daily maximum stream temperature, and then create graphs to illustrate how the data can answer questions. On his own, Sean researched information about brook trout and their habitat needs. He then produced a project under the category Environmental Analysis titled "Does the Tomaquag River Still Have Pockets of Water Cold Enough to Support Brook Trout?"

At his school's Science Fair held in February Sean's project won a 3rd Grant Award. The top ten LaSalle winners then went to the state competition, the 2009 Amgen Rhode Island Science and Engineering Fair, held on March 21st and 22nd. There Sean received a First Grant Award along with a special award from NOAA, Taking the Pulse of the Planet Award. He was the only one in the state competition to be given this particular award. Sean received his awards at a special ceremony on March 26th, attend by Governor Carcieri. Also in attendance were many

high level representatives from the sponsoring organizations, including an Admiral from the Navy wearing his full dress uniform.

WPWA would like to congratulate Sean for his winning science project. Some of Sean's work will be included in WPWA's report about the Tomaquag Brook Temperature Study.



Nuweetooun School students enjoy a paddle on the Wood River.

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Watershed Science

(continued from page 1)

Pre and post test were given on the first and last day of the course, respectively. A paired t-test demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the two tests for the group, meaning it seemed that as a group the class learned something they didn't previously know about watersheds. As expected, the science teachers scored well before and after the course, however, all of them did show improvement.

Teachers were graded on their participation and discussion in class, a presentation on a watershed topic, and a final paper detailing a lesson plan on a watershed topic. All the presentations were well researched and well done. It was evident from the evaluations filled out at the end, that all the teachers thought the course was worthwhile and very instructive. They seemed to enjoy not just the format but also the heterogeneity of the class.

Most of them agreed it provided for different perspectives and ideologies concerning teaching in general. The course provided WPWA, NRPA, and RIRC with an opportunity to get accurate and current information about watersheds and watershed issues to teachers.



Educators performing stream-side evaluation of macroinvertebrates.

The expectation is that those teachers will use at least some of the information they learned with their own students. The twenty-four teachers who attended the course taught over 1200 students this school year. Not only will this course impact those students, but all of the students taught by the Watershed Science for Educators participants in the future. Of real significance is how many more teachers wanted to take this course. We had at least ten teachers on a waiting list, as well as several other calls to enroll. Many of the teachers that took the course spoke about it in their schools, creating even more interest. The big question everyone was asking - "When will this course be given again?"



WPWA Welcomes Four to their Board of Directors

By Chris Fox

This Spring the WPWA Board of Trustees elected to increase the number of its members from 11 to 13. In addition, two long standing members, Saul Sails and Bob Schiedler, retired from the board. As a result, the Board Development Committee sought 4 new candidates who were elected by the WPWA membership at this year's annual meeting. We are pleased to welcome the following new trustees.

Alan Desbonnet

A past President of the WPWA, Alan is Assistant Director of the Rhode Island Sea Grant Program at the University of Rhode Island. Alan knows our organization, our mission, our objectives, our programs and projects very well. As President, he helped shape and develop WPWA. For the past few years he has been active with the Stonington shellfishing management organization. His involvement with that group is coming to an end and he will have time available to devote to serving the WPWA. He brings a number of very valuable assets to the Board. Alan is very well informed concerning the watershed and its environmental issues and he is particularly knowledgeable concerning the issues and the communities in the southwest region of the watershed, especially Little Narragansett Bay and the lower portion of the Pawcatuck River. Alan is an avid saltwater and freshwater angler and writes a regular column for the newsletter of a local fishing organization. Soon he will begin to post fishing information to the WPWA blog. Alan has a strong science and resource management policy background and has worked on many watershed issues over the past few decades.

Kevin A. Breene

Kevin has owned and operated a dairy farm for the past 32 years. He currently has 82 cows. Kevin served on the West Greenwich Town Council for 14 years, 12 as its President. He served as a state senator for 12 years and is the first and current Town Administrator of West Greenwich. Kevin worked with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) to acquire 1,600 acres of open space in West Greenwich known as the Tillinghast Pond Management Area, one of the most important open-space acquisitions in Rhode Island history. He received the prestigious RIDEM Alfred Hawke Award for this outstanding accomplishment. The property includes the headwaters of the Wood River. Kevin is active in the Future Farmers of America, the 4-H Foundation, the Farm Bureau and the RI Forest and Conservatory Organization. He was the Secretary of the state Senate's Environmental and Agricultural and Water Resources Committees. He also serves on the Board of the South County Tourism Council.

Ed Lombardo

Ed is perhaps the best known fly-fisher, fly-tier, and fly-fishing guide in Rhode Island. Thousands of Rhode Islanders have learned the techniques of fly fishing, casting, and fly-tying at the New England Fly Fishing School, founded by Ed 25 years ago. He has spent more than 40 years fly fishing in fresh and salt water, in New England, and in the great trout streams of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming. Although he serves as the industry member on the R.I. Department of Labor and Training Board of Review, Ed's life is defined by the world of fly fishing: when he is not on a trout stream or at a fly-tying vise, he is lecturing or writing about or teaching some aspect of his favorite subject.

(continued on page 7)

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\$10,000

Save the Bay

\$7,500

RI Rivers Council
 Horace A. & S. Ella
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RI Rivers Council

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 Memorial Foundation

Federal and State

Government

\$427,000
 USDA Natl. Resource
 Conservation Service (WHIP)
Shannock Fishway Restoration

\$105,000

US Fish and Wildlife Service
*Shannock Fishway Restoration Bradford
 Fishway Rehabilitation*

\$50,000

RICRMC Coastal Estuarine
 and Habitat Trust
Shannock Fishway Restoration

\$24,000

USDA Natl. Resource
 Conservation Service (WHIP)
Switch Road Landing River Access

\$2,000

RI State Senate
Water Quality Monitoring

Municipal Government

Town of Richmond \$750
 Town of Charlestown \$600
 Town of Stonington \$1000
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Richmond & Hopkinton *have also
 exempted property taxes on WPWA
 public access areas*

WPWA CANOE AND HIKING GUIDES

Order Form

Walks in the Watershed

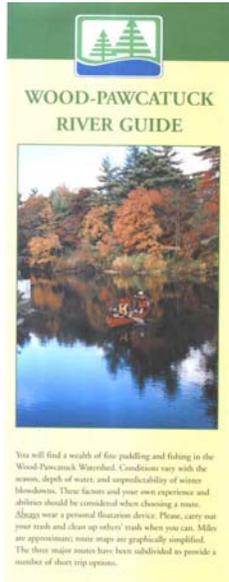
By Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder

Wood-Pawcatuck River Guide (2nd edition)

By Charlie Hickox and Elly Heyder
\$ 5.00

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

WPWA's Hiking guide is currently in the process of being revised and is not available for purchase at this time. The finalized 3rd edition is anticipated to be available toward the end of the Fall 2009.



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 Add \$1.75 postage and handling per item.
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 Mail form with payment to:
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 203 Arcadia Road
 Hope Valley, RI 02832

If you are interested in being a sponsor of the 3rd edition of "Walks in the Watershed" contact WPWA at 401-539-9017



Chariho Middle School Gives Grant to WPWA *by Denise Poyer*

Dan Potts and John Labriola, Chariho Middle School (CMS) science teachers, were able to give WPWA a grant for \$2,500 to purchase five new kayaks and equipment. This brings WPWA's total number of kayaks to 30, enough to supply an entire CMS class for a field trip. The close relationship WPWA and CMS share is based on common goals. We all feel it is of critical importance that students see science in a real world application. Chariho conducts field trips to salt ponds and the Wood River so that the students can experience the relevance of what they study in the class room to the environment in which they live. WPWA is always eager to provide students with ways to learn about the Watershed. Putting kids into kayaks can engage them in a way that they would never get through class work alone.

WPWA would like to thank CMS for their generous grant. We would also like to thank URE Outfitters who continue to support WPWA and the community. WPWA worked with URE to obtain everything needed at a special discount to keep the purchase within budget.



Staff with our new van, trailer and kayaks.

WPWA Trustees *(continued from page 3)*

Ed established a fly fishing course at URI's Narragansett Bay Campus and he is the lead fly fishing instructor for the Aquatic Education Program conducted by the RIDEM Division of

Fish and Wildlife. Ed is the chief fly fishing instructor at Addieville East Farm in North Smithfield. In 2000 he was one of 12 fly fishers nationwide selected by ESPN to participate in a national fly casting competition.

Alisa Morrison, P.E.

Alisa Morrison, an engineer and hydrologist, has a BS and MS degree in civil engineering from Tufts. She serves on the engineering faculty at Three Rivers Community College. Alisa is very involved in environmental and conservation programs in Stonington. Her primary focus is water, watersheds, and wetlands protection; stormwater management; and public education of environmental issues. She is a member of the Stonington Inlands Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, the Stonington Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Stonington Education Fund. Alisa is currently working on a Ph.D. in water hydrology from URI.

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

*Your contribution is tax deductible.
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401-539-9017

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