

# WATERSHED

A Newsletter of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

Volume 33 No. 1

Winter 2016

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## **200 Children Will Explore the Watershed!**

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...to WPWA's 33rd Annual Meeting, where we will spotlight our decades-long Water Quality Monitoring Program. Did you know that ensuring cool, clean and abundant freshwater...[Read more...](#)

Please support WPWA's efforts on behalf of you, our member!

*Please celebrate the rapid approach of spring with a generous donation to WPWA. Your gift today will ensure that our programs and advocacy continue throughout 2016.*  
**Thank you!**



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## **Where Did All the Trees Go?**

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## "In Memory" Donations Support WPWA's Programs

WPWA recently received several generous and unanticipated donations in memory of a long-time member who, sadly, had passed away. We want to express how deeply we appreciate the thoughtfulness.... [Read more...](#)



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## 200 Children Will Explore the Watershed



Thanks to a \$5,000 grant from the RI Trail Advisory Committee Education Grants Program, WPWA will host 200 underserved urban children this summer as we continue our Urban Youth Paddle Program. The grant will allow WPWA to waive its standard cut-rate fee of \$25 per child for the participants and chaperones. The total cost of this program is just under \$10,000.

Over the years WPWA has developed programs that incorporate learning to paddle with safe river

exploration and environmental education on the Wood River. The river, which is under consideration for designation as a National Wild and Scenic River, contains unparalleled opportunities for children to learn about a natural river system and its importance to the wildlife that lives there.

This program will be aimed at children who would normally not have a chance to get out on the Wood River, especially kids from low-income families and those with learning and behavioral disabilities. By exposing them to a clean, healthy river in a way that is fun and rewarding, this program will help them to understand the importance of protecting all rivers.

WPWA will solicit groups, such as Providence After School Alliance, Gateways Health Services, Operation Military Kids, and SMILE Program to participate. With this grant, WPWA's skilled staff will provide kayaks and equipment, give kayaking and safety instruction, and guide the paddles. Volunteers from WPWA, the Narragansett Chapter of the AMC and Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association will help with the lessons.

These Urban Youth Paddles will immerse (hopefully not literally!) children in the natural environment in a way that is immediate, fascinating, memorable, safe and unique. The goals of this program are to engage youth in outdoor educational experiences while teaching them about paddle sports and water trail safety.

This is but one of the many community service programs offered by WPWA every year. They can't happen without grant funding, which is not stable year-to-year, and require a significant pot of match money. That is why we rely on you, the WPWA supporter, to help fund these incredibly beneficial programs. Please consider making a donation to WPWA today to ensure we can continue to provide these kinds of outstanding opportunities for the future stewards of our watershed.



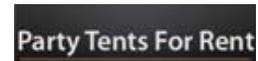
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## Come One, Come All...

...to WPWA's 33rd Annual Meeting, where we will spotlight our decades-long Water Quality Monitoring Program. Did you know that ensuring cool, clean and abundant freshwater is WPWA's top strategic objective? Without it, we would not benefit from the biodiversity, drinking water, or recreational enjoyment that folks often take for granted. That is why WPWA invests over \$15,000 per year to track the health of this beautiful watershed's fresh water.



Join us from 5-9pm on Thursday May 19th for demonstrations and water quality presentations. You will learn about the past, present and future of the monitoring that you make possible. From 5-7pm you're invited to join the board and staff for food, drink and even some kayaking and fishing at our tranquil campus. Our business meeting will begin at 7pm and feature a presentation on the exhaustive 2015 process to overhaul our Water Quality Monitoring Program. We will also honor our founding members Ed and Linda Wood by elevating their status to Emeritus Trustees. And, we will present awards to our water quality monitoring volunteers without whom none of our monitoring would be possible.

Please mark your calendars now for this free event from 5-9pm on Thursday, May 19th, 2016 at WPWA's headquarters on the banks of the Wood River. Who can pass up the chance to eat, drink, and be merry all while learning so much about all you do to protect the invaluable water resources of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed? We hope you won't!

Bring your partner, bring your children, bring your friends, the event is rain or shine and open to all. (Photo: Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and Representative Jim Langevin from 32nd WPWA Annual Meeting in 2015) [View Photo](#)



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## What's Happening

**Your Septic System: Care, Maintenance, And Financing Opportunities to Protect Your Home and Water Resources**  
Thurs., March 31 5:30-7:00 PM  
North Scituate Community House  
546 West Greenville Rd (Rt. 116)  
North Scituate, RI 02857  
This is a free event, but please visit [NRICD.org](http://NRICD.org) or call 401-934-0840 to register

**Earth Day Cleanup**  
Sat., April 23, 2016 any time  
Help WPWA keep our watershed healthy and beautiful by volunteering a few hours of your time to clean up a public access area along one of our beautiful rivers. You choose a time that is convenient for you - anytime the weekend of April 24-26. See [www.wpwa.org/events.php](http://www.wpwa.org/events.php) for more details.

**Map and Compass Workshop #1 and #2**  
#1: Thurs., May 5, 2016 6 - 9pm  
#2: Sat., May 7, 2016 9am - 3pm  
Do you like to get out and explore in the woods, but worry about your skills to find your way back? Join WPWA and the Narragansett Chapter of the AMC for a two-part course (Thursday evening for 3 hours and Saturday day for 6 hours) that will teach you how to read and understand maps and use a compass correctly. See [www.wpwa.org/events.php](http://www.wpwa.org/events.php) for more details.

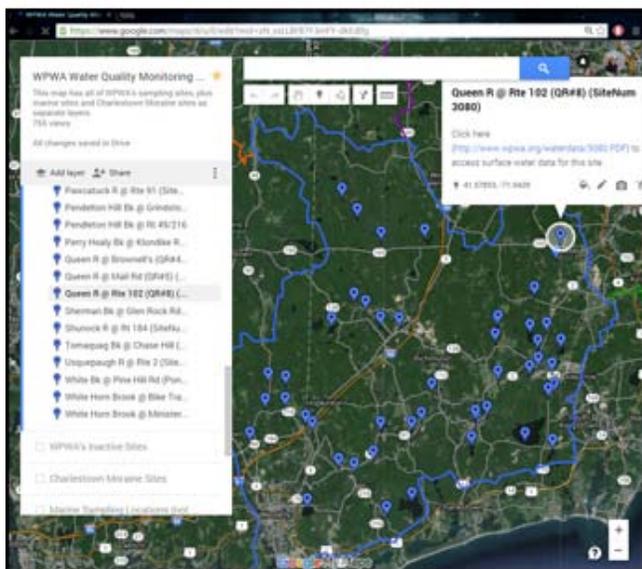
## Related News

[R.I. Researchers Track Bobcats to Assess Habitat Use](#)  
By ecoRI News staff  
February 12, 2016

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## 2014 Water Quality Data are Online!

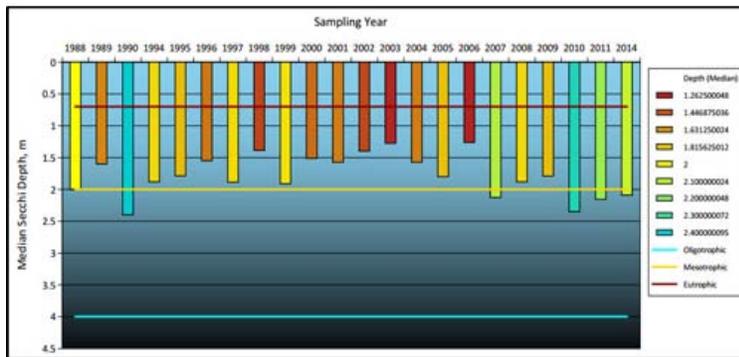


Water quality monitoring is central to WPWA's mission: to preserve and protect the lands and waters of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed for natural and human communities. In 2014, WPWA's dedicated team of volunteer water quality monitors sampled 14 ponds and 33 rivers and streams in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed. We recently received the analytical data from the University of Rhode Island Watershed Watch laboratory and all of the results—almost 4000 lines of data!—have been

reviewed and processed. Reports containing easy-to-read tables and charts of these data in PDF file format for all of our monitoring sites are now available online through a Google Map on our website, [www.wpwa.org/waterQuality.htm](http://www.wpwa.org/waterQuality.htm).

The overall goals of WPWA's water quality sampling program are to keep track of the status of water bodies in the watershed, to monitor trends in water quality (stable, improving, or declining), and to identify water quality problems which need further investigation. When

WPWA began its monitoring program in 1988, only nine lakes and ponds in the watershed were sampled. Since then, WPWA's monitoring program has grown extensively. Over the past 28 years WPWA has performed water quality sampling at over 165 sites in the watershed, accumulating over 80,000 data points. We couldn't possibly continue this mission-critical program without the devoted efforts of our corps of samplers—thank you all! (Photo above: Screen capture of WPWA's Water Quality Monitoring Google Map; Below, example of a Secchi depth data plot.) [Return to Top](#)



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## Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Flood Resiliency Management Plan

WPWA and the engineering firm of Fuss and O'Neill have been hard at work gathering information and data to produce the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Flood Resiliency Management Plan. We are about halfway through the \$720,000 grant from the Hurricane Sandy Resilient Coastal Communities Program. The grant program is for projects that help communities affected by Hurricane Sandy become more resilient to the impacts of coastal and inland flooding and focus on strengthening natural ecosystems that also benefit fish and wildlife. Flood resiliency is a community's ability to plan for, respond to, and recover from floods.

Last summer a team from Fuss and O'Neill, along with WPWA interns Zack Valerio and Nate Lukas, conducted field assessments on 466 structures in the watershed. These included 294 culverts, 128 bridges, and 44 dams. Other structures that could not be directly accessed were evaluated using state and local reports and GIS mapping. The structures were assessed for four factors: 1) Hydraulic Capacity – how well the structure can handle typical flow, how well it can handle large storms, and what potential problems would climate change cause; 2) Geomorphic Vulnerability – is gravel and sand blocking the channel or could it; 3) Aquatic Organism Passage – does the structure block in any way the free movement of fish and other aquatic animals; and 4) Flooding Impact Potential – what would happen during a storm to areas around the structure and does the structure increase flooding.



The next phase of the project will be to analyze the data and develop recommendations. For culverts and bridges the objectives are primarily "How can decision-makers prioritize the repair and replacement of stream crossing infrastructure to increase flood resiliency and enhance aquatic organism passage?" For the dams we asked "How can decision-makers prioritize the removal, repair or modification of dams to reduce flood risk and enhance fish passage?"

The engineers plan to have draft technical reports based on the data and analysis ready by the middle of March. The steering committee, with representatives from five watershed towns, RI Emergency Management Agency, RI Water Resource Board, US Geological Survey, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and RI Department of Environmental Management, will be given the reports for review and comments. At the same time, WPWA

has been conducting outreach to several of the RI state departments to share preliminary results and bring them up to speed on the project.

The final plan will be published around October of 2016. Besides the data and analysis from the field work and desktop evaluations, it will contain discrete recommendations for each town regarding potential projects and land use regulations. Once that is available WPWA will conduct municipal training workshops so each town will understand what parts of the plan pertain to them. The final goal is to enable the towns to use the plan to develop projects that will reduce flooding and increase water quality. The hope is that the plan will strengthen any funding applications available to the towns for these projects. For more information on the Flood Resiliency Management Plan, go to WPWA's FRMP web page, [wpwa.org/flood\\_resiliency.html](http://wpwa.org/flood_resiliency.html). [Return to Top](#)

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## Where Did All the Trees Go?



Many of you have asked, "Where are all the trees going?" on Boom Bridge Road in Stonington, CT. The answer is simple, off to market for timber, pulp and firewood. The real question is "Why?"

The cutting is easily seen from Route 95 if you're traveling north between exits 92 and 93. Typically today's harvesting practices are a selective cut that culls out trees while leaving behind a variety of mature specimens to serve as seed trees and to maintain the health of

the forest, the soil and the watershed. In this case, the Lewis family has stripped the forest bare and many are crying foul. But before you condemn the owner, first consider the circumstances.

The Beriah Lewis Farm has been a working dairy farm since 1791! Ledyard and Ted Lewis represent the seventh generation to own and operate the farm. And they are working to cultivate the eighth generation so that the farm may continue for years to come. Last year the farm won a New England Green Pastures Award at the Eastern States Exposition fair held every year in West Springfield, Massachusetts.

This seventh generation of Lewis's has recently worked with local land trusts to preserve the farm and install buffers along the Pawcatuck River which prevent livestock from wallowing in the water, a practice widely used for centuries to water farm animals. However, all that wallowing took a toll on the river in the form of nitrogen loading from manure. While no studies have been conducted as of yet to determine how much of a reduction in nitrogen loading has resulted from the farm's good deed, it's reasonable to conclude that there has been an increase in the quality of river water passing through the farm.

So why clear cut as opposed to performing a selective harvest? Does the Lewis family plan to sell the land to a developer to build big box stores or McMansions? According to the town zoning map, the land is classified as residential lots with a minimum area of 60,000 square feet, which had many concerned that the cutting was to make way for house lots as a source of revenue for the farm. Not so, says the Lewis family. According to Emily Lewis, the clearing is being done to make way for more croplands to feed the more than 1,000 head of cattle on the farm--cattle that supplied upwards of 15 tons of milk to the Dairy Farmers of America for distribution in 2014.

In a perfect world, the 100+ acre forest would remain untouched. But in a world full of compromises, environmentalists can take solace knowing that the forest is being replaced with a different form of vegetation--croplands. This is a much better alternative than repurposing the land for residential development, which comes with a larger negative impact to the watershed.

Remember, No Farms, No Food! [Return to Top](#)

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## Your Thoughtful "In Memory" Donations Support WPWA's Programs

WPWA recently received several generous and unanticipated donations in memory of a long-time member who, sadly, had passed away. We want to express how deeply we appreciate the thoughtfulness of the families who request donations to WPWA in their loved one's memory. These donations help to support WPWA's work on behalf of the watershed and the lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams that the departed had treasured during their life. Thank you so very much for your kindness and consideration.

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