

NEPONSET RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

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Press Release

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Public Meeting on Draft 2004 Neponset River Watershed Action Plan

Have you ever wondered whether it's safe to swim in Boston area beaches, ponds and streams? Or, whether it's safe to eat the fish caught there? Have you ever had an idea about what ought to be done to make the situation better?

The Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA) is giving people the opportunity to learn about local conditions and help identify solutions to problems in the Neponset River Watershed, which runs from the Neponset Reservoir in Foxborough to the mouth of the River at Dorchester Bay. NepRWA will conduct a Public Meeting on its draft *2004 Neponset River Watershed Assessment and Action Plan* on Tuesday, June 1, 2004 at 7 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Trailside Museum Auditorium at the Blue Hills Reservation in Milton. It is designed to give citizens in the watershed an opportunity for input on setting priorities.

NepRWA is coordinating the work of five organizations to produce the *2004 Boston Harbor Watershed Assessment and Action Plan* for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA). That Plan will be comprised of five sections, covering the Neponset, Weir, Fore, and Back River subwatersheds, as well as direct discharges into the Harbor from the City of Boston. Each subwatershed, including the Neponset, will hold its own public meeting on its draft Action Plan.

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The Action Plan is designed to advise EOEA on priority actions that should be taken to improve water quality, increase summer stream flows, protect the aquatic environment, and increase opportunities for swimming, fishing and boating. NepRWA will base its Action Plan recommendations on its own water quality monitoring results, performed by its Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Network (CWMN) from 1999 through March, 2003. The testing has uncovered numerous problems that were heretofore unknown to state and federal environmental agencies.

From the work done on the Plan by NepRWA, it would appear that major problems in the Neponset River Watershed include:

- bacterial pollution, mostly from human and animal wastes (from sanitary sewer overflows, stormwater runoff, illicit sewer connections & poorly maintained sewers)
- excessive nutrients (illicit sewer connections, stormwater runoff, lawn and golf course fertilizers, and inadequately maintained septic systems)
- low streamflows (caused by dams, water withdrawals and the net export of water from the Neponset Basin directly into Boston Harbor via the sewer system)
- urban sprawl

Fourteen municipalities lie at least partially in the Neponset Watershed: Boston, Canton, Dedham, Dover, Foxborough, Medfield, Milton, Norwood, Quincy, Randolph, Sharon, Stoughton, Walpole and Westwood.

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