

water shed (02) - the area draining into a particular body of water.

Neponset River Watershed Association
 NepRWA is a nonprofit conservation group founded in 1967 to protect and restore the Neponset River, its tributaries and their watershed lands. *News from the Neponset* is published six times a year. Printing by Blue Hill Press, Canton

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2. a critical turning point, 3. communities connected by water



Special thanks to the Massachusetts Environmental Trust...

...for their recent grant to NepRWA. The Trust collects funds from the sale of the Massachusetts "environmental license plates" and other sources and uses the funds to make grants to support nonprofit conservation groups all over the state. The grant to NepRWA will help support the Water BUDGETS project to protect aquatic life in the river.

News From the Neponset

A Publication of the Neponset River Watershed Association

January - February 2002

Stars Align at Forbes Woods

After months of nail biting over the future of Milton's endangered Forbes Woods, the stars are coming into alignment to save this unique piece of forestland.



Forbes Woods is the 35+ acres of mature woods, made up of six separate parcels that sit behind the marsh on the Milton side of the Estuary. It is visible from the Expressway, as you drive south past the Granite Ave exit. The Woods are home to two state champion trees, the largest Black Cherry and largest Black Oak in Massachusetts. They provide crucial upland wildlife habitat adjacent to the marshes in an area where more than 200 species of birds are found. Just as importantly, the Woods provide a "wild" backdrop for the estuary, defining the natural character of the area as seen from Milton Landing, Cedar Grove Cemetery and the new MDC Bikeway.

Last September, the largest single parcel in the Woods, some 25 acres owned by the Forbes Family went up for sale and was vulnerable to immediate construction. Development proposals ranged from a dozen large homes to a complex of up to 80 units.

In response to this threat, NepRWA helped bring together the "Friends of Forbes Woods," a diverse coalition of groups working to preserve this special place forever. The "Friends" include the Trust for Public Land, which negotiated a purchase agreement with the Forbes family. The Milton Land Trust is working to acquire conservation restrictions on neighboring parcels. The Milton Garden Club, the Milton Hill Neighborhood Association, the Cedar Grove Civic Association, the Milton Conservation Commission, and the Milton Board of Selectmen joined in to develop strategies to preserve the Woods. And of course, NepRWA was in the thick of things too, helping to organize the overall effort, secure resources, get the word out and pursue conservation restrictions.

"Forbes Woods" continued inside

The Neponset Trail Emerges Along the River

After years of hard work and coordination the Neponset River Greenway, a series of parks bordering a multi-use trail connecting the mouth of the river in Boston to the Blue Hills Reservation in Milton, is finally becoming a reality. Despite its history as an industrial center, the Neponset remains a natural estuary with extensive marshlands at its mouth and significant freshwater wetlands along much of its upstream length creating wonderful scenic outlooks. As intended, the Greenway is already bringing people closer to the river to discover its natural beauty, fascinating history, and vital wildlife.

The Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) owns much of the shoreline including an abandoned railway line which is being transformed into the ISTEA-funded Neponset Trail, a rail-trail from the mouth of the estuary at Tenean Beach in the Port Norfolk neighborhood of Dorchester, through the Pope John Paul II Park, along the marshes, then paralleling the "High Speed Line" trolley toward Mattapan, as part of the Neponset River Masterplan.

The MDC recently assigned long-time MDC employee John Kovich to manage these lands, which are known as the MDC Neponset River Reservation, or the Neponset Greenway. John began at his position in late August. He has a degree in Forestry and has worked with the MDC for fifteen years in both park management and watershed protection. John's office is located at the Harbor Regions Office on Taylor Street in Dorchester. He can be reached at 617-727-5290.

Pope John Paul II Park, next to the South-east Expressway on the estuary of the river, opened on May 1, 2001 and contains 1/4-mile of the Neponset Trail. The rest of the trail, downstream to Port Norfolk and upstream to Central Avenue in Milton, has been cleared of arsenic contaminated soil, which was found along much of the railroad right of way. Arsenic was a key ingredient in an herbicide that railroads nationwide used until the EPA banned it in 1980. Final construction of the trail started in September 2001, since then a "hinder course" of rough pavement has been placed on more than 90% of the trail, and many people have already begun using it.

One source of confusion along the trail is that policing along the Trail is actually under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts State Police, not the Boston or Milton police Departments. So any safety questions or concerns should be addressed to the state police at 617-740-7536. General questions about the management of the trail can be directed to John Kovich at the number above. Construction of the trail will continue throughout the winter with completion expected by June of 2002.

Community involvement, under the leadership of the Neponset River Greenway Council and Boston Natural Areas Fund (BNAF), has been critical in making the Neponset River Greenway a successful project. If you would like to get involved with the Greenway please contact John Kovich at the MDC or the NepRWA office.

A New Look For the NepRWA Staff!

Along with some staff changes we've added two new staff members.

Maggie Hillis has been hired as the new Outreach Coordinator. She will be in the office full-time, but will be splitting her efforts between NepRWA and the Friends of the Blue Hills. Maggie comes to NepRWA after graduating from Colorado College in May 2000 with a degree in Biochemistry and then working for a year with the State Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs) in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey doing community organizing around environmental, consumer, and democracy issues. Maggie is originally from Newton, MA. Maggie's duties will include coordinating community events and volunteer efforts, working with other organizations on watershed projects and issues, and relating relevant news and information to the media.

Wendy Parisi has also joined the NepRWA staff as the new Environmental Scientist. Wendy will be working in the office full-time and her responsibilities include coordinating the CWMN program and other monitoring projects. Wendy graduated in 1998 with a B.A. in Geography from Miami University in Ohio. This past August Wendy earned her master's degree in Geography from the University of Georgia. Wendy is originally from Fairport, NY. Her interests are varied, with a primary focus on general watershed conservation and the effects of land cover and river morphology on water quality in rivers. Wendy is looking forward to learning about the Neponset River Watershed, and is excited about working with the CWMN program.

Finally, Jessica Stephens, who has been working as the Outreach Coordinator for NepRWA throughout the fall, has switched positions and is now NepRWA's Water Resource Analyst. Jessica graduated from Vermont Law School in August 2001 with a master's degree in Environmental Law. Before graduate school, Jessica worked in Chicago for two years on rivers as an Americorps Volunteer with Illinois Ecowatch. Jessica looks forward to combining her knowledge of environmental laws and regulations with her experience working on rivers to hold polluters accountable for their actions as well as work to prevent water pollution in the first place.

Adams Street Bridge Issue Resolved...we hope

For several years now NepRWA staff and members have been concerned with the presence of sewage seeping into the Neponset River at the Adams Street Bridge in Lower Mills. There was evidence of a leak in the sewer line underneath Adams Street at the bridge that was causing raw sewage to percolate up through the bridge abutment and discharge directly into the river. NepRWA staff had on several occasions collected water samples from the river at the location of the leak and the results proved that indeed there were extremely high levels of fecal coliform evident at the site where sewage was suspected of being discharged into the Neponset.

In October, NepRWA sought to locate the parties involved who would be responsible to repair the leak. After several phone calls were made, it was discovered that in accordance with a contract with the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), before construction was to begin on the bridge itself, the sewer line that was causing the leak was to be replaced. The MWRA has already made temporary repairs to the leaking pipe this past fall and MHD will replace the water and sewer lines under the bridge starting in Summer 2002. Let's hope that this effort will put an end to the dangerous sewage leak that was occurring at this location and that we will be one step closer to a cleaner Neponset!

Change is Coming to the CWMN Program...

...little ones at least! NepRWA is beginning to update our Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) for the Citizen Water Monitoring Network (CWMN) Program. As part of that process we will be reviewing our current site locations and making some changes. We would like your input! If you would like to review the proposed new site list, have any recommendations regarding the current sites, or the addition of any new sampling locations please contact Wendy Parisi, NepRWA Environmental Scientist, at 781-575-0354 or parisi@neponset.org.

Quincy Environmental Network

NepRWA has joined the Quincy Environmental Network (QEN), a new coalition of environmental groups working in Quincy.

The goal of the QEN is to create an open dialogue between various groups, the public, and city officials to more effectively protect and improve the environment in Quincy. This communication should not only prevent duplication of efforts, but will hopefully allow the public the chance to see the big picture on environmental issues that affect the entire city, and ideally stimulate increased public involvement in these efforts.

The QEN provides a forum in which groups can pool their resources and assist one another by publicizing each other's needs, as well as lending technical assistance. The QEN recently established a web site (www.qenet.org) on which various organizations can provide links to their own sites. The QEN was the motivating factor in the coordination between the Friends of the Neponset Estuary and the Fore River Watershed Association revisiting shoreline surveys of both these Quincy rivers at the same time.

One of the QEN's first achievements involved organizing a successful Candidate's Night during the race for Quincy mayor. This involved each candidate filling out a questionnaire on environmental topics, which are posted on their web site. The group recently received a grant from the New England Grassroots Fund, which will help tremendously in their efforts.

NepRWA is proud to be part of the QEN. If you would like to get involved with the coalition, check out their web site, or come to their next meeting on February 4th at 6:30 pm at the Thomas Crane Public Library in Quincy.



Forbes Woods: Largest Black Oak in Massachusetts

"Forbes Woods" continued from front page

The first good news came when the Trust for Public Land announced that the Forbes Family had accepted our proposed option agreement, which would postpone development on the parcel for at least six months. Then, after the dust had settled on the state budget negotiations, we discovered that Neponset's legislative delegation, led by Milton Representative Walter Timilty and Milton Senator Brian Joyce, with the blessing of Governor Swift, had secured the \$2.7 million needed to ultimately purchase this parcel.

This whole effort has been a great example of how effective it can be to combine the talents of a variety of different groups - the real estate expertise of a national group, the community connections of local groups, the coordinating role of a regional nonprofit like NepRWA, and the leadership of state legislators with a long term vision. None of this would have been possible without the unique contribution of each member of the Friends.

But even with the bulk of the funding in place, much remains to be done. The Forbes family parcel will ultimately be conveyed from the family to the Trust for Public Land and finally to the MDC. Dozens of details still need to be wrapped up to complete the transaction. The Friends are also actively working to secure donations of conservation easements that will protect the remaining 10 acres that make up the Woods.

Even after the closing, the property cries out for a master plan to strike the appropriate balance between resource preservation and public access and to guide the maintenance and stewardship of the property in the years to come. The Friends are considering a private fundraising campaign to cover the cost of the master plan, and to help endow future maintenance of the property.

Anyone interested in working on these remaining tasks, or interested in helping out with a donation is encouraged to contact Ian Cooke at the NepRWA office.

DEP Wants Your Input

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is requesting your input on a draft report that presents a pollution budget for fecal coliform in the Neponset River. The report outlines steps to restore the health of the river. Fecal coliform bacteria are indicators of contamination with sewage and/or the feces of warm-blooded wildlife. Such contamination may pose a risk to human health. The data used for this report is primarily that collected by NepRWA CWMN volunteers. The DEP will present the report on Tuesday, February 12, 2001 from 6:30pm - 9:00pm at the Blue Hills Trailside Museum Auditorium. Directions can be downloaded at www.massadubon.org. Copies of the report are available from the address below and on the Internet at www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/wm/wmpubs.htm. Comments must be received by 5:00 pm on February 28, 2001. Comments should be mailed to: Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Watershed Management, 627 Main St., 2nd Floor, Worcester, MA, 01608. Attn: Russell A. Isaac Ph.D., P.E., Phone: (508) 767-2876, Email: russell.isaac@state.ma.us

Tributary of the Month Traphole Brook

Towns: Walpole, Sharon, Norwood
Important attributes: cold water fishery
Lakes/Ponds: Mill Pond
Drainage area: 4.68 square miles
Stream length: 8.91 miles

Issues of concern: sedimentation, chloride concentrations, algal blooms, invasive species

Traphole Brook is a unique tributary of the Neponset River as it is one of the few remaining self-sustaining cold-water fisheries in the watershed. In 1994 the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection reported that Traphole Brook exhibited stable brown and brook trout populations. In fact, in 1999 DEP found a total of 80 fish in Traphole Brook, all of which were trout! After identifying Traphole Brook as the stream with the coolest water temperatures in the entire Neponset Basin, the state's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs recommended in a 1997 review



that it be reclassified as a cold-water fishery.

In January of 2000, NepRWA requested that several Neponset River tributaries, including Traphole Brook, be considered for reclassification as Class B—Cold Water Fisheries under the Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards (MSWQS). According to the procedures associated with reclassification of streams, if a water body is currently designated as a warm-water fishery and it is found capable of sustaining a year-round population of cold-water species then it should be reclassified as a cold-water fishery. Based on this standard, and the findings by DEP that there is a stable population of cold-water trout in Traphole Brook, the reasoning exists that Traphole Brook should be reclassified as a Class B—Cold Water Fishery.

The reclassification of Traphole Brook to a cold water fishery will help to improve conditions in the brook by enforcing tighter temperature and dissolved oxygen regulations. These regulations will be beneficial to cold water fish such as trout because temperature and dissolved oxygen are limiting factors for growth and spawning activities. The MSWQS are due for review this year and the reclassification of Traphole Brook as a cold water fishery will be open to public comment and decided upon in the near future.