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Neponset River Watershed Association  
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wat • er • shed (n): 1. the area of land 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 each year. Printing by Blue Hill Press, Canton.

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November - December 2004

## Fall Fest's Golden Memories

Amidst smiles, laughter and warm conversation, more than 100 Fall Fest-goers enjoyed a silent auction, hearty dinner and live jazz at Canton's Brookmeadow Country Club, on October 15. These individuals and many more donors, bidders and volunteers raised critical funds for environmental protection.

And while Fall Fest slowly becomes a golden memory, its legacy will continue to bring smiles to many—especially as new family vacations, massage appointments and museum visits come up! Fall Fest funds are also now working to support environmental work throughout the 14 towns of the Neponset River Watershed.

Thank you, everyone, for your help in making Fall Fest such a success! We appreciate your generous donations of time, auction items and funds, as well as the adventurous trek many of you made on that rainy, blustery Friday night, not too long ago. NepRWA staff and Board members enjoyed talking with other NepRWA members and meeting families from throughout the Watershed. We hope that everyone came away from Fall Fest pleased to have met new friends and neighbors.

And now, we'd like to give a hats-off to the Fall Fest planning committee! These individuals spent months perfecting Fall Fest details. Thanks very much to: Nancy Davis, Jayne DiCandio, Christine Grady, Taber and Mary Keally, Amy Killeen, Paul



Photo credits: Donna Miller

Laeunstein and Donna Miller. Only with your dedication, perseverance and generosity could Fall Fest have been so enjoyable. And, we'd like to thank the following people for their hard work during the night of Fall Fest: Amanda Northrop, Wendy and Rob Roemer, Steven Davis, Tom Birmingham, Pam Kane and Laura Raymond.

## Completed: Neponset Watershed Assessment & Action Plan

NepRWA recently completed *The Boston Harbor South Watersheds Assessment and Action Plan*, which covers the Neponset, Fore, Weir and Back River Watersheds, as well as direct Harbor discharges by the City of Boston.

This *Assessment and Action Plan* identified a variety of problems and opportunities in the Neponset Watershed, some of which were unknown to government authorities. Within this report, we have listed priority action items and key locations for state, federal, and municipal government and citizen group implementation.

NepRWA will be organizing efforts in individual Watershed towns to implement the *Action Plan* through activities such as:

- Volunteer-based water quality monitoring, shoreline surveys, and identification of local "hot spots,"
- Educating the public and Town Boards on key issues,
- Studying issues and developing model bylaws and best management practices,
- Conducting demonstration projects,
- Establishing citizen/advocate networks to strengthen the

constituency for sound watershed management and to open lines of public communication, and

- Advocating for adequate funding at state and municipal levels.

### 2004 Assessment

The Neponset section of the *Assessment* looked at water quality, hydrology, physical habitat, land use and open space. Primary conclusions include:

*Water quality:* Bacteria (pathogens) and nutrients are the most common and widespread problems in the Watershed. Based on samples gathered from 1999-2003 by NepRWA's volunteer Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Network (CWMN), numerous stream segments were identified as impaired that had not previously been categorized as impaired by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Other water pollution problems include low dissolved oxygen levels (related to low water flow); metals and toxics—including PCBs and mercury; turbidity and siltation; and trash, debris and other aesthetic impairments.

See *Watershed Assessment, Page 2*

## Neponset Watershed Assessment & Action Plan, from Page 1

**Hydrology and Physical Habitat.** Low streamflows are having the greatest adverse effects on fish, other aquatic wildlife, and their habitat, as well as on pollution levels and boating. Causes of low streamflow mostly include excessive water use and the transfer of Neponset water into Boston Harbor via MWRA sewers, as well as seepage of clean groundwater into cracked sewer pipes. Low streamflow conditions concentrate aquatic pollutants.

Dam-induced habitat alteration has also reduced habitat for riverine species.

**Land Use and Open Space.** The primary problem is that a quarter of the Watershed is comprised of impervious surface such as roads, parking lots, rooftops and driveways. Impervious surfaces reduce groundwater recharge and pollute streams. Additionally, the removal of natural vegetation along waterways has:

- Reduced groundwater recharging,
- Increased erosion and siltation in adjacent waterways, and
- Reduced wildlife habitat and diversity. Finally, open space, especially open space providing public access to waterways, is very limited in our Watershed.

### Neponset Action Plan

For the most part, NepRWA recommends that the federal and state authorities, as well as MWRA, greatly increase funding for monitoring, research and implementation, and get tougher in their enforcement of existing water quality rules. Local governments are urged to:

- Fully implement all Clean Water Act requirements. e.g., stormwater and sewer maintenance,
- Strengthen their local bylaws, e.g., require septic pumping, limit lawn watering, and require that new development be done in a more environmentally sensitive manner, and
- Raise sewer and water rates to accurately reflect full costs, including environmental costs and the expense of repairing neglected sewer infrastructure.

More specifically, priority action items cover the following:

- **Sewer system improvements**, including: full implementation of Neponset Watershed Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL); and the banning of sewer extensions and capacity expansions until current systems are properly maintained and illegal discharges cease;
- **Stormwater management and groundwater recharge**, including: adequate funding for local governments to comply with new federal stormwater rules; decentralized stormwater treatment and mitigation of off-site stormwater problems for new development and redevelopment; and local stormwater by-laws as strict as wetland state rules;
- **Septic management**, including: mandatory septic tank pump-outs, and septic as the preferred wastewater treatment for homes;
- **Management of landscaped areas**, including strict development rules—especially for waterfront property owners;
- **Water supply and streamflows**, including: habitat-based, seasonal minimum streamflow requirements; “highly stressed” classification of the Neponset Watershed; and stricter water conservation rules;
- **Riverine habitat**, including: removal of T&H and Baker Dams and risk assessments of other dam removals; more expenditures from Open Space Bond Fund; and a plan for invasive species management;
- **Public access to waterways**, including boat ramp in the Estuary, and more canoe launches for freshwater reaches;
- **Watershed assessment**, including: more state and federal funding for citizen-based monitoring; and development of a Nutrient TMDL;
- **Innovative strategies** for financing, regional collaboration, and adapting general remediation techniques to local conditions, including: Sewer Trust Fund modeled on Highway Trust Fund; water and sewer fees that fully reflect costs, including deferred maintenance costs; regional collaboratives to achieve economies of scale; and Citizen/ Advocate Committees for each town.

View the *Neponset Assessment and Action Plan* at [www.neponset.org](http://www.neponset.org), and soon you'll be able to view the *Boston Harbor Assessment and Action Plan* at [www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm](http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm). For more information, contact Steve Pearlman at 781-575-0354.

## Are You RiverSmart?

NepRWA's RiverSmart public education campaign is in full swing. We're reaching out to citizens across the Watershed to encourage simple actions that make a big difference in the Neponset's water quality and streamflow.

You may have already seen RiverSmart bookmarks at local libraries, banks, community centers and retail stores! You may have even viewed our public service announcements in *The Globe*, *The Daily News Transcript* and other town publications.

If you'd like to find out how RiverSmart you are, visit our RiverSmart web pages at [www.neponset.org](http://www.neponset.org). Many thanks to Rick Dumont of RMD Publishing for technical and design assistance!

If you'd like to air a RiverSmart public service ad or distribute materials in your community, contact Carly at 781-575-0354 or [rocklen@neponset.org](mailto:rocklen@neponset.org).

## Carole Golden, NepRWA Volunteer



NepRWA would like to express our deepest sympathies to the family of Carole Golden of Wollaston. Carole, who recently passed away,

was a dedicated volunteer with NepRWA's Citizen Water Monitoring Network (CWMN). A tireless go-getter, she was always willing to pull on her waders and step out into a stream—no matter the weather or the problem at hand! We will also miss Carole around the NepRWA office; she often lent a hand with mailings. We offer our best wishes to Carole's family and friends.

## A Landscape, Colored

Armed with oil paints, watercolors, acrylics, pastels and cameras, artists recently brought the Neponset Watershed's salt marshes, cormorants and trolleys to life at Milton's Forbes House Museum!

Sponsored by NepRWA and the Forbes House Museum, the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual *RiverArt: Plein Air Art* juried art exhibit and sale kicked-off with a reception for the artists and a festive Fall Family Day, open to the public and brimming with live music, children's activities and art from Watershed high school students. RiverArt artwork was on display at the Museum during the month of October.

Susan Merritt and Tom Fiske served as RiverArt judges, and prizes were donated by Frantic Framers of Quincy, DIFI Photo of Canton, Boston Frame Works of Norwood, Corners of Norwood, and Frame-It Studio & Gallery of Canton, Milton and Plymouth.

### RiverArt 2004 Awards

**Best of Show:** Dianne P. Miller, *Quincy Salt Marsh*.

**Watercolor:**

1st Place: Cathy Garnett, *Davenport Creek...Low Tide*;

2nd: Ruthann W. Frattasio, *Porcelain Vine*;

3rd: Cathy Garnett, *Davenport Creek...High Tide*.

**Oil & Acrylic:**

1st Place: Dianne P. Miller, *Neponset River*;

2nd: Deborah Putnam, *Morning Ebb at Neponset River*;

3rd: Eli Cedrone, *Field of Dreams*.

**Photography & Digital Photography:**

1st Place: Diane Sawyer, *Perfect Light*;

2nd: William Costa, *Lower Mills Trolley*; and

3rd: William Costa, *Great Blue Heron*.

**Mixed Media & Various:**

1st Place: Francesca D'Elia, *Back Yard, Hyde Park*;

2nd: Elva Proctor, *White Cone Flowers*; and

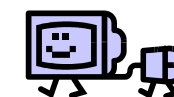
3rd: Anne Schmaltz, *Governor Hutchinson's Field*.

Many thanks to all who participated. *We hope all of our readers will join us for RiverArt in 2005!*

### E-Updates

Interested in getting more involved with local environmental opportunities? Want to meet people with similar interests? Contact Carly to join NepRWA's e-mail list and receive updates about upcoming events and environmental advocacy opportunities:

781-575-0354, [rocklen@neponset.org](mailto:rocklen@neponset.org).



## Goodbye to a Good Friend

It is with great regret that NepRWA notes the untimely death of Roger L. Gregg. Roger was a great advocate and volunteer who helped protect and restore the Neponset Watershed.



Over the years, Roger served as Canoe Race Chairman, River-Cleanup-Day Chainsaw Operator, long-time Board Member, generous supporter, and Treasurer during a critical juncture in NepRWA's development. He was always ready to help, even when others shied away from an unpopular task. Most recently, Roger was instrumental in the acquisition of the Forbes Woods and Signal Hill, not to mention the preservation of the land that he himself owned near the headwaters of Pine Tree Brook.

In his spare time, Roger was a great supporter of the Friends of the Blue Hills, an amateur archaeologist, avid fly fisherman, accomplished skier and elected member of both the Milton ZBA and Milton Representative Town Meeting. Roger passed away this summer, after a short illness. His enthusiasm will be sorely missed and we offer our best wishes for his family.

## Join us for Dam Surveys & Water Monitoring!

How about some hands-on experience protecting your local aquatic environment? Read on for two exciting volunteer opportunities.

Join NepRWA as a *dam locator* in Canton, Stoughton or Sharon. This opportunity is fun and simple and a great family activity!

Volunteer training for the Dam Assessment Project will start with an informational presentation and video at the NepRWA office. Then, volunteers will trek into the field to learn about dams—their construction, operation and ecological effects. Finally, volunteers will receive individual dam assessment assignments that they can complete at their own pace.

NepRWA also has opportunities to engage in *water-monitoring*. The Citizen Water Monitoring Network (CWMN) tests water quality throughout the towns of the Neponset River Watershed. Every other month, CWMN volunteers spend a morning outdoors, taking water samples—and in the process, developing an understanding of changes in their surrounding environment.

To find out more about CWMN or the Dam Assessment Project, please contact Wendy Roemer, NepRWA Environmental Scientist, at [roemer@neponset.org](mailto:roemer@neponset.org), 781-575-0354. You can also learn more about these opportunities at [www.neponset.org](http://www.neponset.org).

