



Of Note

Get Active On-Line

Get timely news from NepRWA and our on-line environmental community — and speak your mind! Join us on Twitter (look for “NepRWA”), Facebook (“NepRWA”), Facebook (“NepRWA”), Facebook (“NepRWA”) Watershed Association” Page), LinkedIn (“NepRWA River Watershed Association”) and Flickr (go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/nepRWA/>).

Be a NepRWA Member

Join NepRWA if you aren't already a member, and support environmental projects around the Watershed. Visit nepRWA.org or request a membership application from Kristina at 781-575-0354 or lafrance@nepRWA.org.

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 watershed lands.

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

News from the Neponset

January-February 2011

Director’s Corner

Physical & Biological Integrity Neponset Watershed’s Next Challenge

Thank you to the hundreds of members and friends who responded so generously to our year-end appeal during 2010. As December came to a close, your gifts and pledges pushed us “over the top” in meeting our \$30,000 challenge grant goal. You helped to raise more than \$60,000 for watershed work as we kick off the second year of our three-year action plan!

In 1972, when Congress passed the Clean Water Act, it set a bold goal: to restore the “chemical, physical and biological integrity” of the nation’s waterways. When sewage and industrial effluent flowed freely into the Neponset, it was the “chemical” that dominated NepRWA’s work, but as the river has gotten cleaner over the years, the other two components—“physical” and “biological”—are becoming more and more prominent.

In this edition of *News from the Neponset*, we look at how NepRWA is working to overcome physical barriers like dams and biological threats like invasive species, while ensuring that we have the right amount of clean water in the river every day.

Whether the objective is chemical, physical or biological, it’s always the generous support of members and volunteers like you that makes progress toward a healthy Neponset possible. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Ian Cooke
Executive Director

Won’t You Be a Beetle Rancher?

The Neponset River Watershed Association seeks your help with Beetle Ranching!

Come be a Beetle Rancher, and help bring native plants and animals back to the Fowl Meadow wetlands by reducing the exotic, invasive Purple loosestrife there.

Join us for our fourth year of the five-year *Fowl Meadow Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Project*, a collaboration with the Massachusetts Department



Beetle Rancher Mary Noble releases beetles in Fowl Meadow.

of Conservation and Recreation. We focus on Purple loosestrife because it outcompetes native plants and spreads far and wide, making the landscape uninhabitable for some species and deficient for others. This issue is of particular concern in Fowl Meadow because of the site’s state-listed endangered, threatened, and special concern species.

...Continued, Page 3

Herring & Shad Restoration Moves Ahead

2011 Goal to Secure Funding for Final Design & Permitting

After more than a decade, the quest to restore herring and shad runs to the Neponset is moving into an important new phase.

For millennia, migratory fish like American shad and Blueback herring would swim dozens of miles up the Neponset River to lay their eggs each spring. For the Neponset, that spring ritual came to an end some time in the early 1700s when a new generation of bigger dams was constructed and blocked the fish for good.

Today, these fish are still blocked by two state-owned dams in Boston and Milton. By 2008, efforts to remove the dams had come to a standstill, until NepRWA, working with the City of Boston, the Town of Milton, our

local legislators and an alphabet soup of state agencies, brought together the Lower Neponset Community Advisory Committee or “CAC.” Made up of representatives from some 25 neighborhood groups along the river (supporters and opponents alike), the CAC spent a year reviewing the project and ended up universally endorsing a revised plan in 2009. The plan calls for removing the more upstream dam and creating a “nature-like fishway” at the more downstream dam, while responsibly managing the PCB-contaminated sediments behind the two dams.

NepRWA spent 2010 pressing to resolve the key remaining technical and administrative hurdles standing

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Stormwater, the Underrated Polluter

NepRWA Partners with New Communities to Find Solutions

Every time it rains or snow melts, we go about our daily routines and pay little attention to one of the largest sources of pollution plaguing local waters—stormwater.



Not even snow stops Environmental Scientist Bill Guenther from locating sites for stormwater treatment structures.

The water running down the gutter goes unnoticed, and puddles in parking lots are viewed as a mere annoyance.

If asked, you probably would not consider the large puddle in the grocery store parking lot to be clean. However, that same water, flowing from parking lots around the watershed, becomes river-water every time it rains.

Stormwater collects and transports pollution into rivers and streams. This

polluted runoff damages wildlife habitat and the wildlife, themselves.

Under natural conditions, stormwater soaks into the ground and is filtered by soils and plants, then eventually recharges the groundwater. As development has spread across the landscape, however, we have replaced naturally absorbant surfaces with roads, parking lots, rooftops, sidewalks, driveways and a host of other impervious surfaces. These hard surfaces send stormwater into municipal drainage systems, which in turn direct the contaminated water into lakes, rivers and streams. In most cases, this water transports a pollutant cocktail of metals, oils, road salt, sediments and pathogens into our waterways without any treatment.

This problem of untreated, contaminated stormwater is fixable. We can build Best Management Practices (BMPs) to filter the polluted runoff. BMPs include a suite of structures that enable water to soak into the ground before reaching our rivers. Each BMP is tailored to meet specific space and water treatment needs, as well as aesthetic preferences and budget.

NepRWA has partnered with the Towns of Canton, Sharon, Stoughton, Walpole and Dedham to site BMPs for future installation. NepRWA Environmental Scientist Bill Guenther has begun to locate appropriate sites for these structures. In each town, Bill conducts a field survey to identify the best locations and creates a database of all BMP-friendly sites.

For more information, visit neponset.org/Stormwater.htm or contact Environmental Scientist Bill Guenther at 781-575-0354 or guenther@neponset.org.

Thank You, Neponset Society!

Members of the Neponset Society are NepRWA's most generous supporters—those making gifts or pledges totaling \$500 or more per calendar year. The support of our Neponset Society Members plays a unique role in protecting the Neponset and making progress toward a healthy river possible. Thank you to the following individuals, businesses and institutions that joined the Neponset Society during 2010 or renewed their support!

Businesses and Institutions

Anonymous
Analog Devices
Boston Water and Sewer Commission
Cedar Grove Gardens
CertainTeed Roofing
CHT Foundation
The Copeland Family Foundation
Glossa Engineering
Hollingsworth and Vose
The Kraft Group, Gillette Stadium
Poirier Service Corp.
Toll Brothers

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David and Jeanne-Marie Brookfield
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James Sharpe and Deborah Stein Sharpe
Barbara Shea McDonald
Dr. Cathy Stern

To become a Neponset Society Member, contact NepRWA Executive Director Ian Cooke at 781-575-0354.

Beetle Ranching, from page 1

“Biological control” or using a living organism to control another species, has proven effective time and again at reducing Purple loosestrife.

Join a fun-loving, hard-working volunteer community that takes a hands-on, outdoors approach to protecting the Watershed. Sign up to be a Beetle Rancher by contacting NepRWA Restoration Manager Carly Rocklen at 781-575-0354 or rocklen@neponset.org.



A volunteer harvests a rootball.

Herring and Shad, from page 1

in the project's way. Over this time, the Department of Fish and Game completed conceptual designs for the proposed nature-like fishway. Technical questions about flooding were clarified and funding to resolve them committed. The US Geological Survey (with helpful encouragement from Congressman Lynch) completed its long overdue evaluation of toxic PCBs accumulated in the sediments behind the dams. The Department of Conservation and Recreation broke ground on the cleanup of an upstream PCB-contamination site, and the Department of Environmental Protection and a local company completed remediation of PCBs upstream in Mother Brook.

All this activity came to a head on January 19, 2011, when the members of the CAC reconvened to review the conceptual designs for the Baker Dam and hear about the status of related efforts. In general, the CAC seemed pleased with what it heard, and the group is now working to craft a letter updating its support for the project.

With most of the potential “deal breakers” overcome during 2010, NepRWA's goal is to secure funding for final design and permitting work by the end of 2011. We will be working intensively with the CAC member groups, as well as with our state and federal legislators and perhaps even some private funders, to figure out how to fund this next phase.

Support from our members has enabled NepRWA to keep the pressure on, and we remain very encouraged with the depth and breadth of public support for the project and our continued steady progress on many levels. For more information on this project, contact NepRWA Advocacy Director Steve Pearlman at 781-575-0354 or pearlman@neponset.org.

Conserving Water for the Neponset

NepRWA to Launch New Programs in Stoughton & Canton, to Follow Successes in Sharon & Milton

The amount of water we see in ponds, streams, wetlands, and the Neponset River is linked to how much water our communities are using versus returning to the ground.



NepRWA Board Member Paul Lauenstein & Water Conservation Coordinator Nancy Fyler provide conservation tips at the 2010 Sharon Energy Water Fair.

When we remove *more* water than we return, water levels drop, pollutant concentrations rise, and aquatic wildlife run into difficulties.

This spring, NepRWA will launch water conservation programs in two new towns to help counter this local environmental issue. We will begin work in Stoughton and Canton, in addition to continuing our efforts in Sharon and Milton.

Each of us can help ensure more water for our natural

resources by making small changes at home and at work. In fact, you can make an even *bigger* difference by helping friends and family to conserve water, too.

You can do three basic things to conserve water: Make small changes to your daily routine, update your appliances, and stop leaks. Here are a few simple steps you can take to save water, immediately:

- Turn off the faucet when brushing your teeth or shaving
- Trim a few minutes off your shower
- Only run full loads in the dishwasher and clothes washer
- Turn off the water when washing dishes by hand
- Keep a bottle of water in your fridge instead of letting your faucet run to get cold

To save even more water, consider upgrading your toilet, clothes washer, faucets and showerhead to high-efficiency WaterSense-approved models. Install faucet aerators around your home. Did you know that many local water departments offer rebates for new appliances, as well as free faucet aerators, showerheads and leak detection tablets? Give one a call. If you have an irrigation system, upgrade to a “smart” irrigation controller to reduce water use by up to 75 percent. Replace grass with drought-tolerant “turf-type tall fescue” and plant drought-tolerant native plants in your yard. Finally, check for leaks. Dripping faucets can waste up to 3,000 gallons of water each year, while leaky toilets can waste up to 200 gallons per day.

Learn more by contacting NepRWA Water Conservation Coordinator Nancy Fyler at 781-575-0354 or fyler@neponset.org or by visiting neponset.org or epa.gov/WaterSense/.