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Beetle Mania

Our beetles may be less iconic than the original “Beatles” but with the first full year of NepRWA’s Purple loosestrife biocontrol program a runaway success, we had a lot more members in our “band” than the original—about 250,000 more!

Our beetles don’t make music, but rather make a meal out of the invasive, exotic Purple loosestrife plant which has overrun many of the Neponset Watershed’s most sensitive wetland habitats. Purple loosesrife displaces the native wetland plant species on which our native wildlife depend. The beetles, *Galerucella* beetles to be exact, love to devour the Purple loosestrife. They love it so much that over years of testing, they have shown they would rather die than go without their favorite food.

Volunteers, working with NepRWA Restoration Manager, Carly Rocklen, have been raising beetles under ideal conditions, with an infinite food supply, no predators, and perfect “mood lighting.” Each volunteer begins with a handful of “starter beetles” and after several months, ends up with 500 beetles that get released to dine on some of our juiciest patches of wild Purple loosestrife. We estimate our volunteers reared at least 250,000 beetles during 2009!

The preliminary results from our beetle and wetland monitoring efforts are encouraging, with noticeable declines in the vigor of the Purple loosestrife population. This effort will continue annually through 2012 which will provide a chance to gauge the program’s long-term effectiveness.

Recognizing a Cast of Nearly 1,000 River Enthusiasts!

During 2009, with the support of hundreds of individuals, businesses, foundations, agency staff, and volunteers, NepRWA made significant strides toward our goal of a healthy river and watershed!

This annual report highlights a few of those accomplishments and recognizes

a few of the people who helped make them possible. Space constraints prevent us from listing all of the nearly 1,000 people and organizations that helped do the work, but EVERY contribution and EVERY volunteer effort—no matter how large or small—made a real difference!

During 2010, we hope you’ll help by reaching out to people you know who aren’t familiar with NepRWA’s work and helping to get them involved. You can start by passing this annual report on to someone you know! Thanks!

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Statewide Water Advocacy

One of the important activities that seldom gets touted in the NepRWA newsletter is our advocacy on issues of statewide water policy. During 2009, NepRWA led efforts to push EPA to adopt stronger rules on polluted runoff, lobbied on behalf of the Sustainable Water Resources Bill, and worked as part of a statewide water policy group.

Perhaps the most significant piece of our advocacy program during 2009 was our focus on getting conservation groups from across the state—from watershed groups, to national conservation groups, to land trusts—working together much more effectively through a new organization the Mass Rivers Alliance. The Alliance will celebrate its first year as a staffed organization in early 2010. Find out more about the alliance at www.massriversalliance.org.

Neponset River Watershed Association Annual Report 2009

Director’s Corner: Reflecting on a Great Year

Without a doubt, 2009 was one of the most exciting and productive years in NepRWA’s 43 year history. As you’ll read inside, we made significant progress on:

- cleaning up pollution hotspots,
- restoring some of our most valuable natural habitats, and
- conserving water for the river.

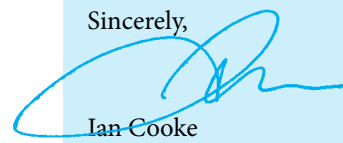
Every few years, the NepRWA Board makes a point of stepping back to take stock of where we are, examine which strategies have been working well and which have been less effective, and question the assumptions that underpin our work. The result of our 2009 self-evaluation is a new, more narrowly targeted, three-year action plan for the watershed.

The Action Plan reaffirmed our core goal of creating a healthy river and watershed for our kids, our families, and our communities. The action plan focuses our program efforts on what the Board sees as the watershed’s three biggest challenges:

- polluted street and parking lot runoff that contaminates our streams,
- wasteful water use that leaves the river drier every year, and
- damaged habitats that keep our native wildlife from flourishing.

The key to our success during 2009 was the extraordinary generosity and commitment shown by our many members, supporters and volunteers. You are the ones who make the painstaking work of protecting our local environment possible. Thank you!

Sincerely,



Ian Cooke
Executive Director

Water Testing: Finding Problems, Getting Results

For years now, NepRWA has been testing for water pollution at more than 41 locations across the watershed—keeping our finger on the pulse of how clean (or dirty) our water is. This critical work is overseen by NepRWA Environmental Scientist Bill Guenther, and made possible by the efforts of more than 60 active volunteers along with the generous support of organizations like the Mass Water Resources Authority Deer Island Laboratory, the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, the Milton and Westwood Departments of Public Works and many other corporate, foundation and individual donors.



Inspecting and stormdrain outfall

During 2009, NepRWA saw substantial results from these efforts, as the town of Norwood and Boston Water and Sewer Commission implemented sewer system repairs on Hawes Brook, Meadow Brook and the Lower Neponset to address pollution problems discovered and documented by NepRWA. Expect more pollution hotspots to be cleaned up in 2010 as NepRWA completes work on an innovative “optical brightener stormdrain outfall survey” begun in 2009.

Saving Water One Community at a Time

NepRWA’s water conservation work broke new ground during 2009 as the program expanded to work with three watershed towns: Milton, Sharon and Walpole. After years of being heavily involved in the contentious debates over water allocation at the state level, it became obvious to NepRWA that there is significant potential to reduce water diversions from the environment by simply using water more efficiently in homes and businesses, but few communities have managed to implement effective water conservation programs.

With that in mind, we set out to find municipal partners that were interested in starting meaningful water conservation efforts and finding ways to help them fund and implement those efforts. Now NepRWA’s Water Conservation Coordinator, Nancy Fyler, spends her days helping our partner towns get the word out through a regular stream of educational mailings, thought-provoking newspaper articles, local events and demonstration projects. One of the most important elements of the program has been the effort to reach out to young people through collaboration with local school departments to incorporate the concepts of efficiency and environmental responsibility into K-12 curricula, and to deliver hands-on classroom instruction on the water cycle.



Third grade students in Sharon display some of their work

The results have been impressive. Hundreds of people have taken advantage of new water conservation rebate programs, and total water consumption in Sharon—where efforts have been ongoing for the longest—has dropped more than 100 million gallons per year, saving the town more than \$70,000 per year in electricity and chemical costs. In 2010, we are working to expand these efforts to even more communities.

Coming Together Around River Restoration on the Lower Neponset

One of the most enticing ideas for restoring the health of the Neponset River has been the possibility of bringing back the River's historic spring spawning runs of migratory fish, including the blueback herring and American shad.

For tens of thousands of years, these fish, which spend most of their lives in the ocean, returned to the river to lay their eggs each spring, forming a vital component of the food web for wildlife and humans alike. But for several hundred years now, this migration has been blocked by a series of dams that once provided water power to drive the industries of a bygone era.

While almost all those industries are now gone, more than 100 of the dams remain. But two dams in particular, the Baker Dam in Dorchester-Milton Lower Mills and the Tileston and Hollingsworth Dam on the Hyde Park-Milton border—both owned by the state—have a disproportionate impact, blocking spawning access on 17 river miles.

More than a decade ago, the state Riverways Program (now the Division of Ecological Restoration) began studying ways to get the fish past these two obsolete dams. Ultimately, they concluded that the simplest, most effective and least expensive way to solve the problem would be to remove the two dams. Compelling as that proposal seemed, it ran into rough waters when neighborhood groups raised objections to removing the Baker Dam, which they viewed not as an obsolete industrial relic, but rather as a vital historic reminder of the neighborhood's proud industrial heritage.

NepRWA recognized that there had not been enough community involvement in figuring out how to bring herring and shad back to the river, and that without near unanimous public support, the project was going nowhere fast. To address this problem, NepRWA convened the Lower Neponset Ecological Restoration Community

Advisory Committee or "CAC" and recruited the Consensus Building Institute to facilitate. NepRWA's Advocacy Director, Steve Pearlman led the outreach for the CAC, ultimately recruiting representatives from some 25 neighborhood groups. At the outset there was very little on which the CAC members agreed, but over the course of 12 months of intensive meetings, the CAC members examined all the options and listened thoughtfully to all the different perspectives on the project.

Ultimately, the CAC devised its own new alternative for achieving fish passage at the Baker Dam—the "nature-like fishway"—and came to unanimous agreement on this new strategy for restoring the fishery while at the same time preserving the historic character of the Baker Dam and its mill pond. With the consensus of the CAC, also came the endorsement of all the key state and local agencies, and the local legislative delegation.

Engineering studies are now underway on the CAC's nature-like fishway concept. If efforts to secure funding are successful, the restoration project will move into the final design stage during 2011.



Members of the Lower Neponset CAC with Senator Joyce. Photo courtesy Mass Dept. Envi. Protection

Tree Boxes to the Rescue!

Fixing the problem of polluted runoff from streets and parking lots in the Neponset Watershed will require doing something about the many square miles of existing pavement that send sand, litter, bacteria and other contaminants into neighborhood streams. In areas that were developed years ago, it can be a real challenge to find the space to build structures that will intercept and clean up polluted runoff.

Enter the "tree box" demonstration project. Basically, a box filled with soil and a small tree, a tree box is built in the sidewalk with one side open to the gutter. As polluted runoff flows along the gutter, it falls into the tree box and gets filtered before reaching the catch basin that would normally take polluted water straight to the stream. While not a perfect solution in every situation, tree boxes are a valuable tool, particularly in areas where there isn't much space available.

During 2009, NepRWA installed 14 tree boxes along Brook Road in Milton, the largest tree box installation in Massachusetts to date. The work was completed in partnership with the Milton Department of Public Works, the Mass Department of Environmental Protection and the US Environmental Protection Agency. The tree box project will not only help cleanup Pine Tree Brook, but even more importantly, will provide a local example of one of the new generation of techniques for managing polluted runoff that we hope to see implemented more widely.

Financial Summary

The extraordinary generosity of our members and donors enabled us to end our 2009-2010 fiscal year on a very positive note, helping to make up for a challenging year during 2008-2009. NepRWA expects to rely even more heavily on donations from members in the coming year as state and foundation grants become increasingly scarce. Figures have not yet been audited.

	Year Ending 3/31/2010	Year Ending 3/31/2009
Revenue		
Individuals	92,558	92,558
Foundations & Corporations	116,650	120,900
Government	133,248	219,062
Program Service Revenue	36,200	33,206
In-Kind & Other	105,501	31,562
Total Revenue	484,157	472,794
Expenses		
Personnel	242,891	247,839
Consultants & Subcontracts	138,878	204,944
Operating Expenses	52,090	67,028
Total Expenses	433,858	519,811
Net Income	50,299	-47,019

The Neponset Society

During 2009 we created the Neponset Society to better recognize our most generous supporters—those making annual gifts of \$500 or more. Our Neponset Society members rose to the challenge in 2009, by making gifts that enabled us to leverage \$40,000 in challenge grants from the Copeland Family Foundation and our Board of Directors. Now more than ever, support from Neponset Society members is the key to building a strong, effective organization. Thank you!

Businesses

Analog Devices
CertainTeed Roofing
Henkel Corporation
Hollingsworth and Vose
The Kraft Group
Poirier Service Corp.
Toll Brothers, Inc.
Walpole Cooperative Bank
VJ Properties L.P.

Anne Herbst
Patricia Hogan
Douglas & Barbara Holdridge
Shirley Howard
James Kaemmerlen & Mary Clarke
Peter & Pamela Kane
Taber & Mary Keally
Geoffrey & Sidney Kenyon
Dolores Kong
Robert Kormis & Margaret Ferguson
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Janet & Allen Lapey
Paul Lauenstein & Lonnie Friedman
Florence Locke
Pamela Lee Lowry
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Brendan & Mary McLaughlin
Maura O'Gara
Richard O'Mara
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Sam Plimpton & Wendy Shattuck
P. Carey Reid & Diane Wald
John C. Roche
Leo Roy
Michael Saad
Lynda & John Samp
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James Sharpe & Deborah Stein
Sharpe
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James Tieso

Foundations & Grants

Boston Water and Sewer Commission
The Copeland Family Foundation
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation
Mifflin Memorial Fund
The Norcross Wildlife Foundation

Individuals

Richard Ballantyne
David Biggers & Kathleen O'Connell
Thomas Birmingham & Amy Killeen
Harris & Melinda Collins
Malcolm & Renata Davidson
Michael & Karen Fortin
Maureen & Jack Ghublikian
John Glossa
Paul & Christine Grady
Gary & Karen Gregg
Eric & Deborah Hall

Thanks to Our Members and Volunteers!

None of NepRWA's accomplishments would be possible without the generous financial support provided by more than 600 individuals, businesses and foundations during 2009, not to mention the thousands of hours of time and effort donated by more than 248 volunteers. NepRWA began life in 1967 as a grassroots, all-volunteer organization. While our capabilities have grown over the years, we are still very much a grassroots group and we depend on our members and volunteers to get the work done.

Listed below are a few of the people who helped accomplish that work during 2009. Due to space constraints, we are only able to publish the names of donors giving \$100 or more. Thanks to *everyone* who supported NepRWA during 2009!

Businesses

AAA of Southern New England
Bay State Gas
Blue Hill Press
Dedham Institution for Savings
ING Direct
Roscommon Extended Care Center
Sharon Garden Club

Gary & April Dayton
Laurent Delli-Bovi
Jack & Jane Dickison
Kathy & Mark Dietlin
Paul DiMaura
Terry Dolan
Mary Driscoll
Kevin P. Duffy
John Dundas
John & Dianne Erickson
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Alan French
John & Paula Glossa
James & Marilyn Green
Andrew Gregg
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John & Carol Hahnfeld
Devens Hamlen
Thomas Hanold
Mary Happ
John & Rachel Hitt
Brian Holdridge
Susan Hunter
George Hurd
Jeffrey & Roxanna Hurst
Daniel Huse & Kathy Roth
Louis Hutchins
Barbara Jane Hyde
Ardis Johnston
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Frederick W. Kelso
Barbara Kern
Andrew Kull
Branch Lane
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Kelly McClintock
Edward & Margery McKenna
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May Pierce
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Matthew Watsky
Scott Wayne
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Christopher & Rosemary White
Dr. Brooks S. White
Alexander Whiteside
William T. Whitney
Janice Wilkins
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Wine
Jeffries Wyman

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Lucy Bailey
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Trisha & Brewster Barnard
Alison Barry
Todd & Jean Beattie
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Pauline Bolger
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