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Neponset River Watershed Association
NepRWA is a nonprofit conservation group founded in 1987 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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Environmental Bond Needs Your Support!

As reported in the last edition of News from the Neponset, the Environmental Bond legislation that if passed will ensure funding for environmental projects throughout the Commonwealth is making its way through the House of Representatives. A victory was won recently when the Massachusetts State Senate enacted its own version of the Environmental Bond. We must continue to encourage our state Representatives to pass their own version of the Environmental Bond. Visit www.neponset.org to read the latest updates and get involved!

CWMN Volunteer Opportunities

Currently CWMN is looking for regular CWMN samplers to be available every other month for 30-45 minutes between the hours of 6-8 AM. We also need drop-off coordinators to retrieve the bottles from the drop-off locations and transport them back to the office. Finally, we need dissolved oxygen (DO) samplers. Thanks to a grant from the state, we will now be able to sample dissolved oxygen in the field. If you are interested in any of these volunteer opportunities, please contact Wendy Parisi, our Environmental Scientist at parisi@neponset.org or 781.575.0334.

News From the Neponset

A Publication of the Neponset River Watershed Association

May - June 2002

The Streamflow Squeeze

Rain. Keep it coming! With all the talk of late about the drought afflicting the Northeast region of the United States, it would be hard for people not to stop and take notice when the infrequent raindrops finally make their way to people's rooftops, windshields and baseball caps. Unfortunately, several events of steady rain will not put our precipitation levels anywhere near where they should be for this time of year. And if precipitation levels are not where they should be, water levels in lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams are also apt to be far lower than normal. For the local environments that depend on adequate streamflow levels for the maintenance of healthy aquatic habitats, this summer might prove to be harder than most. But not by much. Drought or no drought, our aquatic environments are only going to get drier and become more stressed if our water use habits continue in the wasteful and inefficient manner to which we have become accustomed.



Streamflow levels are critical to healthy fish habitat.

It is true that drought can have long-reaching effects on the natural environment. But even more damaging to the Neponset River and its tributaries is the effect that consumptive water use has day in and day out.

The amount of water in surface water bodies, including the Neponset River, has been decreasing for several years, due mainly to the fact that the demand for water has been increasing, while the amount of water recycled back into the river and aquifers is decreasing. NepRWA has been examining the causes and impacts of increased water use within the Neponset River Watershed. While we are still studying this issue as part of our BUDGETS (Balancing Uses with Demands and Generating Effective Techniques for Sustainability) project, we can safely say that loss of water in natural aquatic environments leads to long-term problems. There are several causes for the reduced streamflow throughout the Neponset Watershed, like increased development, unregulated summer water use, and lack of water conservation efforts among residential and industrial users.

Locally, increasing development within the Neponset River Watershed communities is placing great stress on the local water supplies. The watershed is finding itself in a "streamflow squeeze" with more than half of Neponset Watershed residents and businesses drawing their drinking water from local aquifers, and most of those residents disposing of waste through the central sewer system. The amount of water withdrawn locally in the Neponset Watershed is never returned to the basin where it might augment streamflow.

"Streamflow Squeeze" continued inside

Thank You!

NepRWA gratefully acknowledges the many foundations, businesses, organizations and individuals who helped advance the goal of a cleaner, greener Neponset Valley over the last year through their financial support and/or their actions as project partners:

Applied Marketing Science Inc.; The Paul and Edith Babson Foundation; Ben & Jerry's Foundation; The Boston Foundation - Fund for the Environment; Boston Natural Areas Network; Boston Water and Sewer Commission; Cedar Grove Civic Association; Charles River Watershed Association; The Copeland Family Foundation; Davis Conservation Foundation; Environmental Support Center; Friends of the Blue Hills; Friends of the Neponset Estuary; Friends of Sharon Conservation; The Gillette Company; More than 1,000 individual donors, members, and volunteers; The Henry P. Kendall Foundation; Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection; Massachusetts Environmental Trust; Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Boston Harbor Watershed Team; Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Watershed Stewardship Program; The Massachusetts Riverways Program; The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Massachusetts Watershed Coalition; Metropolitan District Commission; Milton Garden Club; Milton Land Trust; Mystic River Watershed Association; The New England Patriots; New England Wildlife Center; NLT Foundation; Quincy Environmental Network; Sons of Italy, Quincy; The Sudbury Foundation; Sweet Water Trust; Town and city governments and conservation commissions across the watershed; The Trust for Public Land; University of Massachusetts Boston ECOS Program and Urban Harbors Institute; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; The U.S. Geological Survey; The Westwood Preservation Society; Wetlands Banking and Restoration Program; The William P. Wharton Trust; Willett Pond Charitable and Protection Association.

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Annual Meeting Coming Soon!

This past year NepRWA's volunteers and friends have proved that a few caring people can change the world, or at least the Neponset River Watershed. Now it is time for us to celebrate our accomplishments while we look forward to future achievements. The Annual Meeting will be Wednesday, June 12 on the shores of Lake Massapoag at the Sapphire Manor in Sharon. Save the date and keep your eyes open for your Annual Meeting invitation to arrive in your mailbox!

The featured speaker will be Dr. George Hurtt, an assistant professor at the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space at the University of New Hampshire. Dr. Hurtt is a coauthor of the "New England Regional Assessment of the Potential Consequences of Climate Variability and Change," the only study to specifically examine the potential impacts of climate changes on Massachusetts and New England. Dr. Hurtt has testified to both the New Hampshire Legislature and U.S. Congress on the science of global climate change.

More information about Dr. Hurtt's research is available at www.eos.sr.unh.edu under the faculty link, and you can learn about the New England Regional Assessment at www.necsl.sr.unh.edu.

Artists: Get Ready for River Art 2002: 8th Annual Juried Showing of Plein Air Art of the Neponset River Watershed.

Attention all area artists, prepare to feed your artistic passions as plans are underway for River Art 2002. Plein Air Art of the Neponset. Works must be submitted to the Jury on September 15-17, 2002, and this year's exhibit opens September 29.

River Art promotes the use, appreciation and preservation of the Neponset River, its lakes, streams, ponds and surrounding lands. The underlying guideline for the annual River Art exhibition is that artists must create their works on site, plein air, within the boundaries of the Neponset River Watershed. While many artists assume they must have the river or water in their artwork, this is not the case! The Neponset Watershed encompasses all the land and water that drain into the Neponset River. Works can be done anywhere within the 14 communities of the Neponset Watershed. Detailed maps are available upon request from NepRWA.

For the third year, River Art will be awarding ribbons and prizes in four categories: Oil & Acrylic, Watercolor, Photography, and Various (mixed media, pastels, etc.). Prizes will include gift certificates from area art & photography retailers.

The Call for Entries outlines all the details on how to submit your creation to the exhibition. If you would like to receive a Call for Entries, a map of the watershed or additional information, please call Maggie Hillis at 781-575-0354 or just visit neponset.org. Guidelines for the student art exhibition are also available.



Photography is one of the categories receiving prizes at River Art 2002. Photo: By Bill Tonra

"Streamflow Squeeze" continued from front

The state is just now recognizing the Neponset River as suffering from low streamflow. The Massachusetts Water Resources Commission has listed the Neponset, or portions of it, as a stressed river environment. It has been conservatively estimated that the volume of water lost each year from the Neponset River to outside basins now exceeds 20% of the river's total annual freshwater discharge.

Reduced streamflow damages ecosystems by increasing temperatures, lowering dissolved oxygen, reducing habitat, and eliminating recreational uses. The effects of the "streamflow squeeze" are evident in the variety of low flow symptoms that are occurring throughout the Neponset River Watershed. Low streamflow in the spring exposes smelt spawning habitat, killing the entire season's eggs. Waters that previously supported cold water fisheries can not any longer. Canoeing opportunities have been limited because low stream levels prevent adequate passage. Additionally, there are public health concerns related to swimming, fishing and boating as water levels drop and pollutants become more concentrated.

We must reduce our water withdrawals in order to protect the streamflow levels in the Neponset and its tributaries. The largest consumptive water use that individuals can reduce is outdoor lawn and landscape watering, which takes a great toll on water resources during the summer months. People who water their lawns and gardens need to do so responsibly, and only when necessary. Even better, you can utilize plants and grasses that are drought tolerant, and not so apt to require massive amounts of watering. A reduction in outdoor watering would greatly benefit streamflow levels in the Neponset River and the local streams and brooks that supply habitat for fish and animals, as well as aesthetic enjoyment for all.

While the environmental impacts from the current drought are a matter of concern, our water consumption practices have caused more damage to the local aquatic habitats and aquifers than any major drought. People can protect the water resources in the Neponset River Watershed by conserving their water and acting responsibly when using one of our greatest shared resources.

For more information on how to reduce consumptive water use, and for tips on water-saving gardening, please visit www.neponset.org or www.UMassDroughtInfo.org.

Volunteers Clean Up the Neponset in Quincy!

Over 75 volunteers came out on April 20th to work with the Neponset River Watershed Association and the Friends of the Neponset Estuary to clean up trash and debris that has built up along the shores of the Neponset Estuary in Quincy. In all, the volunteers covered six sites, producing over 100 bags of trash plus 30 tires and other items such as grocery carts and coolers. Many thanks to John Kovich from the MDC, Roche Bros., Equal Exchange, the Quincy Sons of Italy and all of the many volunteers who made this clean up such a terrific success!



Calendar of Events

- May 18 Westwood Land Trust Showhouse Party**
6:30-9, Jr. League Showhouse, Clapboardtree St., Westwood. Hors d'oeuvres and wine reception followed by showhouse tour. Minimum donation \$100 / person.
- May 19 Canton River Day**
12-4, Pequitside Woods, Pleasant Street, Canton. Spend a day celebrating the Canton River with food, music, canoes, craft exhibits, clowns and pony rides with a tour of the Williams House.
- May 22 Water Quality Sampling**
CWMN: Mark your Calendars!
- May 31-June 3 Biodiversity Days 2002**
Be a part of "the largest nature walk in the world," as we transform Massachusetts into a wild outdoor classroom. You can participate in one of the many Biodiversity Days field trips occurring throughout the Neponset Watershed. Work with field trip leaders to document the remarkable number and kind of species - the biodiversity - to be discovered here in the Neponset Watershed. Visit www.neponset.org for a list of field trips or call the NepRWA office.
- June 12 Annual Meeting**
6-9, Sapphire Manor, 164 Massapoag Avenue, Sharon. Celebrate a year of accomplishments as we look to the future. Reception with a light dinner and cash bar.
- June 16 Father's Day Ponkapoag Paddle**
7, Ponkapoag Pond. Join the MDC for an early morning paddle on Ponkapoag Pond. Previous canoeing experience required, must be 12 years or older. Preregistration required, 617-698-1802.
- June 29 Eighth Annual Neponset Greenway Festival**
11-3, Milton Landing, Wharf Street, Milton. Enjoy the kickoff event of the Neponset River Greenway Summer Festival. A day long celebration with music, children's performances, environmental crafts for kids, and learn-to-fish programs with poles and bait provided. Milton Farmers Market and Boat Trips on the Neponset Estuary. For more information call BNAN at 617-542-7696 or visit www.bostonnatural.org.
- July 6 Blueberry Sweep Hike**
10-1. The hilltops produce delectable fruit every year. Bring coffee cans, kids, and an appetite to the visitor's parking lot at the Hillside Street police station. Tom Palmer will lead you on a one mile walk to rich pickings with great views.
- July 16 Walking Tour of Deer Island**
9-1. Join the Boston Harbor Association and MWRA staff for a tour around the newly completed public access area on Deer Island, site of the Boston Harbor Project's treatment facility. Visit the top of the egg-shaped digesters for one of the most breathtaking views of the Harbor Islands. To reserve a space, call 617-482-1722.

Win a Walden Sports Kayak!

Imagine grabbing your Explorer's Guide and paddling through the salt marshes of the Neponset Reservation. Or maybe you prefer a leisurely float through Fowl Meadow. Whatever your preference, an "Experience" kayak would be the ideal boat for your explorations. Enter to win a Walden Paddler's "Experience" Kayak. The Experience is made of 100% recycled plastic, is 10' long, weighs 35 lbs. and includes a day hatch and front deck rigging. Retailing for \$400, you can enter to win the kayak at just \$4 a ticket, or 3 for \$10. The drawing will be held June 12 at the NepRWA Annual Meeting, but you don't need to be present to win. To enter, complete and return the order form.

Mail entries must be received by June 10.

"Experience" Kayak Raffle Ticket Order Form

You will receive your tickets by return mail. Entries may be made in person until the time of the drawing. Drawing will be held June 12 at NepRWA's Annual Meeting. Ticket holders need not be present to win. Good Luck!

Number of Tickets: _____

Total Enclosed: _____ (\$4 each/3 for \$10)

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone/Email _____

Make checks payable and return to:
NepRWA, 490 Chapman Street, Suite 1B, Canton, MA 02021

