

NepRWA Wish List



NepRWA staff at lunch, sans picnic table.

Do you have a picnic table to spare?

NepRWA would be happy to use it!

A picnic table would be especially useful at NepRWA on warm, sunny days at lunchtime.

Please let us know if you would like to donate a picnic table to NepRWA.

Contact Carly at 781-575-0354 or rocklen@neponset.org.

Thanks for considering!

Learn more about how you can help to support NepRWA at: www.neponset.org/BeaMember.htm

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

July - August 2006

Douglas Foy Touches On Smart Growth & Transportation Planning



Douglas Foy, Featured Speaker at the Annual Meeting.

This year's Annual Meeting featured Douglas Foy, former Secretary of the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development (OCD) and former President of the Conservation Law Foundation.

More than 70 NepRWA friends came together for this June 13th event. Attendees learned from the thought-provoking and timely presentation *Smart*

Growth, Cities, Climate Change & the Neponset River Watershed given by Douglas Foy.

Mr. Foy discussed the long-term effects of some of Massachusetts' short-sighted land use- and transportation-planning trends. He detailed what makes for a wisely planned town vs. a poorly planned community, using examples from throughout Massachusetts. He noted, for example, that in well-planned towns, residents can walk to the following: in 5 minutes, they can walk from their front doorstep to an ice cream shop; they can also walk to the library; children can walk to school; and residents can walk to public transit which will take them to any destination.

Mr. Foy noted that many of the Commonwealth's older towns have these key characteristics at their town centers, but that because newer development has not followed the same guiding principles (often because of zoning decisions), the towns' livability in surrounding areas has been degraded. Newer development has instead produced "urban sprawl." Houses are being built on larger lots (in an ineffective effort to deter more development) and in previously undeveloped areas. New schools and businesses are also sited far away from the town center. As a result, it has become considerably more difficult to walk to destinations, encouraging residents to drive to nearly all of their destinations. This commuting produces traffic congestion and poor air quality. It also leads to residents becoming physically unfit.

Mr. Foy noted that zoning that requires more acreage per home ultimately carves up the landscape, including natural areas—compounding urban sprawl. Ironically, towns often have increased the required acreage per home to deter additional development and protect the character of the town.

On the flip side of the coin, one type of development that promotes walkable towns is "Smart Growth." Smart Growth produces pedestrian-friendly, multi-use living areas and conserves

...Continued, Page 3

Lower Neponset River Restoration Project Gains Steam

In the past, ocean fish such as Rainbow smelt and American shad would swim up the Neponset River to lay their eggs in fresh water. For many years, however, these so-called "anadromous" fish have been prevented from doing so by two large dams running across the River from Boston to Milton: the Baker Dam near the Estuary and the Tileston and Hollingsworth (T&H) Dam a bit further upstream. If fish could get beyond these dams they could swim a full 17 miles up the river before meeting any other obstructions.

In 1996, the Massachusetts Riverways Program asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do a feasibility study on options for restoring fish runs on the lower Neponset River. Such options include fish ladders, partial dam removal, full dam removal, or even rerouting portions of the River around one or both of the dams. In doing its study, though, the Corps found large quantities of toxic PCBs (Polychlorinated Biphenyls, manmade chemicals used in commercial and industrial applications) in sedi-

ments behind the two dams. These PCBs must be either dredged out and disposed of (which is extremely costly) or "capped" so that they are no longer able to get into the water column or the food chain. Capping costs far less than dredging, but it is also quite expensive. Thus, alternatives for remediating the PCBs will have to be considered when looking at fish passage options.

Because the Army Corps was never able to complete its study, however, the Massachusetts Riverways Program obtained state funding for two other studies. The first, conducted by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and just completed, looked much more deeply at the PCB issue. It found very high PCB levels in sediments behind the dams (especially the T&H Dam) with lesser levels elsewhere in the lower Neponset. It also found that PCBs from these sediments were continuing to get into the water itself as well as into the tissue of fresh water fish, both at levels that violate human health as well as environmental

...Continued, Page 3

Quincy Riverwalk Dealt a Setback

NepRWA, along with Quincy Environmental Network and Quincy attorney Bryan Stevens, have been working for years to build a combined walkway and bicycle path along the Neponset River from Squantum Point to the Milton line.

Isolated sections of the walkway have already been built along the Quincy waterfront in Squantum Point Park, at Boston Scientific and at the Adams Inn. Last summer, NepRWA negotiated a key agreement with Conroy Development Company (which is developing the parcel between the MBTA and Neponset Avenue Bridges) to extend the Riverwalk along a highly degraded section of the waterfront from the Adams Inn all the way to Commander Shea Blvd. The walk was to be 10 feet wide and include benches, lighting, a kiosk, extensive natural plantings and even “mutt-mitt” stations. A canoe-launching ramp was also included on Conroy’s parcel. When Conroy took the project to the Quincy Conservation Commission, however, the Commission rejected every one of these amenities and approved only an unpaved 4 ft. wide path. NepRWA and attorney Stevens have appealed the decision to the Department of Environmental Protection and also discussed the project with City officials in late June. NepRWA remains hopeful that this section of the Riverwalk will be restored to its original design. Only by bringing people to the river, NepRWA believes, can we create support for the river’s protection and restoration.

NepRWA Thanks State Senator Morrissey of Quincy

NepRWA would like to express our sincere appreciation to Senator Michael W. Morrissey of Quincy for sponsoring a successful budget amendment that increased funding for state parks and urban parks by \$1.1 million each. The money will be used to increase park maintenance staff at the Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Budget for DCR (which includes the former Metropolitan District Commission, or MDC) has been slashed deeply in the last four years and the park maintenance backlog has grown to critical proportions. *Thanks, Senator Morrissey!*

Peter Chandonait Moves On

As of June 30, Peter Chandonait, NepRWA Environmental Scientist, will leave his position to start a job at Aggregate Industries in Saugus, in the field of environmental and real estate permitting, with a focus on stormwater. As NepRWA Environmental Scientist, Peter managed NepRWA’s water-testing programs, amongst other responsibilities. You may have met Peter at various Citizen Water Monitoring Network activities, at wet weather sampling trainings, or at other nonpoint source pollution sampling activities. A hard worker and a valued member of the NepRWA staff, we will miss Peter and wish him well in his new endeavors.

NepRWA Summer Interns Arrive

NepRWA welcomes two new interns. Justin Blau will assist the Environmental Scientist with nonpoint source pollution monitoring, and Cara Sacchetti will work on a variety of programs. Justin attends Union College in New York, where he is majoring in Chemistry and studying Art as a minor. Cara Sacchetti is a pre-med student and Spanish Major at Providence College in Rhode Island.

Pump-Out Party!

One night in early June, Walpole neighbors and friends listened intently to a presentation on how to maintain their septic systems. Later, audience members engaged in a lively question & answer session from amidst cozy perches in the living room of Walpole residents Carol Johnson and Sandra Adamson.



Gail Nixon, Walpole Deputy Health Agent, led the discussion on how septic systems work and what their maintenance needs are. Later, she and septic haulers Jason Hockman and Chris Marchand from J. Hockman, Inc., fielded questions, detailing how to extend septic systems’ lives and improve system function. Toward the end of the evening, everyone moved to the backyard – food and drink in hand – to witness a cess pool pump-out.

About 20 people attended this event, many of whom will now pump their septic systems regularly and maintain them properly!

Many Neponset Watershed residents who own septic systems are unfamiliar with their maintenance needs. For example, many people aren’t aware that septic systems should be pumped at least once every 2 to 3 years, depending on several factors such as the size of the septic system, the amount of water the household uses, and the presence of a garbage disposal. Residents also don’t realize that as septic system-owners, they should spread their water use over the course of the day. To learn more about septic systems, visit www.neponset.org/SepticSystemCare.htm or call your town’s Board of Health.

This Walpole Pump-Out Party was organized as a part of a collaborative project. The Walpole Board of Health, the Walpole Septic System Taskforce and NepRWA are working together to improve Walpole residents’ septic system maintenance. *Why?* A properly functioning septic system cleans a household’s wastewater and returns it to the ground, where it recharges the community’s groundwater supply. However, poorly maintained septic systems can recharge the community’s groundwater with untreated wastewater, making people sick, degrading adjacent stream and ponds and making neighborhood living conditions very unpleasant.

Ultimately, by using septic systems, households help to conserve and recycle their community’s water. Using the sewer, on the other hand, shuttles water out of the community. Cracked sewer pipes can also leak untreated sewage into local groundwater. Likewise, clean groundwater can seep into cracked sewer pipes—decreasing the community’s groundwater supplies and sending clean water to be treated at the sewage treatment plant!

As you can see, it’s important for environmental and public health that we all properly maintain our septic systems.

Douglas Foy, from page 1



larger-than-usual green spaces.

These developments also tend to be sited by already-existent infrastructure (i.e. roadways, public transit, sewer lines). They also space their buildings closer together and make roads narrower than the norm to leave larger natural areas intact and accessible.

While with the OCD, Mr. Foy made it easier for communities to implement Smart Growth. He reinvested in cities, targeting growth in town centers by train stations. He created a new system for distributing state funds to communities to engage in Smart Growth (including the Neponset Watershed town of Quincy). He also developed a new Highway Design Manual and a long-term transportation plan, and he helped to establish new standards for energy efficiency and climate policy, among other accomplishments.

In addition to Mr. Foy’s presentation, the Annual Meeting also included a summary of NepRWA’s latest activities and programs, given by Ian Cooke, NepRWA’s Executive Director.

We are grateful for generous event support from these Neponset River Watershed businesses: Radio Coffeehouse in Milton; Ward’s Berry Farm in Sharon; Kabloom in Norwood; and Shaws Supermarket in Canton.

To find out how your business or organization can help support the Neponset River Watershed Association, please contact Ian Cooke, Executive Director, at 781-575-0354 or cooke@neponset.org. Learn more about NepRWA at www.neponset.org.

Neponset Restoration, from page 1

standards. USGS also estimated that around ten pounds of PCBs in the water column pass over these dams and end up in the Neponset River Estuary each year. Finally, the USGS identified one party who may be responsible for some of the original PCB discharges, and thus would remain responsible for cleaning up at least a portion of them.

The second study, which is ongoing, is being done by the firm Milone & MacBroom, Inc. Milone & MacBroom is identifying all the options for restoring fish passage as well as cleaning up PCBs in the lower Neponset, *and* it is researching the estimated cost of each option. NepRWA sits on the Riverways’ Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is reviewing these options. It is expected that the TAC will identify one or more “preferred” options this summer, after which the Riverways Program (with NepRWA’s help) will be organizing community meetings to get input from local citizens in Boston and Milton in the fall.

Once final preferred options are identified, the real work begins. Plans must be drawn up, permits must be obtained, citizen support must be cultivated, and funding must be found (NepRWA will be active in the latter two tasks). It is expected that state and federal funding will be needed along with private money. If the original source(s) of the PCB contamination can be identified, the current owner(s) will also be responsible for at least some of the PCB cleanup. *Stay tuned!*

Get Active with NepRWA



Job Openings at NepRWA

NepRWA has two immediate openings: a full-time Environmental Scientist and a part-time Development Officer. The **Environmental Scientist** is one of the Association’s senior project managers who oversees the Association’s volunteer-based water quality monitoring program, as well as a variety of other projects such as evaluating sediment contamination due to historic discharges, preparing a water balance for the basin, developing strategies to preserve instream flows, evaluating the effectiveness of structural stormwater BMPs, and prioritizing areas for stormwater BMP retrofits. The **Development Officer** leads the Association’s efforts to acquire, maintain, cultivate and solicit individual donors, members and local businesses. S/he also assists with other fundraising activities as time permits. For a full description of either of these positions and for application information, visit: www.neponset.org/JobOpenings.htm.

July 22nd Canoe Trip!

Join NepRWA for a morning canoe trip along the Neponset River on Saturday, July 22. A donation of \$5 is requested of NepRWA members and \$10 of nonmembers. For more information and to register on-line, visit www.neponset.org/Events-NepRWA.htm. RSVPs are requested by July 19.

Call for Gardeners

NepRWA’s demonstration rain garden at Pequitside Farm in Canton has grown well, but so have the weeds! We need a few hours of volunteer help to maintain the garden. All who are interested should contact Laura: 781-575-0354, hallowell@neponset.org. *Rain gardens quickly filter and absorb stormwater runoff, enabling more water than usual to sink into the ground and recharge the groundwater. Some of the water also supports plant life within the rain garden, while some water evaporates. Rain gardens use plants and soil mixtures that quickly absorb large amounts of water. Homeowners find rain gardens useful for absorbing water that gathers in certain spots in their yard, and for adding color and attracting butterflies and birds to their property. Learn more about constructing raingardens at www.neponset.org/raingarden.htm.*



Call for Artisans

The 12th annual RiverArt celebration will be held in late September, now with new activities! Cosponsored by NepRWA and the Forbes House Museum of Milton, artisans will sell high-quality crafts and fine art, and artists will paint on-site at the Museum and in Lower Mills. There will be live music, participatory children’s crafts and festival food! All interested in exhibiting fine art or crafts should contact Carly at 781-575-0354, rocklen@neponset.org, or visit www.neponset.org/RiverArt06.htm.