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**Neponset River Watershed Association**  
**2173 Washington Street**  
**Canton, MA 02021**

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

## More Greenway!

Plans to extend the Neponset River Greenway continue to progress.

The MA Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) recently held a public meeting to receive feedback on three prospective designs for the extended greenway. All three designs include a continuous trail – an aspect strongly supported by the public. One of the designs includes a trail that is all on-road; another includes an off-road trail in addition to side trails and implements only a little reservation of land as conservation area; and the third design includes a continuous off-road trail while also strengthening the conservation corridor (e.g. by reinforcing conservation land, calling for areas to be cleaned-up, and proposing habitat improvements). Another public meeting will occur in June to present the final greenway master plan.

Upon completion of the master plan, the DCR will seek funds for construction. For more information on this project, contact Cathy Garnett, DCR Neponset Planner, 617-626-1443.

May - June 2006

## Updates for NepRWA's Citizen Water Monitoring Network Program (CWMN)

Since 1997, the Citizen's Water Monitoring Network (CWMN, pronounced "swimmin") has been the cornerstone of NepRWA's efforts to monitor water quality, increase stakeholder involvement and improve general understanding of the Neponset River Watershed. CWMN provides a substantial database of water quality information and focuses corrective actions to combat water quality issues.

Approximately 50 CWMN volunteers take water quality samples at designated sites once every other month. Samples are then analyzed in-house or at one of NepRWA's partner organizations, such as Suffolk University or the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority. Resulting data is stored as a record of water quality.

Recent developments in the CWMN program include:

- Re-writing the Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) that governs project operations. One important change is the replacement of fecal coliform with the bacteria E. coli as a favored indicator organism for water quality standards. The QAPP appendices have also been reviewed and updated.
- Modifying procedures and metrics for quality control, data analysis and storage, to ensure quality of the results and to make results easier to interpret (visit [www.neponset.org/CWMNResults.htm](http://www.neponset.org/CWMNResults.htm)).

## Neponset Dams & Culverts, Oh My!

NepRWA's Volunteer Dam Assessment Project has recently come to a close, having produced data that will improve NepRWA's understanding of local dams and culverts and how they affect the Neponset Watershed's health. The data will also strengthen the dams database of the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety. The Dam Assessment project began in Fall 2004 via a partnership with the Massachusetts Riverways Program and a goal to compile a comprehensive inventory of all man-made barriers to the passage of fish and other aquatic life in the Neponset River Watershed.

The first leg of the project focused on the East Branch of the Neponset River and its tributaries. Volunteers documented the physical characteristics and conditions of dams in Canton, Stoughton and Sharon. In Fall 2005, Project Manager Andy Leahy began guiding volunteers to document the location and condition of dams and culverts (structures that allow streams to pass under roads) in the remaining 11 Watershed towns.

- Converting communications with volunteers almost entirely to email, allowing better data format at reduced cost.
- Establishment of laboratory facilities at Suffolk University and UMass Boston to test and count E. coli, and possibly also to test for Enterococcus, a preferred indicator in saline environments.
- Grant-funded bacterial sampling for eight sites in Boston and Milton. The first samples were taken in March and indicate low levels of E. coli in Pine Tree Brook and Mother Brook, but higher levels in the mainstem Neponset.
- Cuts in the amount of analytical services provided by MWRA.
- Upcoming decisions about changes to the number of sites to be sampled, parameters to be tested and sampling events per year.
- Discontinuation of field pH measurement in favor of in-house measurements because of the expense and time associated with pH meter maintenance.
- Upcoming refresher training for volunteers to prepare for bacterial sampling. Trainings will be held in April & May, prior to sampling.

NepRWA is streamlining efforts and increasing in-house and partners' capabilities in order to to compensate for budget-cutting. To contribute to or volunteer for CWMN, please contact Peter Chandonait at 781 575-0354.

It was found that larger dams and dams that are easily visible from roads and trails usually were already documented in the MA Office of Dam Safety's database. However, plenty of dams were not recorded in the database. Some of these structures are over 8 feet high, in very residential areas, and in visibly poor shape. Many previously undocumented dams are also small – four feet high or less, impounding streams in relatively inaccessible areas. Ultimately, the Dam Assessment project recorded 23 previously "unknown" dams and over 100 culverts. The Riverways Program will use the Dam Assessment data to identify potential structures for removal in order to reconnect fragmented habitat.

NepRWA extends a big thank you to all of the volunteers who assessed dams and culverts for the Volunteer Dam Assessment project, and to Andy Leahy, our hardworking and dedicated Project Manager who recently completed his tenure at NepRWA.



## DEP Compromises on Water Conservation Standards

In April 2004, the MA Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued a new Policy requiring certain public water suppliers to institute strict water conservation measures if their current water use was in excess of what the DEP deemed as necessary. The Policy applies to water suppliers who withdraw groundwater pursuant to a Water Management Act permit.

The reaction of many water suppliers to the new Policy was negative and angry. State Legislative Hearings were held in which water suppliers argued for repeal or suspension of the Policy while environmentalists, including NeprWA's Ian Cooke, argued to retain it. Last January, DEP came up with compromise "Guidance" which, while not perfect, NeprWA views as a victory in light of the considerable political influence of municipalities. In the new Guidance, DEP has retained its previous standards allowing no more than 65 Residential Gallons Per Capita per Day (RGPCD) of water use in "high and medium stressed basins" and 80 RGPCD or less in "low stressed and unassessed basins," and Unaccounted-for Water (UAW) of 10% or less in high or medium stressed basins and 15% in low stressed/unassessed basins.

Designations of stress level are made by the MA Water Resources Commission. The Commission has designated none of the Neponset Watershed as high stressed and only the upper Neponset as medium stressed. NeprWA does not agree with the Neponset Watershed designations and will work to revise them. If, however, a municipality is in more than one watershed (e.g., the Neponset and the Charles or Taunton Watershed), it must meet the standards applying to the most stressed

... *Continued, Page 3*

## Milone & MacBroom to Study Lower Neponset River

Even as you read this paragraph, investigations are continuing into the Neponset River's health and the options for restoring it.

A few weeks ago, the MA Riverways Program hired the firm Milone & MacBroom, Inc. (MMI) to pick-up where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 2002 preliminary draft report "Environmental Restoration Report and Environmental Assessment; Neponset River Fish Passage and Habitat Restoration Project" left-off. MMI will select a preferred alternative and management strategy to achieve ecological restoration and contaminant remediation at four sites on the Lower Neponset River. These sites include the Baker Dam, the Tileston and Hollingsworth Dam ("T&H"), the "rubble dam" 0.27 miles downstream of T&H, and the MWRA utility pipe crossing at Mompouset St. The stretch of river extends from T&H downstream to the Baker Dam at Adams St., Milton. MMI will present its findings to the public in June (see sidebar).

The aim of MMI's strategy will be to improve upstream and downstream passage for resident and diadromous fish (species that regularly migrate between freshwater and saltwater), restore riverine habitat, and remediate riverine sediments contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals. In the strategy selection process, MMI will review data, do field reconnaissance and sediment sampling, and consider cultural and biological benefits of the various restoration methods. Aquatic habitat, shoreline and vegetation habitat will be examined, as will groundwater gradients, the channel's geomorphic characteristics, and the condition, dimensions and materials of the dams and river obstructions.

For more information about Neponset River restoration and MMI's work, contact Tim Purinton at Riverways: 617-626-1542.

## Neponset River Revival Events

The MA Riverways Program, a division of the MA Dept. of Fish & Game, is organizing events to bring people of the Lower Neponset to the River! For more event information, contact Gabrielle Stebbins at Riverways: 617-626-1595.



**Sat., May 6: Spring Spawning Fish Runs in the Neponset River.** Come see the critters that call the Neponset River and Estuary "home." An indoor presentation by Fisheries biologist Brad Chase will kick-off the outdoor exploration session. 10:30AM, Milton Yacht Club, 25 Wharf St., Milton.

**Tues., May 9: Neponset River Restoration: Where Are We Now?** Hear this overview of the issues affecting the Neponset River, given by Riverways Restoration Planner Tim Purinton, MA Dept. of Fish & Game. 7:30-8:00PM, Milton Town Office Building, 525 Canton Ave., Milton.

**Thurs., May 11: Sediment Contamination: Review of Findings.** Rob Breault of the United States Geological Survey has been studying Neponset River sediment for years. Now's your chance to learn from him about what is in the River's depths! 6:30PM, Hyde Park Library - Weld Hall, 35 Harvard Ave., Hyde Park.

**Sat., May 20: On the River: Canoeing for First-Timers.** 'Never been on the Neponset? Come see the Rice Islands from a special floating perch. Beginner and experienced canoeists are welcome. Trips at 10AM, 12PM & 2 PM. Call 617-626-1595 to reserve your space. Meet at Ryan Playground Parking Lot, River St., Mattapan.

**Tues., May 23: Relics & Rivers: Dismantling Dams in New England.** a film & discussion. Many New England communities are choosing to remove their aging, obsolete dams. Learn from Mathias Collins of the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration about how communities have engaged in the dam removal process. 7:00PM, Unquity House Dining Hall, 30 Curtis Rd., Milton.

**Thurs., June 1: Neponset River Revival Finale!** Jim MacBroom, a nationally recognized river restoration engineer, will present the results of his studies on the Neponset River. Before Mr. MacBroom's presentation, we will view student video documentaries of interviews with Neponset River neighbors. Times: 6:00PM: The Community View: Youth Environmental Club Video. 7:00PM: River Options: James MacBroom, Milone & MacBroom, Inc. Hyde Park Community Center, 1179 River St., Hyde Park.

## Key Environmental Votes in Legislature: Act Now!

NeprWA urges readers to contact state Senators about the Blue Hills wetlands restoration. The MWRA recently drained the 16-acre Blue Hills reservoir with plans to build concrete tanks to hold a one-day emergency supply of water, mostly for Quincy. By eliminating 8.7 acres of clean open water, the proposed storage tanks will produce the largest net loss of wetlands since 1990. Such an assault on the state's "no net loss" of wetlands policy imperils wetlands throughout the state. Contact your Senator or Representative at 617-722-2000 (ask for them by name); and/or e-mail Representatives at firstnamelastname@Hou.State.ma.us or Senators at firstname.lastname@state.ma.us. Identify them at: www.mass.gov/legis/citytown.htm. For other legislation of environmental importance, visit: www.environmentalleague.org/Issues/Water/Issues\_Water.html.

To get regularly informed about key state government environmental proposals of concern to NeprWA, contact rocklen@neponset.org.

## DEP Conservation Standards, from page 2

watershed. Thus the following Neponset communities are considered as medium stressed and must meet the stricter standards: Dover, Foxborough, Medfield, Sharon, Stoughton and Walpole. The lower standards apply in Canton, Dedham and Westwood. Other Neponset communities have no water withdrawal permits and thus are exempt. Currently, only Dedham and Westwood meet both DEP standards. Sharon meets the residential water use standard. Stoughton and Canton meet the unaccounted for water use standard.

In the new Guidance, DEP has given affected municipalities 2 years to come into compliance, and will allow towns in high/medium stressed basins an additional three years if they use no more than 72 RGPCD, have no more than 15% UAW, and are implementing a plan to reach full compliance within three years. For towns in high and medium stressed basins, DEP also loosened its rules on summer nonessential water uses (i.e., uses that are not required for health or safety, farming or to meet the core functions of a business). Under the original Policy, such towns had to limit outdoor watering to hand-held hoses when stream flows fell below US Fish & Wildlife standards. Under the new Guidance, towns in medium stressed basins are given two options:

- **Option 1: Calendar Trigger.** From May 1 - September 30, no nonessential outdoor water use is allowed except for sprinklers used outside the hours of 9AM - 5PM, up to two days per week. However, if a declaration of a drought level of "Watch" or higher is declared by the state, towns choosing Option 1 must change to Option 2 (see below) until the drought watch has ended.
- **Option 2: Stream Flow Trigger.** Whenever streamflows fall below US Fish & Wildlife standards for three consecutive days from May 1 - September 30, no nonessential outdoor water use is allowed except for sprinklers used outside the hours of 9AM – 5PM up to one day per week until streamflows meet the standards for seven consecutive days.

This last change represents the most significant weakening of the original DEP Policy. For more information, contact Steve Pearlman, 781-575-0354, pearlman@neponset.org.

## Get Active with NeprWA



### NeprWA's Spring Annual Meeting

It's almost time for NeprWA's Spring Annual Meeting, where you'll enjoy a lively presentation by our distinguished Featured Speaker, taste delicious food & experience great company. Check www.neponset.org for the latest details!

### Have a Little Time?

With just a little free time, you can make a big impact! NeprWA needs volunteer help around the office and the watershed. Contact Carly to learn more about the opportunities below: 781-575-0354, rocklen@neponset.org.

**A regular thing around the office...** If you can spare at least 1 hour once a month or more on a regular basis, we have many things you can help with! From managing water quality data to preparing mailings, maintaining water-testing equipment to preparing for CWMN....

**An irregular thing...** Not ready to make it a regular activity but willing to consider helping out on weekdays when a project calls for "all hands on deck"? Add your name to our list and when a project calls for multiple volunteers, we'll e-mail you!

**In the field...** NeprWA is also always looking for help with projects outside the office, for example, a volunteer **gardener** to spend a few hours a year helping to maintain our demonstration rain garden; a **drop-off coordinator** for the Canton water-testing drop-off location (1-2 hours every other month); volunteers to help **survey** spots where streams and roads intersect; and volunteers to **man a NeprWA booth** at local events.

### Healthy Communities Volunteer Opportunity

This summer and fall, help NeprWA monitor pipes that end on the banks of the Lower Neponset River by Mattapan, Hyde Park and Milton. All who are interested, contact Carly: 781-575-0354, rocklen@neponset.org.

### Summer Water Quality Internships

NeprWA is seeking volunteer Water Quality Interns to help with a variety of water-testing projects. Interns will gain hands-on experience collecting samples, tracking down pollution sources, managing data, maintaining equipment and working with CWMN volunteers. Interns will get a first-hand feel for what it's like to work in a busy nonprofit environmental organization. This is a great opportunity for an undergraduate contemplating a career in the environmental sciences or for a motivated high school senior. The schedule is flexible, but interns must commit to working at least eight hours/week, for at least eight weeks. To learn more, contact Peter Chandonait, Environmental Scientist: 781-575-0354, chandonait@neponset.org. To apply, send your resume and a cover letter describing what you hope to gain from an internship, why you are a good candidate, and a proposed schedule, to Peter.