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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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Beautifying Milton's Pine Tree Brook Greenway

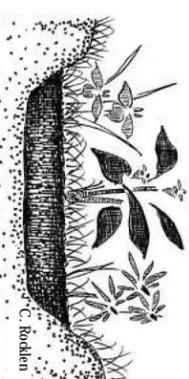
This past spring and summer, NepRWA, the Milton Department of Public Works (DPW) and the neighbors of Pine Tree Brook have worked together to create a plan to beautify and maintain Milton's Pine Tree Brook Greenway over the long-term.

Part of this project has included new plans for bioretention cell plantings, the first of which will be put to use in September 2006. You may recall from previous NepRWA newsletters that the bioretention cells are stormwater treatment structures that were constructed in the summer of 2005. Bioretention cells are simply depressions created in the ground into which a very permeable soil mixture is added. Most importantly, stormwater pipes leading from catchbasins in Pine Tree Brook's neighboring streets empty into the bioretention cells. These pipes were cut last summer to enable them to drain into the cells. The cells now filter the runoff from the neighborhood before it can enter the Brook, thereby decreasing water pollution. Previously, the stormwater pipes emptied directly into Pine Tree Brook and degraded the aquatic ecosystem.

In addition to stormwater pipes and permeable soils, bioretention cells sometimes include plants that can quickly absorb a lot of water and make use of waterborne contaminants.

Since last summer, a variety of wild herbaceous plants have taken root in the cells. Though perennials were also planted in the cells last summer, they did not survive. This past spring, we seeded some of the bioretention cells with native perennial seed mixtures. Unfortunately—most likely because of the intense rains we received—not many of those seeds germinated into robust plants.

Thus we arrive at the planting, this fall. We will plant the bioretention cells with flowering perennials, and, to facilitate the DPW's maintenance activities, we will also move some of the shrubs that were planted around the perimeter



Sketch of a bioretention cell cross-section.

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Project Update: Nonpoint Source Assessment

NepRWA is wrapping up its Nonpoint Source Assessment project, and with a little more cooperation from the weather, all should run smoothly.

The Nonpoint Source Assessment project, ongoing since 2004, has been monitoring the bacteria levels in three stream reaches within the Neponset River Watershed: Mill Brook in Westwood, Mill Brook in Medfield, and Trapohole Brook in Walpole.

These three waterbodies are among the cleaner streams in the Neponset Watershed, though they are affected by nonpoint sources of pollution, especially stormwater that carries contaminants from residential areas and streets. NepRWA has been monitoring the levels of bacteria in these streams both prior to and during rainstorms to pinpoint any stormdrains

associated with an excess of bacterial pollutants. Additional stream sampling during rainstorms will give NepRWA a clearer picture of the extent of the problem.

Preliminary data have shown that bacteria levels in these stream reaches meet the Massachusetts

Photograph: Stephen White



Stormwater pipe

September - October 2006

2006 State Legislative Roundup

The Legislature has now finished its work on environmental funding for state Fiscal Year 2007 (July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2007) as well as on other legislation. We would like to thank all the NeprWA friends who responded to our action alerts and contacted their legislators regarding key votes. Overall, the environment did well in this session, achieving a 15% budget

- An expedited permitting bill was passed without NeprWA's support, though it was successfully amended to delete some of the most egregious provisions, such as one limiting the public's appeal rights and another forcing towns to accept commercial projects in non-residentially zoned areas. Unfortunately, the bill transfers court review of environmental and other permits regarding real property to the Land Court, which the development community believes is more sympathetic to its point of view. The bill also allows developers to begin work when a permit is under appeal, which could result in significant environmental harm even if the permit is ultimately overturned.
- DEP "Guidance" requiring greater home water conservation largely withstood a legislative assault by some municipal water suppliers. See article entitled "NeprWA Director Named to Blue Ribbon Panel" on page 3 of this newsletter.
- Legislation to stop MWRRA from destroying 8.7 acres of wetlands in the Blue Hills Reservation without providing any mitigation was defeated.
- A Mercury Products bill was signed into law banning certain mercury-containing products, starting in 2007. The new law is one of the strongest in the nation.
- The Toxics Use Reduction Act was enacted, which lowers the reporting threshold from 10,000 to 1,000 pounds for the most hazardous chemicals.
- Time ran out on some other initiatives, including the Ocean Management Act, Land Conservation Tax Incentives legislation, and zoning reform, but most of these advanced through the process, and we've laid the foundation for next year.

Final Massachusetts Environmental Budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, with Comparisons to FY 2001 & FY 2006: *

	Final FY '07 Budget	% Change from FY '06	% Change from FY '01
Exec. Office of Environ. Affairs (EOEA)	\$23.9 million	+ 8.7%	- 20.0%
Administration	\$6.9 million	+ 8.0%	+ 37.0%
Geographic Info. Systems	\$686 thousand	+ 144.0%	- 76.0%
Recycling (not incl. redemp. centers)	\$2.4 million	+ 1.0%	- 4.7%
Office of Tech. Assistance	\$1.4 million	+ 4.7%	- 3.0%
Dept. of Environ. Protection (DEP) Admin.	\$34 million	+ 10.4%	- 16.0%
Safe Drinking Water	\$1.6 million	+ 4.7%	(\$ 0)
Brownfields	\$1.8 million	+ 4.1%	- 11.0%
DEP Hazardous Waste Cleanup	\$15.6 million	+ 9.0%	- 4.0%
Dept. of Fish & Game (DFG)	\$18.8 million	+ 7.3%	- 18.0%
Riverways Program	\$550 thousand	+ 21.6%	- 2.0%
Wildlife Management	\$0	0.0%	(\$377 thousand)
Endangered Species	\$0	0.0%	- 18.0%
Habitat Purchase	\$1.8 million	+ 19.0%	- 2.0%
Marine Fisheries	\$4.8 million	+ 19.0%	- 32.0%
Dept. of Agricultural Resources	\$300 thousand	+ 50.0%	- 15.8%
Integrated Pest Management	\$88.8 million	+ 15.8%	0.0%
Dept. of Conserv. & Recreation (DCR)	\$0	0.0%	90.0%
Resource Management Planning	\$950 thousand	+ 90.0%	16.8%
Stormwater Management	\$1.05 million	+ 90.0%	13.0%
Dam Safety	\$1.05 million	+ 16.8%	48.8%
State Parks	\$22.3 million	+ 13.0%	
Urban Parks	\$26.7 million	+ 13.0%	
Watershed Management	\$2.7 million	+ 48.8%	

* Budgets of environmental programs not listed above were either level funded or increased in FY '07 from the previous fiscal year.

NeprWA Director Named To Blue Ribbon Panel

Bending to pressure from the environmental community, the Legislature has not suspended DEPs new, more stringent water conservation policy, instead creating a panel to study the effectiveness of the water management guidance policy. NeprWA Executive Director, Ian Cooke, has been assigned to this panel.

As noted in NeprWA's May-June 2006 newsletter, new rules mandating that cities and towns do more to get their citizens to conserve water (especially in the summer months) have been strongly resisted by many water suppliers. The rules, proposed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), were subject to a Legislative Hearing late in 2005. To rebut water suppliers' arguments, NeprWA Executive Director Ian Cooke gave testimony demonstrating how groundwater withdrawals have had the direct effect of depleting Neponset streamflows.

DEP ultimately retained most of the conservation requirements, though it did extend the deadlines for compliance. Still, unhappy with the results, a number of water suppliers went to the Legislature this summer to have the rule "suspended" indefinitely. Many NeprWA friends responded to NeprWA's email request to call state representatives in opposition to this effort. One of the major backers of the water suppliers in the Legislature (who shall remain nameless) finally dropped his amendment, but complained to NeprWA's Advocacy Director about the pressure we were putting on him.

The end result was that the Legislature did not suspend the new DEP water conservation requirements, but it did establish a Blue Ribbon Panel to "study the effectiveness of [DEPs] guidance policy regarding water management... and... submit a report" to the Legislature by the end of 2006. The Legislature specified that someone from "a local watershed or watershed association" be included on the Panel. NeprWA is proud to announce that the Massachusetts Office of Commonwealth Development, which chairs the Panel, has asked NeprWA Executive Director, Ian Cooke, to be that representative, and Mr. Cooke has accepted the offer.

Pine Tree Brook Beautification, from page 1

of the cells (i.e. Sweet pepperbush, Sweetfern, Highbush blueberry and Inkberry) to other areas along the Greenway. The move will simplify mowing.

This pilot project has proven to be a learning experience for all involved. Working with multiple stakeholders has lengthened the project time and made processes more complex. However, it has also allowed for teamwork and the sharing of ideas between organizations. And, with more hands and thoughts to go around, keeping the greenway in better condition for years to come becomes more of a reality.

If you are a neighbor of Pine Tree Brook who would like to lend a hand with maintaining the greenway, contact Carly at 781-575-0354 or rocklen@neponset.org.



Get Active with NeprWA

Vacancy: Environmental Scientist Position

NeprWA is in the process of interviewing prospective candidates for the Environmental Scientist (ES) position. The ES manages NeprWA's volunteer-based water quality monitoring program as well as a variety of other projects, including evaluating sediment contamination due to historic discharges, preparing a water balance for the basin, developing strategies to preserve in-stream flows, evaluating the effectiveness of structural stormwater BMPs, and prioritizing areas for stormwater BMP retrofits. All who are interested in applying can view the full job description at www.neponset.org.

RiverArt: Handmade Crafts & Fine Art!

Calling all fine artists and crafters, you're invited to sell your art in the Watershed! Now through September 15 (and beyond, space permitting), vendor applications are being accepted for the Saturday, September 30th, RiverArt celebration. RiverArt crafters and fine artists will sell their work on the grounds of the Forbes House Museum, 215 Adams St., Milton. There will also be craft-making activities for children, live music, nature walks and light food fare.

All artisans interested in selling their work can download an application at www.neponset.org. Everybody else, save the date! Learn more at www.neponset.org or by contacting Carly at 781-575-0354 or rocklen@neponset.org.

A Mid-Summer's Paddle

On a weekend morning in late July, when rain was just holding off and the outdoor temperature pleasantly cool, upwards of 20 people gathered at a canoe launch along the Neponset River. In the roadside parking lot at Paul's Bridge in Milton, NeprWA friends chatted, gazing every now and again at the line of waiting canoes on the grass. NeprWA Outreach Director Carly Rocklen welcomed participants, who represented towns from throughout the Neponset Watershed. Then Ian Cooke, NeprWA Executive Director, gave a colorful account of the history of the Neponset River, starting off with the link between the river's gradient and riverside development. The Neponset's riverbed remains level through Fowl Meadow, but strongly slopes further downstream, where it is associated with dams and mills and related riverside development. Following a paddling demonstration by DCR Ranger Dan Crowley, all of us were off—pairing up and carrying the canoes to the River, where we slid the boats down the dirt bank and into the water. Gradually, we emerged in a flotilla and leisurely began to paddle upstream. Every now and again, we would stop to discuss the birds and plants along the riverbanks, snack a little and chat. We look forward to getting back on the water soon! All who are interested in participating in such events should visit NeprWA's event listings at www.neponset.org.

