



Of Note

Become a Member

Please consider joining NepRWA if you aren't already a member! Member support helps to maintain and expand NepRWA's conservation work throughout the communities of the Watershed. It's easy to become a member. Sign-up at www.neponset.org or request a membership application from Kristina at 781-575-0354 or lafrance@neponset.org.

Unsubscribe

To be removed from our newsletter mailing list, please contact Kristina at 781-575-0354 or lafrance@neponset.org.

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.

2173 Washington St., Canton, MA 02021
p 781-575-0354, f 781-575-9971
staff@neponset.org, www.neponset.org

Staff

Ian Cooke, *Executive Director*
Bill Guenther, *Env. Scientist*
Laura Hallowell, *CWMN Assist.*,
Willert Pond Manager
Kristina LaFrance, *Admin. Assistant*
Steve Pearlman, *Advocacy Dir.*
Carly Rocklen, *Outreach Dir. & Restoration Manager*

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

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November - December 2007

NepRWA Finds Sewer Pollution

This past September, the Neponset River Watershed Association made presentations to several neighborhood associations in the Lower Neponset area, outlining the results of local water monitoring and discussing water pollution problems. NepRWA attended meetings of the Colorado Street Neighborhood Association of Mattapan, the Fairmount Hill Neighborhood Association of Hyde Park, and the Area B-3 Dorchester/Mattapan Neighborhood Council.

NepRWA Environmental Scientist Bill Guenther described water sampling that had taken place over this past summer. The goal of testing was to identify illicit connections to stormwater drainage systems. An "illicit connection" is any discharge of pollutants or non-stormwater materials into a storm drain system via a pipe or other direct connection. Illicit connections to stormwater drainage systems can be problematic to streams and rivers in many ways. Often, cross connections with household or municipal sanitary sewer lines introduce elevated levels of pollutants to the receiving streams. Bacteria such as *E.coli* are a common indicator that a cross connection exists. Water flowing from a stormwater pipe during dry weather may also indicate an illicit connection.

NepRWA's summer sampling identified four contaminated drainage areas along the lower Neponset. Results were confirmed by the MA Department of Environmental Protection, which also sampled these drainage systems. Boston Water and Sewer Commission crews and contractors now are working to pinpoint and fix the illicit connections in this area, conducting dye testing and sandbagging of the drainage systems. To date, three illicit connections have been identified in these drainage areas, two of which have already been corrected.

For more information about Lower Neponset water testing, contact Bill Guenther at 781-575-0354 or guenther@neponset.org.

River Art Festivities Enjoyed by All

On a sunny weekend in September, festival-goers explored the natural and cultural history of the Neponset River Watershed at River Art, an annual celebration cosponsored by NepRWA and the Forbes House Museum of Milton.



Photo: Lauren Pauly, FHM

NepRWA Volunteers Hugh Stringer and Al Rosenstein & NepRWA Director Ian Cooke rest between leading canoe trips

River Art took place on the grounds of the Forbes House Museum as well as in adjacent Gov. Hutchinson's Field, in the woods bordering the Neponset Estuary, and in the brackish waters of the Estuary itself.



Photo: Lauren Pauly, FHM

Wooden wares carved by Chris Dodds

Visitors toured the historic Forbes family mansion, accompanied naturalist Tom Palmer on guided nature walks, paddled canoes on the Estuary with NepRWA staff and volunteers, browsed handmade crafts and fine art, and enjoyed the music of Murphy's Kitchen. Children participated in craft and nature activities.

On display and for sale was the work of 15 artisans and fine artists, including woodworkers, weavers, painters, card-makers, sculptors, jewelry-makers and *plein air* artists.

NepRWA would like to thank all River Art volunteers, participants and attendees; you helped to produce a very enjoyable event! See event pictures at www.neponset.org. To display artwork next year, call 781-575-0354.



Photo: Lauren Pauly, FHM

Artist Darlene Smart welcomes visitors

Environmental Bond Bill Heading for the State Legislature: Funding Critical to Neponset Restoration

With little hope for new revenues to adequately fund state environmental programs any time soon, the best opportunity to clean-up and restore the Neponset River lies with the new, five-year Environmental Bond Bill.

Bonds are used by state governments to pay for expensive, one-time capital projects, rather than ongoing operating costs. As noted in the previous NepRWA newsletter, Gov. Patrick initially neglected to include river restoration money when he announced his Bond proposals. After meeting with NepRWA's Advocacy Director Steve Pearlman and representatives from other watershed associations, however, the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs agreed to make river restoration "eligible" for Bond funding. In order to maintain flexibility, however, the Administration has refused to specify the amount of Bond money that would be dedicated to such restoration.

As the Governor finalizes his Bond Bill, the state Legislature is preparing to put its own stamp on how Bond funds may be spent. *NepRWA urges its members and friends to contact their state Representatives and Senators and ask them to " earmark" at least \$6 million in the Environmental Bond for Neponset River Restoration.* If you're not sure who your legislators are, visit www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php. For information on ways to contact legislators, visit www.mass.gov/legis/ (click on "House" or "Senate" under "Legislators" at the top of the page).

Earmarked bond funds are needed to:

- *Clean-up toxic PCBs in Neponset waters and sediments.* Although state environmental law requires landowners to clean-up contamination on their property, the law exempts highly mobile river sediments. That's why the state has an obligation to help pay for the Neponset River cleanup. Federal money will only be available if the state provides matching funds.
- *Remove dams on the lower Neponset River that are destroying fish and wildlife habitat and restricting recreational opportunities.* Removal of the two most downstream dams in Milton and Boston (the Baker and T&H Dams) would restore a full 17 miles of historic fish runs for shad, herring and smelt and would also improve habitat for resident freshwater fish. In addition, dam removal would greatly improve canoeing and kayaking on the lower Neponset.
- *Restore the lower Neponset to a natural, free-flowing river.* Hazardous waste cleanups in rivers can be done right or they can transform rivers into straight, concrete canals (see sidebar about PCB cleanup in Norwood). PCB cleanup alone will not restore the lower Neponset to an attractive, natural, free-flowing river unless money is available to ensure that the cleanup is combined with river restoration.

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River Restoration Benefits

Less Flooding. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has concluded that the Baker and T&H Dams serve no flood control purpose. The Baker Dam is particularly problematic since it reduces the amount of water that can quickly pass through to the ocean during a major storm. In a "100 year storm," the dam would cause flooding on part of the Baker Square Condominium property, the Neponset Greenway path and the MBTA railroad tracks. Making matters worse, these floodwaters would likely carry toxic river-bottom sediments. A failure of the Baker Dam would be particularly dangerous because the dam is part of the foundations of the buildings on either side of the river, and these buildings could become significantly damaged.

PCB Cleanup. Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) are not safely contained at the bottom of the river or behind the dams. Rather, they mix into the water during heavy storms, making fish unsafe to eat, and wash down into the Estuary and Boston Harbor. Needless to say, it is unhealthy for children or others to handle the contaminated sediments in certain parts of the river.

Under state hazardous waste rules, cleanups may ignore impacts to stream habitat, recreational use or post-cleanup river aesthetics. Consider that the cleanup of PCBs at the Grant Gear site in Norwood reduced a streambed to a straight channel with a blanket of concrete pavers. The River Restore Project would save the lower Neponset from a similar fate.

Herring & Shad Restoration. Migratory salt water fish species, which for thousands of years swam up the Neponset to lay their eggs, now have no access to the river upstream of the Baker Dam. Dam modification would allow American shad, Blueback herring, Alewife, and Rainbow smelt to once again use the river for spawning. The shad and herring would augment the diets of popular salt water sport fish such as Striped bass, Bluefish, Bluefin tuna and False albacore tuna. Freshwater fish species that reside permanently in the river, such as Largemouth bass and sunfish, would also benefit from restoration of natural river flow, cooler water temperatures and higher oxygen levels.

Better Boating. The dams and their associated ponds would be replaced with a series of calm pools, smooth moving water, and riffles or small rapids. The primary hazard to novice boaters—the dams—would be eliminated. A continuous "water-trail" from the Blue Hills to Lower Mills would result.

Wetland Restoration. Decommissioning and removing the dams creates the opportunity to restore a substantial portion of the wetlands that once bordered the river. Wetlands add to the natural beauty of the river, act as a nursery and habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife, help hold back floodwaters and filter pollutants from the water.



Thanks to NepRWA Volunteers!

The Neponset River Watershed Association offers thanks to all those people who generously volunteered their time and energy over the past year. Volunteers tested water, helped with mailings, tabled at outreach events, assisted on canoe trips, and called on NepRWA Members for support. Thank you for your help! *Our apologies to anyone mistakenly omitted from the following list of volunteers.*

Craig Austin	Anne Herbst	Pine Tree Brook
David Biggers	Bill Hocking	Neighborhood
Bob Boushell	Kit Hoffman	Association
Ashley Brady Lyons	Pat Hogan	Steve Popkin
Elise Brink	Doug & Barb	Susan Powers
Mark Brule	Holdridge	Lilian Randall
Alex Budnitz	Dan Huse	Faye & Al Rosenstein
Sean Burchesky	Marge Huse	Rob Scott
Bob Chen	Wendy Ingram	Kathy Sedor
Glenna Collett	Pete Jackson	Catherine Shaffer
David Conant	Jim Kaemmerlen	Nancy Shone
Gerda Conant	Ernie Kahn	Stu Skinner
Karen Crounse	Pam, Pete, Julie &	Sonja Skricki
Tom D'Avanzo	Steven Kane	Ellie Spring
Mike Delaney	Taber & Mary Keally	Hugh & Marta
Ed Dowling	Joanne Kellner	Stringer
Michael Edgar	Maryjeanne Langevin	John Thurston
Tammy & Chris	Paul Lauenstein	Cheryl Toffel
Fisher	Andy Leahy	Roger Turner
Bob Flagg	Peter Leahy	Fred Twigg-Taylor
Virginia Foley	Barbara Shea	Helen Van
Adele Foy	McDonald	Benschoten
Harry Frost	Rory McGregor	Paul Walker
Trish Gallagher	Marge & Ed McKenna	Marcia Wasserman
Adam Gilmore	Brendan McLaughlin	Chris White
Chuck Glenn	Joann Merchant	Steve White
Patrick Glenn	Melissa Mills	Ina Williamson
John Glossa	Peter Milner	Bill Wiseman
Al Goetz	Mike Molyneux	Lynn Wolbarst
Cris Grady	Bill Nelson	Ethel Woodard
Tom Grady	Steve Olanoff	Doug Wynne
Mark Guenthner	Fran O'Neill	
Dave Hammond	Tom Palmer	

River Restoration, from page 2

Massachusetts now has a unique opportunity to make the lower Neponset River a much cleaner, more accessible, more natural waterway. Led by the state Dept. of Fish & Game's Riverways Program, a conceptual plan has been created to clean-up toxic sediments, fully or partially remove the Baker and T&H Dams, and restore the river to its natural state. The plan is known as the "Lower Neponset River Restore Project." Riverways has developed a list of restoration options along with relative costs and benefits for achieving these goals. NepRWA is now forming a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) to review these options and, if possible, come to a consensus on one preferred alternative. CAC members will come from affected neighborhoods in Dorchester, Mattapan, Hyde Park, and Milton, as well as a few upstream and downstream towns. *If you are interested in serving on the CAC or otherwise helping with this project, contact Ian Cooke (cooke@neponset.org) or Steve Pearlman (pearlman@neponset.org), or call 781-575-0354.*

Get Active with NepRWA



Calling for Water & Oxygen Testers

NepRWA's Citizen Water Monitoring Network (CWMN) is in need of volunteers for water sampling. NepRWA trains new volunteers to take water samples or field measurements of dissolved oxygen. If you would like to participate in this program, please contact Bill Guenther (guenther@neponset.org) or Laura Hallowell (hallowell@neponset.org), or call them at 781-575-0354.

Make It Count Double

Did you know that your donation can help NepRWA twice as much? That's because NepRWA qualifies for company matching gifts. Any contribution made to NepRWA can be doubled by an employer's matching gift program. Find out more by contacting the community relations department of your company or by contacting NepRWA Membership Coordinator Kristina LaFrance at 781-575-0354 or lafrance@neponset.org.

Help NepRWA Reach Out to the Community

Do you know any neighbors, friends, family or co-workers who might be interested in joining NepRWA? If so, let us know. Membership Coordinator Kristina LaFrance can provide you with membership materials to distribute at your leisure or she can send the materials directly to your contacts. Contact Kristina with any membership questions or suggestions at 781-575-0354 or lafrance@neponset.org.



Volunteer David Conant loosens man-made junk from the bottom of the Neponset River at the Central Ave. bridge between Milton and Mattapan. David participated in a NepRWA river cleanup on Sunday, October 28. Volunteers removed a pile of grocery carts as tall as a full-grown man! See more river cleanup pictures at www.neponset.org.