



Of Note

Become a Member

Please consider joining NepRWA if you aren't already a member! Member support helps to maintain and expand environmental protection throughout the communities of the Neponset River 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, lafrance@neponset.org.

To Unsubscribe

To be removed from our newsletter mailing list or our e-mail list, contact Kristina at 781-575-0354, 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*
Nancy Fyler, *Water Conserv. Coordinator*
Bill Guenther, *Env. Scientist*
Laura Hollowell, *CWMN Assist., Willett Pond Manager*
Kristina LaFrance, *Admin. Assistant*
Steve Pearlman, *Advocacy Dir.*
Carly Rocklen, *Outreach Dir., Restoration Manager*

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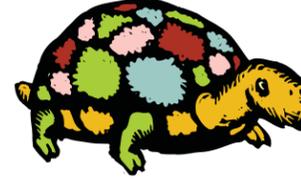
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2. a crucial turning point, 3. communities connected by water

March - April 2008

Lower Neponset Restoration Efforts Progress Slowly But Surely



The state Riverways Program has now completed its studies of PCB contamination and fish passage restoration in the lower Neponset River.

With the strong support of NepRWA, Riverways wants

to cleanup the toxic PCBs behind the Baker and the Tileston & Hollingsworth (T&H) Dams in Boston and Milton, and at the same time (or immediately thereafter) remove those dams. Removal of the two dams would restore ancient shad and herring runs, permitting them to swim 17 miles upstream to spawn, all the way to Walpole and Sharon. It would also make canoeing the river safer and more fun and would generally improve the River's health.

The two remaining obstacles to achieving lower Neponset River Restoration are economic and political. According to the dam experts Malone & MacBroom who performed the final two studies of the Neponset for Riverways, it would cost in the range of \$9.3 million to cleanup the PCBs behind the two dams and then remove them. However, the cost of *keeping* these two 50-year old dams and maintaining them indefinitely would, with PCB cleanup, be over 50% more expensive (around \$14.5 million). Other alternatives such as fish ladders would be even costlier, with the exception of building a "rock ramp" for fish at the T&H Dam, which would cost a little less than dam removal but might not succeed in getting the fish over the dam.

Even if the project comes in under \$10 million, it will require funds from the state (see Environmental Bond Bill article on p. 2), the federal government, and possibly from private parties if it can be shown that any of them were major contributors of the PCBs. Money from state and the fed's, however, is not likely to be forthcoming unless a consensus is reached among most community groups about what to do about fish passage as well as PCB remediation.

In order to try to reach such a consensus, NepRWA has put together a widely representative Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to assess restoration alternatives. The first CAC meeting was supposed to occur in February, but beginning in January, NepRWA began to receive requests from a number of important agencies wishing to join us in co-sponsoring the CAC. Though this has delayed the start of the CAC, the political

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What's Happening at NepRWA?



The Neponset River Watershed Association recently held an Open House at Orchard Cove Hebrew SeniorLife center in Canton. Both the meeting space and a spread of refreshments were generously donated by Orchard Cove.

The 45 attendees included members of NepRWA, residents of Orchard Cove, and the public. A lively question and answer session followed presentations by NepRWA Executive Director Ian Cooke, Outreach Director and Restoration Manager Carly Rocklen, Willett Pond Manager and CWMN Assistant Laura Hollowell, and Environmental Scientist Bill Guenther.

The evening began with an introduction by Ian Cooke to NepRWA's diverse conservation programs, including efforts to restore the health of the Lower Neponset River through dam removal and contaminated sediment remediation. Carly Rocklen then reviewed options for getting involved with NepRWA, such as attending events, reading newsletters and e-mail updates, volunteering and becoming a member. Carly also described a proposed wetland restoration project that would reduce the presence of exotic, invasive Purple loosestrife in the Fowl Meadow wetland. Laura Hollowell discussed NepRWA's work at Norwood and Walpole's Willett Pond. Along the Pond, Laura facilitates lake-friendly yard maintenance and lake use, including the planting of native plants and the control of exotic species, and manages the dam. Bill Guenther followed with a presentation on the Citizen Water Monitoring Network and hotspot follow-up water sampling in the watershed.

Subscribe to event announcements by e-mailing Carly at rocklen@neponset.org.

The Most Important Environmental Funding Proposal for the Next Five Years: The Environmental Bond Bill

Environmental Bond Bill Now Pending in State Legislature. The Neponset River Watershed Association is working with more than 220 other organizations across the state to pass the five-year, \$1.5 billion Environmental Bond Bill. The last Environmental Bond Bill was passed in 2002 and expires this year, so passage of a new Environmental Bond this session is essential to protecting rivers, wetlands, and aquifers (as well as forests and parks) while meeting the economic and recreational needs of residents and visitors. It's a sad fact that current economic (and political) conditions in Massachusetts permit virtually no new *operating* money for state environmental agencies (see below for the distinction between bond and operating funds). Thus, the Environmental Bond is the "only game in town" for projects such as cleaning up contaminated river and stream sediments or removing unnecessary dams. *NepRWA is asking its members and friends to contact their legislators to express support for this important Bill (please see side bar).*

Bond Bill Amendment for Lower Neponset River Restoration. NepRWA is also strongly supporting a Neponset Restoration amendment to the Bond Bill, sponsored by Sen. Brian Joyce and/or another legislator. The amendment would add \$12 million for a free-standing line item to pay "for restoration, remediation and other necessary environmental improvements to the lower Neponset River." These funds would go to the state Riverways Program and could be spent for things like cleaning up the toxic, PCB-laden sediments in the lower Neponset River and restoring Neponset's herring and shad runs through dam removal, fish ladders or some other means that is ultimately endorsed by the community as a whole.

Anadromous fish, such as shad and herring, live in the ocean but lay their eggs in freshwater. Currently, they are blocked from 17 miles of excellent upstream habitat on the Neponset and its tributaries by just two dams: the Baker and the Tileston & Hollingsworth. Removal of these dams would greatly enhance the River's overall health and allow unencumbered canoeing from Walpole to the sea. Best of all, it would save taxpayers millions of dollars by not having to pay for the indefinite repair and maintenance of these 50-year old state-owned dams.

What "bond" funds are and how they differ from "operating" funds. Bond funds represent money borrowed by the state to pay for so-called "capital" projects, whether those are new highways, new land purchases, or specific river restoration projects. Bond funds are distinct from money spent directly for the day-to-day operation of state government, so-called "operating funds." In addition to environmental bonds, there are highway, education, and other bonds. Thus Legislators who want a major new highway or a new high school in their district may vote against an Environmental Bond Bill, since projects authorized under the Environmental Bond would be competing for the limited amount of money that the state can borrow with projects authorized by the highway or education bonds.

The odd thing about bond legislation, however, is that it doesn't provide "real" money for projects—it just "authorizes" the Governor to borrow if he decides to do so. Thus passage of the Environmental Bond Bill, and the Neponset River restoration amendment, only "get you to the 50 yard line," as Sen. Brian Joyce of Milton put it. The final 50 yards must come through the Governor's office, which NepRWA has every intention of pursuing if and when the legislation is enacted.



It's Time to Take Action!

*It only takes a few phone calls to make a **big** impression on a legislator. Ask your state representative & senator to support House Bill 4446: the Environmental Bond Bill.*

In addition to asking for their support for the Environmental Bond overall, *please also ask your state representative to support an amendment to the Bond Bill authorizing \$12 million for restoration and remediation of the Neponset Watershed.* The amendment either will be offered by Sen. Brian Joyce or another legislator.

For more information about the Environmental Bond Bill, visit www.envirobond.org.

If you don't know who your legislators are or how to contact them, visit www.wheredoivotema.com. Enter your home address to get the name of your state representative and senator, and then click on their names next to the words "Rep in General Court" and "Senate in General Court" to get their contact information.

NepRWA Welcomes Nancy Fyler

NepRWA recently hired Nancy Fyler for the post of Water Conservation Coordinator. Nancy is working on a special water conservation project as part of a new partnership between the Water Division of the Sharon Department of Public Works and NepRWA. She has a BFA in Communication Design from Parson's School of Design and a degree in art education from the Massachusetts College of Art. Recently, Nancy has found her way into local politics and has been active in marketing and public relations. She is currently serving on the Town of Sharon Economic Development Committee, and is active in the Sharon Public Schools as a program coordinator and executive board member of the PTO.

Seeking Water Quality Interns

NepRWA seeks three volunteer interns to help with all aspects of the volunteer water quality monitoring and follow-up sampling programs, from April through October. Activities include field work, data management, sample analysis and volunteer coordination. The schedule is flexible, but must be consistent. The minimum time commitment is 8 hrs. per week, though more is preferred. Work occurs primarily during normal business hours, with occasional early morning or evening activities. The volunteer should be an undergraduate pursuing a degree in environmental science or a related field, or a mature high school senior considering a career in the sciences. Familiarity with environmental sampling and analysis techniques is desirable but not required. Self-motivation, reliability and the ability to work independently and follow specific sampling protocols are critical. Basic computer skills are necessary and having your own transportation is desirable. The ability to work both outdoors and in a canoe is required. Contact Bill Guenther at 781-575-0354 x 302 or guenther@neponset.org.



Status of Lower Neponset Restoration, from page 1

significance of the group is now likely to be far greater.

Senators Brian Joyce and Jack Hart, along with Rep. Linda Forcena Forry, agreed to convene the CAC by sending invitations to the individual CAC members. Then Commissioner Mary Griffin of the state Dept. of Fish & Game (the Riverways Program's parent agency) worked to obtain co-sponsorship of the CAC from her agency as well as the Dept. of Conservation & Recreation (which owns the dams), and the City of Boston Environmental Dept. The Town of Milton Conservation Commission had already agreed to co-sponsor. NepRWA hopes that the first CAC meeting will be held in April or early May.

To learn more, or to be notified of CAC meetings which are open to the public, contact NepRWA Advocacy Director Steve Pearlman at 781-575-0354 or pearlman@neponset.org.

Get Active with NepRWA

Seeking Wetland Restoration Volunteers!

NepRWA seeks volunteers for a proposed wetland restoration project in which we control populations of the exotic, invasive Purple loosestrife plant in the Fowl Meadow, using a "biocontrol" method. Volunteers will help with any or all of the following activities: Raising Purple loosestrife plants and "biocontrol" beetles during the spring; Releasing beetles at field sites once in the early summer; and/or Surveying Purple loosestrife, wetland plants, and biocontrol beetles in the field, once in the early summer and again in the early fall. Contact Carly to learn more and to sign-up: rocklen@neponset.org or 781-575-0354 x 303.

Bio Blitz, May 10, 9AM-1PM

Join NepRWA and The Trustees of Reservations for an exploration of biodiversity at the new TTOR Signal Hill reservation in Canton. Let's identify as many species as we can! Come expand your knowledge of local ecosystems, improve your wildlife identification skills, and explore Signal Hill. Families are welcome. Rain date: May 17. Location: Signal Hill, University Rd., Canton. Bring bug repellent, sun block, a hat and a camera (optional). Directions: Take I-95/Rt. 128 Exit 13 onto University Ave. Proceed through large industrial park to traffic light at Canton St. Turn left on Canton St., cross Neponset River and take immediate right onto University Rd. Proceed through office park. Park on right just before the last building. Learn more by contacting Paul Lauenstein at 781-784-2986 or lauenstein@comcast.net.

Earth Day Bike Ride, April 26, 10AM

Join MassBike and cosponsors Boston Natural Areas Network and NepRWA for a bike ride along Milton's Burma Road dirt path to the Bridge to Nowhere. We'll take beautiful Elm St. in Canton, ending with views to the City from the TTOR Signal Hill Reservation! This is a 10-mile ride, of which the first couple of miles are off-road through the Fowl Meadow section of the DCR Blue Hills Reservation. Hybrid or mountain bikes are recommended, though Burma Rd. possibly could be ridden with skinny tires. Helmets required. Meet at 10:00AM at Paul's Bridge on the Milton/Boston line on the Neponset Valley Pkwy. Contact Doug of MassBike to register and for updates: dmink@cfa.harvard.edu.