



## 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](http://www.neponset.org) or request a membership application from Kristina at 781-575-0354 x301, or [lafrance@neponset.org](mailto:lafrance@neponset.org).

### To Unsubscribe

To be removed from our newsletter mailing list or our e-mail list, contact Kristina at 781-575-0354 x301, or [lafrance@neponset.org](mailto: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.

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

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May - June 2008

## Tom Wessels to Explore Sustainability & Economic Success at June 24 Celebration



Featured Speaker Tom Wessels

Join us for an evening celebration along the Neponset River Estuary! Over a spread of delectable food, and in the company of fellow Friends of the Neponset, Tom Wessels will

lead us in a lively discussion on the connections between culture, human progress and the environment. Together, we will delve into current thinking on economic success, examining it in the context of sustainability and natural resources.

Annual Meeting attendees also will learn about the Watershed Association's current projects and future plans, and there will be a raffle for a PERCEPTION Prodigy 10 Kayak from Eastern Mountain Sports-Canton.

The Annual Meeting will take place at 7PM, Tuesday, June 24, at the Best Western Adams Inn at 29 Hancock St., right on the water in Quincy. Directions are posted at [www.neponset.org](http://www.neponset.org). Admission to the Annual Meeting is a requested donation of \$40 per person. All are invited—including NepRWA members and non-members alike. RSVPs are requested by June 16. You can reserve your Annual Meeting seats on-line at [www.neponset.org/AnnualMtg08.htm](http://www.neponset.org/AnnualMtg08.htm), or by mail.

The Kayak Raffle tickets are 1 for \$10, or 3 for \$20. You can purchase Kayak Raffle tickets through June 23 by mail or on-line at [www.neponset.org/AnnualMtg08.htm](http://www.neponset.org/AnnualMtg08.htm), or even at the Annual Meeting itself. All are invited to participate in the Kayak Raffle even if attendance at the Annual Meeting isn't possible.

Questions? Contact Carly at 781-575-0354 x303 or [rocklen@neponset.org](mailto:rocklen@neponset.org). We hope to see you at the Annual Meeting!

## Volunteers Identify 113 Species at Bio Blitz!



Photos: Paul Lauenstein & Ed Bristol

Signal Hill, Canton

On the morning of Saturday, May 17, thirty people gathered at Signal Hill park in Canton, anticipating identifying as many species as possible in the Bio Blitz.

The site of the Bio Blitz, Signal Hill — a recently acquired property of The Trustees of Reservations — includes a 188-ft. rocky summit, access to the Neponset River, woods, wetlands and open fields. Bio Blitz attendees created a transect extending from the cattail marsh, across the field, over the rocky outcrop, to the top of Signal Hill, and down through the woods to the river.

113 species were recorded with the help of local naturalists Tom Palmer, Amy and Liam Waters, and Helga Burre — from Red-winged blackbirds to Bobolinks, Rose-breasted grosbeaks to Warbling vireos, Deer-tongue to Haircap moss, Pignut hickory to Witch-hazel, Trembling aspen to Black raspberry, and Eastern tent caterpillar moth to Velvet mites. See the full species list at [www.neponset.org/Links-WhatYou'veSeen.htm](http://www.neponset.org/Links-WhatYou'veSeen.htm) (scroll to May 17).

The Bio Blitz was organized by NepRWA members Wendy Ingram and Paul Lauenstein, and by TTOR. NepRWA is very grateful for this event. The Bio Blitz species list provides insight into what shares our Watershed — knowledge that is key for better protecting the environment.



Photo: Wendy Ingram

Taber Keally, Tom Palmer and Fred Twigg-Taylor identify species at Signal Hill

## Patrick Administration Commits \$5 Million for Neponset Parks

In early May, the Patrick Administration announced plans to invest five million dollars in improving parklands along the Lower Neponset River in Hyde Park, Mattapan and Milton. The announcement was wonderful news for neighbors, river advocates, NepRWA and the many others who have been working on the Neponset Greenway for more than two decades.



The vision for the Neponset Greenway is to create a system of continuous linear parks along the Neponset from the mouth of the river near the famous painted gas tank all the way up to the Fowl Meadow, where Neponset Valley Parkway crosses the River at Paul's Bridge.

Most of "Phase I" of the Greenway has been completed, including bicycle paths that reach upstream to Central Ave. on the border of Milton and Dorchester. Phase I of the Master Plan also included the creation of Pope John Paul I Park and the Neponset II Park in Dorchester.

In 2006, the DCR completed the Master Plan for "Phase II" of the Neponset Greenway. Phase II would bring the trail and parks from Mattapan Square upstream to Neponset Valley Parkway and the Fowl Meadow. The commitment from the Patrick Administration would make the Neponset one of Patrick's "Signature Urban Parks" which some have dubbed the "Neponset Esplanade."

The effort would provide funding to implement many (but by no means all) of the elements of the Phase II Master Plan. Included would be repairs to the "Truman Parkway Field Office," located next to the river just south of Mattapan Square in Milton. It would also provide for the creation of a bike path from Mattapan Square to Neponset Valley Parkway, along Truman Parkway, by narrowing the shoulder. The Martini Shell—the Neponset's own version of the Hatch Shell, located in Hyde Park off Truman Parkway—would be renovated, along with major improvements to the adjoining park area and Moynihan Playground. Funding would also be provided to finalize the design of the "secondary" network of trails that would provide access from the Truman Parkway bike path and other areas into the natural areas along the riverbank. Lastly, funding would be provided to finalize the unresolved issue of what route the bike path would take from Central Avenue to Mattapan Square.

Work using the new funding is already underway, with a number of early action elements of the project needing to be finished by June 30, 2008. The bulk of the work however, will unfold over the next few years.

## DEP Assessment of Lower Neponset Riverbanks Results in Good News

From the 1930s until they were banned in the 1970s, dozens of industries along the Neponset used polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). In some cases, these toxic substances found their way into the river and sank to the bottom. High concentrations are still found in sediments in certain parts of the river in Boston and Milton, poisoning fish and flowing into the Estuary.

In the 1960s, the Metropolitan District Commission (the predecessor of the Department of Conservation and Recreation) dredged the Neponset River and, not knowing about the dangers of PCBs, deposited the dredged sediments (known as "dredge spoils") along the banks. When the U.S. Geological Survey recently discovered high concentrations of PCBs in river sediments as well as in fish tissue, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) began to worry that the banks might also be contaminated. Because people spend far more time on the riverbanks than they do on the river bottom, the potential risk to human health was feared to be greater.

On April 28 in Hyde Park and on May 6 in Dorchester, DEP held public meetings to announce the results of sampling it conducted last winter in areas where dredge spoils had been deposited on the riverbanks. With one exception (where high levels of lead were found and which DEP will clean up shortly), all the areas tested were found to be safe for human use. The tested areas are all owned by DCR; dredge spoil areas that are privately owned weren't tested, though DEP hopes to test those areas soon.

DEP not only tested riverbanks (above the river's average high-water mark), but also looked at river sediments at areas such as playgrounds and canoe launches where people may step into the river (below the average high-water mark). Again, DEP found that these areas do not represent a risk to human health. Unfortunately, DEP did not test the canoe landing at Baker Dam or those directly upstream and downstream of Tileston & Hollingsworth Dam, where USGS found the highest sediment contamination levels, though they plan to do that testing in a follow-up study.

DEP noted that there are serious health risks for anyone who eats White sucker caught in the Neponset River. In addition, pregnant women and children should never eat Brown bullhead (Horned pout) or White suckers from the river, and adults should not eat Brown bullhead more than twice a month. This advisory applies from Lower Mills all the way upstream to Walpole. These species contain high levels of PCBs, due to their diet. Other species will be sampled this summer. While the state Dept. of Public Health has issued fish advisories for these fish, the advisories have yet to be posted along the river.

However, NepRWA feels strongly that



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## Environmental Bond Lobby Day a Big Success

More than 200 people, including many NepRWA members, attended the Rally and Lobby Day for the Environmental Bond on April 9 at the Statehouse. Many who could not attend called or emailed their senators and representatives instead. The event was sponsored by the Coalition for the Environmental Bond, which represents 250 groups and businesses with a combined membership of more than 400,000.

With available "operating" funds (i.e., money raised from taxes) so tight this year, bond funds (i.e., money borrowed for one-time capital expenditures) are essential to expanding environmental protection in the state. The Environmental Bond is the cornerstone of the Commonwealth's long-term investment in its environment, providing support over the next five years for crucial environmental projects. Already many key environmental agencies, partners and programs are suffering from a lack of funds. If the Bond does not pass this legislative session (which ends of July 31), some programs will effectively cease to operate – putting our water quality at risk.

The April 9 rally was addressed by Environmental Secretary Ian Bowles and chief legislative sponsors of the bond bill such as Rep. Frank Smizik of Brookline and Sen. Pam Resor of Acton. Resor, co-chair of the Joint Committee on Natural Resources, will be retiring at the end of this year and received a standing ovation from the crowd.

NepRWA staff and members then visited the offices of every representative and senator representing communities in the Neponset Valley. We asked our legislators to: support the environmental bond bill, ask the legislative leadership to bring the bill to a floor vote before July 31, and support our efforts to add \$12 million to the \$1.5 billion Bond for restoration of the lower Neponset River, including the cleanup of toxic PCBs. It is now hoped that this \$12 million will have been added to the Bond Bill by Senator Brian Joyce in the Bonding Committee before it reaches the floor of the House or Senate.

The Environmental Bond bill includes money for:

- As noted above, it is expected that \$12 million will be added to the bill in Committee for cleanup and restoration of the lower Neponset River.
- Water quality monitoring, assessment and protection - \$15 million
- State & Municipal dam rehabilitation/removal - \$31.5 million
- Protection and rehabilitation of lakes and ponds - \$5 million
- Stream flow and groundwater monitoring networks - \$25 million
- Riverways Program - \$10 million
- Fishing and boating access facilities - \$6.5 million
- Coastal resources protection, preservation, access & enhancement - \$30 million

More calls and emails are urgently needed, as are letters to the editors of local papers. Learn more at the Coalition for the Environmental Bond website, [www.envirobond.org](http://www.envirobond.org).

Get Active with NepRWA

## Register for June 24<sup>th</sup> NepRWA Annual Meeting!

You're invited! Now's the time to reserve your Annual Meeting seats (by June 16, though some tickets will be through June 24). The Kayak Raffle is also on! Kayak Raffle tickets are available until June 23. Learn more, reserve your seats, and buy Kayak Raffle tickets at: [www.neponset.org/AnnualMtg08.htm](http://www.neponset.org/AnnualMtg08.htm). Questions? Contact Carly at 781-575-0354 x303 or [rocklen@neponset.org](mailto:rocklen@neponset.org)

## Seeking Purple Loosestrife Volunteers!

NepRWA is seeking volunteers to help with a Purple loosestrife control project in the Blue Hills Reservation, using *Galerucella* beetles. Volunteers can participate in any of the following: raising beetles, releasing beetles at field sites, and/or surveying plant species and beetles. Training provided. To learn more, contact Carly at 781-575-0354 x303 or [rocklen@neponset.org](mailto:rocklen@neponset.org).

## Neponset Ecological Restoration CAC Kicks Off

The Neponset River Ecological Restoration Community Advisory Committee (or "CAC") held its first meeting in late May. The CAC is composed of 25 appointed members representing neighborhood associations and others with an interest in the river. The focus of the CAC is to discuss the various alternatives for cleaning up and restoring the Neponset River while re-establishing the Neponset's historic herring and shad runs from Dorchester to Walpole. The goal is to come up with a set of consensus recommendations on how best to proceed within the context of other important considerations such as recreational use and historic values. The first CAC meeting focused on introducing the participants and reviewing important background information. Subsequent meetings will begin to explore the issues in detail. The meetings of the CAC are open to the public. To receive notices of meetings by email or phone, contact [pearlman@neponset.org](mailto:pearlman@neponset.org) or call 781-575-0354 x304.

## DEP Riverbank Assessment, from page 2

fish advisories are no substitute for sediment cleanup. DEP appeared to recognize this in one of their handouts distributed at the April 28 and May 6 meetings. DEP stated, "Because of stringent environmental regulations that would apply, individual projects along the river, including restoration activities, will result in more cleanup and risk reduction than the 'No Action' alternative." NepRWA supports a PCB cleanup and dam removal as the most effective way to reduce human health risks and restore the environmental health of the Neponset River. As noted in the newsletter blurb above entitled "Neponset Ecological Restoration CAC Kicks Off," NepRWA has initiated a Citizens Advisory Committee to try to reach a community consensus on how to proceed from here. For more information, contact Steve Pearlman at 781-575-0354 x304 or [pearlman@neponset.org](mailto:pearlman@neponset.org).