



Of Note

Become a Member

Join NepRWA if you aren't already a member; you'll help to get more done around the Watershed! Member support helps to further 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 x301 or lafrance@neponset.org.

To Unsubscribe

To be removed from the NepRWA newsletter mailing list or from our e-mail list, contact Membership Coordinator Kristina LaFrance: 781-575-0354 x301, 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.

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

November - December 2008

Playing "I Spy" on a Holiday Stroll

This holiday season, as you head out with the family for a stroll around the neighborhood, let yourself relax and focus on the environment around you; a variety of wild inhabitants of the wintry landscape will soon make themselves known.

On stream banks and along wetland paths, catch the shining red fruits of Common winterberry, Japanese barberry (an exotic, invasive) and Northern spicebush. You'll see that the red, slender stems of wild dogwood and the golden plumes of *Phragmites* stand out amidst the other wetland shrubbery. Catch sight of the small remnant berries of viburnum, dogwood and Common elderberry, the spherical fruits of Buttonbush, and the feathery whiteness of milkweed seeds. Next season's leaves and flowers will be there, too, but protected inside buds. Next, look down by your feet for a collage of leaves and seeds, and then gaze upwards at the tree trunks to see all the shapes and colors of fungi and lichen growing

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Autumn comes to Neponset River Watershed. Top row, L to R: Buttonbush, Fowl Meadow; White-tailed deer; Wintergreen, Canton; Middle row, L to R: Autumn-olive fruits, Canton; bird's nest (photo. by NepRWA Member Hugh Stringer); Bottom row, L to R: Bird tracks, Norwood; Wild cucumber, Norwood.

The Director's Corner: Looking Ahead to 2009



2008 has been a productive year for NepRWA. Our hotspot testing program found several discharges, which are the source of pollution problems identified by our water-testing volunteers. We launched a new initiative to conserve drinking water and reduce the diversion of water from our streams. We started a campaign to control the invasive, exotic Purple loosestrife plant that is disrupting many of our most sensitive wetland habitats. We continued to make steady progress in the effort to bring back the Neponset's historic herring and shad runs.

It has also been a challenging year for NepRWA economically, as sources of state funding for watershed work have remained largely non-existent and as turmoil in the larger economy has begun to impact giving by charitable foundations and businesses.

NepRWA's Board and staff are committed to continuing to make progress cleaning up and protecting the watershed, in spite of these difficulties. To be effective over the next few years, NepRWA must reach out and broaden our base of support (both financial and volunteer) from local individuals and businesses in all of our 14 communities, and we need the help of all our members and friends to do it!

How can you help? First, consider making your own year-end gift to the Annual River Fund Campaign. Generous support of the River Fund by local individuals has always been important to protecting the river, but in 2009, it will be absolutely critical. You can give online at www.neponset.org.

Next, help spread the word about what a great resource the Neponset is and how your friends and neighbors can help protect it. *Forward a NepRWA email to a friend. Bring one new person to a NepRWA event during 2009. Send a letter to friends and colleagues. Invite your neighbors over for coffee and a*

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Director's Corner, from page 1

presentation about the river. If you'd like to help, but need some pointers on getting started, give me a call (781-575-0354 x305) or drop me an email (cooke@neponset.org).

The NepRWA Board of Directors also has begun the process of forming town-based "outreach teams." Each team will work together to develop a plan for spreading the word about the important work of revitalizing the Neponset, through mailings, local events, house parties and other efforts. So far, teams have been created for Milton, Westwood, Walpole and Sharon. If you're interested in joining a team or setting one up, just let me know and I'll connect you with the right people.

Lastly, consider what you can contribute as a volunteer. *Can you help with putting together mailings? Do you have expertise in marketing, web design, engineering or biology? Can you work on the computer from home? Can you help raise Purple loosestrife beetles in your backyard?* NepRWA was built on the notion that "many hands make light work," and all of us have unique skills to contribute.

Ian Cooke
Executive Director

One Simple Step to Conserve Water at Your Sink

Upgrading to water-efficient faucet aerators is simple and inexpensive, and can reduce your home water consumption and the associated energy cost of heating water by as much as 15%.

Aerators, which screw on to the tip of a faucet nozzle, mix air with water to reduce the amount of flow coming from a faucet. If an aerator is already installed on your faucet, it will have its flow rate imprinted on the side, and it probably reads 2.2 gpm (gallons per minute). If no aerator is installed, check to see if there are threads just inside the tip of the faucet, which allows the faucet to accept an aerator.

For maximum water efficiency, replace a 2.2 gpm aerator with one that has a flow rate of 1.5 (best for the kitchen), 1.0 or 0.5 gpm (both good for the bath). Generally speaking, switching from a 2.2 gpm kitchen aerator to a 1.5 gpm will save over 7,600 gallons per year at an average use of 30 minutes per day. Changing a 2.2 gpm bath aerator to a 0.5 gpm will save over 6,200 gallons per person/per year at an average use of 10 minutes per day.

To learn more about conserving water, contact Nancy Fyler, Water Conservation Coordinator, at 781-575-0354 x307 or fyler@neponset.org.

Illicit Connections in the Neponset Watershed

NepRWA's Citizen Water Monitoring Network (CWMN) program takes water samples throughout the watershed. The samples are analyzed, and sampling areas that repeatedly fail to meet state and federal water quality standards are selected for more thorough investigations ("follow-up sampling").

Where this follow-up sampling differs from the CWMN program is in the number and frequency of samples taken. Typically stream segments host only a couple of CWMN sampling locations, but may contain significantly more follow-up testing sites. Also, whereas a CWMN site would be sampled once every six weeks, follow-up sampling sites are typically sampled at least twice per month, if not more.

This past year the main focus of the follow-up sampling program has been to locate stormwater outfalls along targeted streams, with illicit connections. An "illicit connection" is a connection to the stormwater system by homes or businesses through which wastewater is released into the stormwater system and then discharged directly into streams. Wastewater actually should be sent to sewage treatment facilities.

There are physical and chemical signatures that we look for to locate illicit connections. Physical parameters include running water during dry weather, overgrowth of algae at the base of the outfall, and more conspicuous clues such as toilet paper and other household debris. Chemical parameters are often more subtle. Bacteria levels (specifically *E. coli*), ammonia, surfactants (detergents), and conductivity can all be indicators of illicit connections.

This past summer the target

areas for follow-up sampling were Hawes and Germany Brooks in Norwood, Purgatory and Plantingfield Brooks in Norwood and Westwood, and the lower mainstem of the Neponset River. With the help of NepRWA Interns Sara Salome and Emily Tran, we identified five illicit connections: four new outfalls with illicit connections in the lower section of the Neponset River, and one problem outfall in Norwood that drains into Plantingfield Brook.

Six problem outfalls from the previous summer's follow-up sampling also were monitored. One of these outfalls had been fixed by the Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC). BWSC is working to locate and fix other illegal connections as well. NepRWA has spoken with BWSC about their nine problem outfalls that need repair, and meetings also are planned with Norwood, the MA Department of Environmental Protection and the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

It is not uncommon to find illicit connections in an older urban environment like Metro Boston. If you witness a stormwater outfall pipe discharging water in the vicinity of the Neponset River during dry weather, or would like to know more about illicit connections and how NepRWA works to identify and fix these problems, contact Environmental Scientist Bill Guenther at 781-575-0354 x302 or guenther@neponset.org.



Volunteers power through a mailing collation in the NepRWA kitchen. Clockwise from top: NepRWA Bookkeeper Kristina LaFrance and Volunteers Doug Wynne & Doug Holdridge.



Sharing a chuckle. Left to right: Volunteers Doug Wynne, Melissa Mills and Marge Huse and Executive Director Ian Cooke.

Holiday Stroll, from page 1

along the bark. With a little more focus, you'll soon see wildlife tracks dotting the edges of waterways and patterning snow and mud. Fur and feathers may be caught in brambles. Bird nests could have fallen from trees. Nibbled saplings and briars give away favored routes of deer and rabbit. Scat could indicate the oft used trail of a fox, coyote, rabbit or deer. A gray pellet about the size of your thumb or smaller can signify that an owl once perched overhead in a tree. Sometimes you can find entire bones in these owl pellets, and recreate the skeletons of shrews, voles and field mice that made up an owl's meal.

Peek through dried reeds and cattails to spot Boston's winter waterfowl paddling and diving in ponds and streams – Hooded mergansers in their bold black and white plumage, the rainbow colors of Wood ducks, the crowds of tiny black and white Buffleheads, and the gregarious American coots with large feet that make for a lively diving, bobbing, greenery-eating crowd. The more common and larger Mallards, Canada geese, Mute swans, cormorants and gulls can be seen, too.

Send us your nature observations, and we'll post them at neponset.org/Links-WhatYou'veSeen.htm (write to rocklen@neponset.org). Or, share photo's at flickr.com/groups/neponset/.

Get Active with NepRWA

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 programs. Any contribution made to NepRWA can be doubled by an employer's matching gift program. If your employer offers a matching gift program, please consider signing up! Find out more by contacting the community relations department of your employer or by contacting NepRWA Membership Coordinator Kristina LaFrance at 781-575-0354 x301 or lafrance@neponset.org.

Are You a Harvard Pilgrim Employee?

If so, have you heard of the "9/11 Community Spirit Mini-Grant Program"? As an employee, you can nominate a charity of your choice for a grant. Please consider nominating NepRWA. Grants are awarded quarterly to tax-exempt, nonprofit organizations. The information for this mini-grant can be found through the Foundation of Harvard Pilgrim. To learn more, visit www.harvardpilgrim.org, then click "Members", then "Our Foundation", then "Staff Giving/Volunteering".

Ranch those Beetles!

NepRWA seeks volunteers to become beetle ranchers! This is a great hands-on opportunity for families, individuals, school groups, civic associations, environmental clubs, scouts, religious organizations and more to help restore local wetlands. Learn more at www.neponset.org, by contacting Carly Rocklen at 781-575-0354 x303 or rocklen@neponset.org. For more information about the Purple loosestrife biocontrol project, visit www.neponset.org and click "Current Projects."



Galerucella beetle on a Purple loosestrife leaf at Brookwood Farm.