



Of Note

Become a Member

We invite you to join NepRWA if you aren't already a member! 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 LaFrance 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

July - August 2009

Thank You to Our Donors

No one is immune to the incessant stream of bad economic news in the media these days, including NepRWA. Our budget has been tighter than usual because of a decline in available state and foundation grant funds. But, NepRWA also has seen one very bright spot in its finances: the extraordinary generosity of our members and donors.

In the midst of all the economic gloom, you responded more generously to our year-end River Fund appeal than ever before. That support will make an immediate difference on the ground. Because of it,

projects like the restoration of herring and shad runs and efforts to fix the few remaining sewer discharges to the river will be able to forge ahead full speed during 2009. Just as importantly, your support shows us that many people care about the river and the quality of the environment in their community. In the end, that will be the key to environmental success in the Neponset Watershed.

Sincerely,

Ian Cooke,

Executive Director

Lower Neponset River Restoration Receives Unanimous Community Support

The Neponset River Watershed Association has won unanimous community support for plans to clean-up the lower Neponset River and restore herring and shad runs from Dorchester to Walpole.

Background. NepRWA and the Massachusetts Riverways Program have worked for over a decade to restore ancient fish runs for herring and shad in the Neponset River. These ocean fish must spawn (lay eggs) in fresh water. Seventeen miles of prime spawning habitat are now blocked by two dams on the Neponset River in Boston and Milton; restoration of the lower Neponset would involve modifying these fish run obstacles and eliminating contaminated sediments in the

river to make fish safer to eat, increase boating opportunities and improve river health.

Last fall NepRWA formed a "Citizens Advisory Committee" (CAC) to see if a river restoration consensus could be reached with neighborhood, civic and condo associations along this lower stretch of the river. The 26-member CAC soon had the sponsorship of all the state environmental agencies, the City of Boston, and the Town of Milton. Now, the CAC has unanimously recommended to:

1. Dredge the contaminants from behind the two dams,

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NepRWA Annual Meeting 2009!

On the evening of Thursday, June 11, over hors d'oeuvres and drinks in the indoor tropical garden and patio at Meditech-Canton, 100 Friends of the Neponset came together to celebrate, from around the Watershed and beyond. We explored the health of local

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Collage of NepRWA Annual Meeting 2009 photographs taken by Tom Palmer.

Sources of Lower Neponset River PCB Contamination

As explained elsewhere in this newsletter, NepRWA has made important progress in its efforts to restore the lower Neponset River and ancient “fish runs” for herring and shad now blocked by two dams.

But, before anything can be done about the dams, tons of PCB-contaminated sediments lodged behind the dams must be cleaned up at a cost of as much as \$10 million. Under state law, owners of land from which the PCBs originated — so-called “potentially responsible parties” — are liable for the cleanup costs. However, *many* industrial companies located along the Neponset River and its tributaries used PCBs in the past, so it isn’t easy to identify those responsible or determine how cleanup costs should be apportioned.

Over the last five years, however, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has done considerable testing of Neponset River sediments and concluded, in a yet to be published report, that much (though not all) of the PCBs behind the dams originated from Mother Brook in the Hyde Park neighborhood of Boston.

A privately financed cleanup of Mother Brook, which until recently had twice the amount of PCBs as are currently located behind the two Neponset River dams, is almost complete, thanks to the excellent work and sense of corporate responsibility exercised by the Thomas & Betts Company, which owns the former LE Mason industrial site. In the course of the cleanup, another “potentially responsible party” for the PCBs in Mother Brook was identified: the Albertson Supermarket chain, which owns much of the former Allis Chalmers industrial site. Neither of these companies has taken responsibility for PCBs in the Neponset River, even though their PCB cleanup extends to within 50 ft. of Mother Brook’s entrance into the Neponset.

Last fall, NepRWA received a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) from MassDEP to help Hyde Park citizens

learn more about the work that has been done by Thomas and Betts. Through that grant, NepRWA hired Frank Riccardi of Weston & Sampson, a “licensed site professional” (LSP) to take a look at whether Thomas & Betts followed the law in concluding that PCBs originating at the LE Mason did not migrate into the Neponset River, and to examine whether Thomas & Betts should now be required to do additional work to determine the “extent of contamination” in light of the draft USGS findings.

Weston & Sampson’s Final Report was presented on June 10, 2009 at the last of three public meetings in Hyde Park under the TAG Grant. The Report concluded:

- In general, ... response actions conducted by Thomas & Betts to date have been approved by DEP and EPA and conducted in accordance with the appropriate standard of professional care for the industry.
- The assessment of contaminant extent did not evaluate sediment transport of PCB-impacted fine-grained sediment from the Site. In light of the findings in the draft USGS Report, DEP should... require Thomas & Betts to evaluate fate and transport of PCB-impacted fine-grained sediment from the Site and demonstrate that this sediment did not migrate into the Neponset River.

MassDEP has a copy of this report, but says it must wait until the USGS Report is finalized before determining whether to ask Thomas & Betts to do additional work to determine the extent of the PCB contamination for which it is responsible. Hopefully, the final USGS Report will be available in the next few months.

For more information, read the full report at www.neponset.org by clicking on “Possible Source of River PCBs Found” or contact NepRWA Advocacy Director Steve Pearlman at 781-575-0354 x304 or pearlman@neponset.org.

Try a Rain Barrel, this Summer!

This rainy weather presents the perfect opportunity to take advantage of rain barrels to collect and store rainwater from your roof to use during dry times.

You can harvest a surprisingly large amount of rainwater from your gutters. Consider that if you have 1,000 square feet of roof surface area, one inch of rainfall will produce over 600 gallons of rainwater.

Most rain barrels hold 55 gallons. If you use a rain barrel at each downspout, you can quickly collect enough rain to water your garden and houseplants. You also can rig a system of multiple rain barrels by attaching the first barrel to one of the house’s downspouts and linking the rest of the barrels with hoses to collect the overflow. Rain barrels can be installed on blocks to provide height for gravity flow purposes, and small pumps can be used to provide additional water pressure for hand sprayers and sprinklers. Remember to cover any openings in the rain barrel with fine mesh screen to prevent mosquitos from breeding and to trap debris. During the winter, drain and remove the barrels to prevent ice damage.

A ready-made rain barrel ranges in price from \$89 to \$169, depending on size, style and added features. You can buy a rain barrel at Home Depot, Lowe’s, Sky Juice New England (www.skyjuice.us), The New England Rain Barrel Co. (www.nerainbarrel.com), or The Great American Rain Barrel Co. (www.greatamericanrainbarrel.com).



Questions? Contact
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2. Remove the Tileston and Hollingsworth (T&H) Dam in Hyde Park and Milton;
3. Reduce the height of the Baker Dam in Lower Mills (Dorchester and Milton) and construct a “nature-like fish ramp” to allow migratory fish to pass over it.

See www.neponset.org and click on “River Restoration Agreement Reached!” for details of the CAC’s four pages of recommendations.

On May 26, a signing ceremony was held on the patio of the Baker Chocolate Condominiums overlooking the mill pond behind Baker Dam. The ceremony, reported in the *Boston Globe*, featured speeches by Senator Brian Joyce, Rep. Linda Dorcena-Forry, Phil Griffiths (state Undersecretary for Environmental Affairs), Mary Griffin (Commissioner of the state Department of Fish & Game), Tim Purinton (Acting Director of the Riverways Program) and Ian Cooke of NepRWA.

Next Steps. Two additional studies need to be done by the Riverways Program before the project can begin the environmental review and permitting process. First, the design of the “nature-like fish ramp” must be finalized. Second, a study must be done to confirm that removal of the T&H Dam won’t cause flooding. Riverways needs relatively modest funding for these studies; see below for how to help this agency get it!

In the longer term, most of the cost of this project will be for cleanup of PCB-contaminated sediments behind the dams. NepRWA is currently working with MassDEP to try to identify private parties responsible for the contamination and its cleanup (see “Sources of Lower Neponset PCB Contamination” on page 2 of this newsletter).

What You Can Do To Help. Take the next step to restore the Neponset, and write, email, or call your state Representative and Senator:

- Tell them that you strongly support the CAC recommendations.
- Ask for their help in obtaining the modest amount of bond funding needed for the project’s final design studies. Legislators should contact the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs and ask them to give the state “Riverways” Program enough “bond cap” to pay for the studies.
- If you are represented by any of the following legislators, please thank them for convening the CAC: Senators Jack Hart, Brian Joyce and Marian Walsh; and Representatives Linda Dorcena Forry, Walter F. Timilty and Angelo Scaccia.
- Contact information for your legislators can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/legis/>.
- To identify your legislators, visit <http://www.wheredoivotema.com/bal/myelectioninfo.php>. Type your address, click “find my election information,” and scroll to bottom of page.

To do more to support Neponset River restoration, contact NepRWA Advocacy Director Steve Pearlman at pearlman@neponset.org, and include your address, email and phone number(s) for future alerts.



NepRWA Member Jim Kaemmerlen spent a recent morning harvesting biocontrol *Galerucella* beetles from a wetland for the Fowl Meadow Purple Loosestrife Biocontrol Project. Here, he uses a beetle aspirator to collect beetles. View more project pictures at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/neprwa/>

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migratory fisheries and the life stories of truly remarkable fish species, with featured speaker Kristen Ferry, a biologist with the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), formerly with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, who specializes in biological studies, migratory fish passage, and habitat restoration. NepRWA Executive Director Ian Cooke also presented on NepRWA’s projects and programs.

Joan Kimball, former Director of the Massachusetts Riverways Program of the MA Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and Mary Griffin, DFG Commissioner, were presented with conservation awards for their hard work on behalf of the Neponset and the Massachusetts environment. A slate of NepRWA Directors also was voted in. A Perception Prodigy 10 kayak and a Gift Certificate from EMS-Foxboro and a rain barrel from The Great American Rain Barrel Company were raffled off. NepRWA Member Pete Jackson won the kayak, and to Dr. Cathy Stern won the rain barrel.

Thank you to all who helped make the event possible! Funding for the Annual Meeting was provided in part by a generous donation from Poirier Sales & Service, and also by AAA. Thanks to the generosity of Meditech, the event took place in their Canton facility’s stunning indoor garden and auditorium. Eastern Mountain Sports of Foxboro provided a kayak discount, and The Great American Rain Barrel Company of Hyde Park donated a rain barrel.

View pictures at: www.flickr.com/groups/neponset/pool/. (Scroll through the pages to the Annual Meeting images. Then, click on each photograph to view it in a larger size.)