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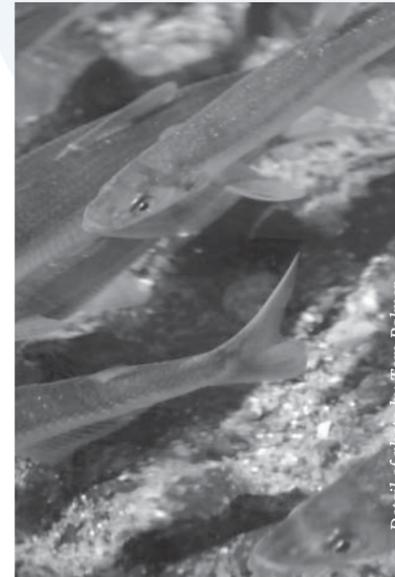


December 2012

Neponset News

Protecting Our Water, Wildlife and Land

Polluted Runoff Takes Center Stage



Detail of photo by Tom Palmer.

Each spring, smelt swim up creeks from the Neponset Estuary to spawn and lay eggs. With enough clean water flow, their eggs can hatch.

Watershed Association Accelerates Work to Strengthen Stormwater Controls

Polluted stormwater runoff is the toughest remaining pollution challenge facing the Neponset River, and the Association continues to ramp up our efforts to clean up stormwater.

Roads and parking lots constantly accumulate pollution from cars, pets, and other sources. Lawns may contain dog waste, or be over-fertilized with phosphorus-based products. When it rains, these pollutants flush directly into the nearest catchbasin and get transported to a stream or river in just a few min-

utes, even when homes and parking lots seem to be nowhere near a waterway. Many people mistakenly think that catchbasins take runoff to some sort of sewage treatment plant, when in fact most discharge to streams has little or no treatment.

Even though most of the sewer leaks around the watershed have been cleaned up, the Neponset continues to suffer from widespread violations of bacterial pollution standards. The main source of *E. coli* and other pathogens entering the river is now polluted runoff.

But the problem is not limited to water pollution. Consider that rainwater naturally would seep into the ground and recharge our

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Quincy's Neponset RiverWalk Nears Completion

In November 2002, a volunteer working with the Watershed Association produced a conceptual plan for a RiverWalk along the Neponset Estuary in Quincy. It called for a Quincy RiverWalk to parallel the Neponset Greenway and Pope John Paul II Park, across the river.

After a decade of work with public agencies and private developers, we are poised to realize this vision along two miles of waterfront,

from the publicly-accessible gazebo perched over the river at Adams Inn (by the Neponset River Bridge) to Squantum Point Park, where the River enters Dorchester Bay.

Most of the RiverWalk already is built or is nearing completion, and the Watershed Association believes that with a little more work, we will cut the ribbon on this beautiful two-mile-long trail section next summer.

By far, the largest portion of the RiverWalk is, or soon will be, on land owned by Boston Scientific Corporation (BSC). Ten years ago, at our urging, BSC built a half-mile-long path around its facility on the River, and it has been open to the public ever since. But this first segment of the route was a dead end, with no connections either upstream or downstream.

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Leverage Your Year-end Donation with One of Two Challenge Grants!

Over the last several years, the Watershed Association has seen major changes to the funding sources that support our work. In fact, the three biggest foundation and government grant programs that have supported our river protection efforts over the last decade have disappeared!

Over the same period, the support we receive from individual members and donors has become that much more critical to what gets accomplished out on the river. **Right now, we are working to meet not one but two challenge grants before the end of the year.**

If you've never been a contributor before, or if you haven't donated in a few years (since January 2011) please **help us take advantage of our Triple Challenge Grant**. As the name implies, this challenge grant will triple any donations we receive before December 31,

from first-time or lapsed members. That means a \$100 donation is worth \$300 to the river! It's a truly unique opportunity to make a difference!

We also are asking our current members to help us meet our Small Dams Challenge. We are trying to raise \$30,000 to launch a new program to address the tremendous ecological impact of more than 100 small dams across the watershed, and we've picked two small dams to kick-off the effort. A generous individual has pledged \$10,000 for this effort if we can raise the balance by March 31. So, please consider adding a few dollars to your 2012 donation, or making an additional gift before year-end, and earmarking it for this special project!

Simply mail your check to our office, or easier still, donate online at www.neponset.org. Thank you!

Before you recycle this newsletter...REUSE it, by sharing it with a friend!



Neponset River Watershed Association

The Watershed Association is a nonprofit conservation group founded in 1967 to protect and restore the Neponset River, its tributaries and watershed lands.

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Director's Corner

Regional Vision Drives Local Results

One of the strengths of the Watershed Association is its regional approach. We look at the entire river and its watershed as an interconnected system irrespective of political boundaries.

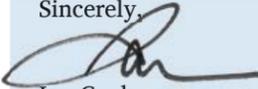
But, as this issue of the newsletter shows, increasingly, we find that our most important work occurs at the local level—working in partnership with each of our town or city governments, land-owners and volunteers to address the unique challenges and opportunities in that community.

Sometimes, the challenge is sorting out conflicting regulations. Other times, there is an opportunity to remove a small dam.

Whatever the opportunity, we bring together experts, volunteers and local officials to figure out creative ways to solve the problems affecting our river.

This combination of regional vision and local implementation seems to be working pretty well. Whether it's recruiting volunteers to test our water and tackle hands-on restoration projects, partnering with schools to educate kids about where our water comes from, or working with our Town Water and Engineering Departments to create water conservation programs and fix polluted parking lot runoff, the results are piling up.

Behind it all is the energy, support and generosity of our members and volunteers. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Ian Cooke
Executive Director

Polluted Runoff Takes Center Stage

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groundwater reserves, but, these days, with so much impervious surface (i.e. pavement and buildings) preventing rain from soaking into the ground, the rate of groundwater recharge has taken a hit.

Groundwater recharge is critical, as it is the only source of river-flow and drinking water during droughts and summer conditions. Also, ironically, the large and rapid flow of stormwater off impervious surfaces causes flooding during rainstorms.

Stormwater is regulated through a patchwork of rules issued by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), by the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and by local cities and towns.

The Neponset Watershed is subject to a state-issued "Total Maximum Daily Load" (TMDL) for Bacteria, which establishes targets for reducing bacterial pollution from stormwater, but the TMDL does not address other pollutants and does not require anyone to comply with the targets.

Near wetlands, new development and redevelopment projects are required to comply with ten state stormwater standards. These rules are administered by the conservation commission in each city or town and are supposed to be "consistent" with the TMDL requirements, although this is seldom applied in practice. Also, these rules do not affect existing properties that contribute polluted runoff to the river unless they are undergoing major re-construction.

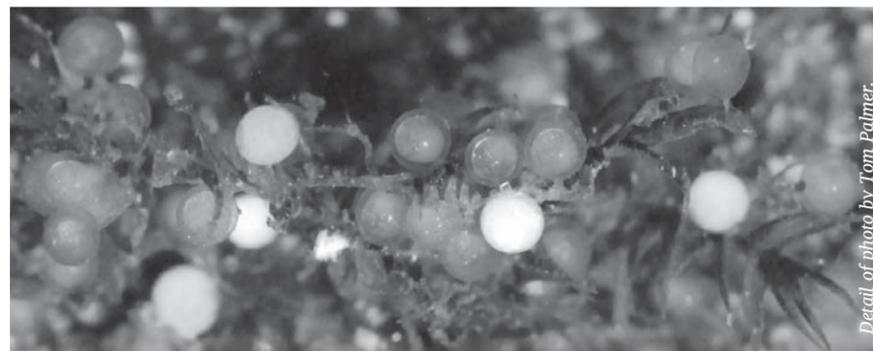
In locations not near wetlands, EPA requires some minimal stormwater controls. A 2010 proposal to greatly strengthen these rules has been withdrawn, although EPA says it will be re-proposed soon.

Under current rules, EPA requires towns to enact local bylaws that control runoff from development projects, although the substance and implementation of these rules varies widely from town to town.

Our Advocacy Director, Steve Pearlman, is leading efforts to make this patchwork of rules work to protect the river, including efforts to:

- Get the U.S. EPA to adopt new rules that specifically require towns to mandate pollution control practices that are effective at removing bacteria.
- Get MassDEP to issue guidance on what it means for stormwater controls to be "consistent" with TMDL requirements.
- Get local governments to amend their stormwater bylaws to specifically require bacteria removal measures.
- Work with towns to ensure their zoning, subdivision, parking, and other bylaws don't make it hard to reduce polluted runoff by mandating overly wide roadways, prohibiting rain gardens near property lines, requiring too much parking, or any number of other ways.

For more information, contact Steve Pearlman at 781-575-0354 x304 or pearlman@neponset.org.



Smelt eggs require sufficient clean water to hatch.

Engaging People With Our River Watershed

Events and Volunteer Activities Are Fun, Productive & Serve a Larger Purpose



Volunteers participate in a river cleanup on the Neponset in Hyde Park, August 2012.

Each year, Members take advantage of opportunities organized by the Watershed Association to get out and have fun in new areas of the Watershed—from paddling the river to touring project sites, cleaning-up the Neponset to discussing films, exploring parklands, even to celebrating at a parade by waving fish signs!

Besides holding events, the Watershed Association also staffs tables at other organizations' activities to educate more of our Watershed community about Neponset conservation. In recent years, you may have spotted us at a Boston Landmarks Orchestra concert, at library events, the Dedham Farmer's Market, Whole Foods, Eastern Mountain Sports, Sharon Water/Energy Fair, Stoughton and Canton Earth Days, Celebrate Milton, ING Green Fair, and more. Come say hello, the next time you see us! Bring a friend; we'll explore watershed protection together. We also seek volunteers to help us table at events. To get involved, contact Outreach Director Carly Rocklen at: rocklen@neponset.org or 781-575-0354 x303.

Volunteering with the Watershed Association offers opportunities for Members to build skills and knowledge, meet new people, and explore the watershed. In 2012, volunteers took water samples; raised beetles, monitored treatment sites, and sewed nets for our Purple loosestrife biological control program; assessed culverts and small dams for fish accessibility; and prepared mailings.

We encourage you to get more involved with the Watershed Association. Learn about upcoming events and volunteer opportunities at www.neponset.org. We hope to see you, soon!

Quincy RiverWalk

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This year, the Watershed Association successfully worked with BSC to have them:

- Repair the existing walkway around their facility, which had deteriorated;
- Grant the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) a permanent public access easement to it;
- Allow public access and the posting of "Quincy Neponset RiverWalk" signs along all of Commander Shea Boulevard and the existing trail;
- Allow the Watershed Association to post signs on BSC property to indicate that the public may launch canoes and kayaks from the BSC beach;
- Grant the Watershed Association an easement which allows for construction of a trail along the "missing link" from the dead end of the existing BSC trail to the DCR Squantum Point Park.

The Watershed Association has been working to secure funding to construct the missing link between the existing BSC trail and Squantum Point. We hope to have funding in place by the spring, with construction to follow in 2013.

The next longest section of the RiverWalk (about a third of a mile) has been built by Conroy Development

Corporation, the developer of the "Neponset Landing" waterfront apartment building.

As part of a 2005 Settlement Agreement between Conroy and the Watershed Association, Conroy agreed to construct the RiverWalk across four separately owned properties, connecting the Adams Inn to Commander Shea Boulevard. Also promised were a public access easement across the developer's property and various other amenities such as lighting, benches, and rehabilitation of an existing pier.

After a seven-year delay due to permitting problems and several revisions to the plans, Conroy has completed this work, except for a small area which will be completed in the spring once renovation of the Neponset River Bridge is finished.

Still unresolved is the fate of a proposed canoe launch ramp which hinges on the outcome of ongoing litigation between Conroy and a third party. But by next year, we hope to see our original vision of a multi-use trail from Squantum Point to the Adams Inn fully realized.

For more information, contact Steve Pearlman at 781-575-0354 x304 or pearlman@neponset.org.