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Fall 2015

# Neponset News

Protecting Our Water, Wildlife and Land

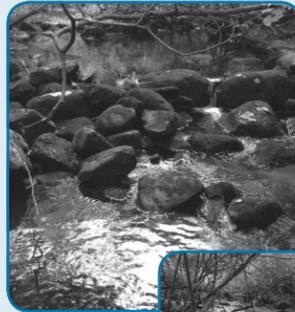
How many volunteers does it take to replace a backhoe?

A process that started two years ago, with a challenge grant and donations from 150 NepRWA member families, came to fruition in mid-September as volunteers dismantled two small dams on **Walpole's Traphole Brook**.

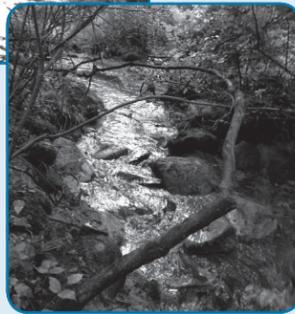
After months of planning, coordinating with landowners, debating how to do the work, and obtaining permits, it took 19 very enthusiastic volunteers just **two hours** to finish the job.

Traphole Brook has long been known as the Neponset's best trout stream—the state's last fish survey found **81 fish**, every one a trout. Removing two

## Traphole Dams Tumble



Before:  
Boulder dam blocks trout passage



After:  
Traphole Brook is open for fishy business

boulder dams doubled the length of continuous available habitat so that fish can move freely to find food, spawning areas and summer refuge, making the Brook's trout population more robust.

The project, which some thought would require expensive heavy equipment, instead showed the strength of our human-powered approach to stream restoration, eliminating the cost and disturbance of heavy machinery. It was also a thrilling experience for the volunteers who spotted trout passing through 30 minutes after we finished.

Engineering is ongoing to restore trout at three larger dams on **Milton's Pine Tree Brook**, as are efforts to develop additional dam removal opportunities.

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## Targeting Water Pollution Hotspots in 2016



Since our volunteer-based water quality program was founded in the early 1990's, our volunteers have amassed more than **30,000** individual water quality measurements.

Along the way many of these measurements have pointed to water quality problem areas—we call them **water pollution hotspots**—that have since been cleaned. The result is ponds and waterways that are healthier for humans and wildlife alike.

But as we've been reviewing some of that data in recent months, we've been reminded about just how many of these "hotspots" continue to be unsolved mysteries that we haven't had the resources to follow up on properly.

Continued, page 2

## The Value of Volunteers

**Over six hundred hours!** That's the amount of time that our dedicated volunteers spend taking water samples from May through October for our Citizens' Water Monitoring Network (CWMN) Program.

Sampling days take place between **6 and 7:30AM** across the watershed, with volunteers collecting three bottles of water from the Neponset River or one of its tributaries, and transporting the samples to one of our nearby drop off locations.

In addition, we have a group of **seven volunteers** who measure dissolved oxygen with handheld meters at groups of five or six sites. Dissolved oxygen is crucial to aquatic life, such as fish that need to breathe in the water. We also have **four drop off coordinators**, who receive samples and help fill out tracking paperwork, and **one volunteer driver** who brings the samples to Deer Island for analysis.



Continued, page 3



### Neponset River Watershed Association

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

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**Officers:**  
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Mauna O'Carra, Vice-President  
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Nancy Pyle, Water Conservator, Coord.  
Kristina LaFrance, Admin. Assistant  
Dee Muller, Development Director  
Tom Palmer, Willert Pond Manager



## Director's Corner

### The Cost of Clean Water

What price are we willing to pay for clean water? Here at the Watershed Association we deal with certain parts of that price: \$1,500 to monitor water quality at one site for a year, \$90 to outfit a river cleanup volunteer with chest waders, \$4,000 to send an educational mailing about water pollution to every resident of a town, \$750 to deliver a stormwater training to local officials, or \$130 to send our educator to one classroom.

It all adds up, and we are extraordinarily grateful for the generosity of our members and friends who help make these things happen through their membership dues and annual gifts.

The challenges of paying for water infrastructure—drinking water, wastewater and stormwater—at the municipal level are equally daunting. Few, if any, of our communities are charging enough to keep up with maintenance, and when it comes to stormwater, none of our communities charge directly, and the results are reflected in our water quality results every time it rains.

The men and women entrusted with managing our water infrastructure are professionals who know what they need to do to protect our water, but a lack of political will from above sometimes makes that impossible. This is why we spend so much time helping our communities be more effective stewards of our water.

You are the constituency for clean water in your community and we look forward to working with you to give it the priority it deserves!

Sincerely,

Ian Cooke  
Executive Director

### Targeting Hotspots

*Continued from page 1*

These problem areas can be found in almost every one of our towns and they vary from obvious sewer leaks to vague anecdotal reports.

In many cases, solving these problems requires sending our staff out into the field to wade the stream, make observations, and take samples back to the lab so that we can pinpoint a source. In others, it's a matter of working with local officials to try to find a problem inside a municipally owned drainage system.

Over the years, a lack of available staff time and funding for laboratory costs has left many of these hotspots languishing and unresolved.

As municipalities gear up to comply with new EPA requirements to intensively monitor their storm drains over the next several years, it's a good time to tackle these remaining hotspots.

With this in mind, we've set a goal to track down the causes of a majority of our known hotspots over the next 18 months. Doing this will help leverage the investment our municipalities are about to make in monitoring their stormdrain systems, by helping them target their efforts to the right locations.

This activity won't be cheap. It will require re-allocating a significant chunk of our Environmental Engineer's time away from existing projects, as well as additional costs for interns, field equipment and laboratory analysis, an estimated **\$30,000** in all and not something that can be readily funded through available grants.

We're hoping to engage many of our members in a campaign to raise the funds for this project over the next few months. Look for more details soon about how you can help with this important work, to make sure that all of our streams are fishable and swimmable for families across the watershed.

### Upcoming Events

#### 14th Annual Pumpkin Float

Tuesday, Oct. 20 at 5:30pm

*Pope John Paul II Park, Dorchester*

A Neponset family tradition! Bring your hollow carved pumpkin and join the floating parade of illuminated jack-o-lanterns down Davenport Creek to the Neponset River. Halloween costumes encouraged!

Pumpkins can be no larger than 8 inches, or they won't float. Each jack-o-lantern will have a candle inserted on site and lit before being launched, en masse, in the water. Floats and candles will be provided. At the end of the event, pumpkins are collected for compost and used in Boston gardens.

Event check-in at Hallet Street entrance to the park. *Presented by MA DCR*

#### Fall Birding Hike

Sat., Nov. 7 from 8:30am-10:30am

*Blue Hills Reservation  
1904 Canton Ave (Rte 138), Milton*

Join NepRWA board member, Les Tyralla, for a birding hike in Blue Hills!

We will bird the lower trails behind the museum. In addition to seeing the year-round birds, we may have a variety of sparrows and late migrants.

*Meet at the south side parking lot adjacent to the Trailside Museum entrance.*

*Wear sturdy footwear and bring binoculars if you have them. (Les will have a limited number to borrow.) Children are welcome.*

Rain date: Sun., Nov. 8

*Limited to fifteen. Registration required. Email Nancy Fyler at [fyler@neponset.org](mailto:fyler@neponset.org) or call 781-575-0354 x307.*



*Students from the Codman Academy Charter School in Dorchester explore the Neponset Estuary.*

### Teach Your Children Well

Over the years, we've developed a substantial Water Conservation School Education Program that brings the real-world importance of water conservation to the classroom.

During the course of our two-day classroom visits, students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of local water sources, delivery infrastructure, and the connections that they have to watershed neighbors.

They learn new terms and vocabulary, calculate daily water usage, and discuss ways to conserve—from behavioral changes to appliance updates. We also review the many ways that water gets polluted—discussing everything from chemical use in the home and yard, to dog waste—and we discuss how impervious surfaces contribute to polluted stormwater runoff.

At the end of our program, students (and teachers) know quite a bit more about their local water supply. While they previously may have taken their water for granted, afterward they realize that it's a precious resource that needs to be protected forever. Students are also encouraged to share their knowledge with family and friends.

- Number of towns currently in the program: 5
- Number of students visited per year: Over 1,400
- Hours spent per year on the program: 450+
- The value of teaching the next generation about water conservation: **Priceless!**



*Students from the Cottage Street School in Sharon observe a groundwater model.*



### Value of Volunteers

*Continued from page 1*

The total number of hours volunteered on each sampling morning? 73. With six sampling days per year, plus training and prep work for sampling, there is an annual volunteer total of over 600 hours.

We couldn't possibly run the CWMN Program without the help of our volunteers, and we are incredibly thankful for their time.

If you are interested in being a 2016 CWMN volunteer (no experience necessary) please contact Environmental Engineer Sarah Bounty, [bounty@neponset.org](mailto:bounty@neponset.org) or 781-575-0354 x302.



#### A Great Day for the River

*In spite of chilly rain, more than 100 people turned out for the Neponset River Clean-up on 10/3. The river was looking great afterwards, including new cleanup sites in Milton and Mattapan, in addition to Hyde Park. The best part? It was harder to find large debris thanks to past efforts!*

### It's that time of year again!

The holidays will soon be upon us and the next few months will be filled with ideas and options for giving. It could be finding that elusive gift for the hard to please person on your list, giving the gift of hospitality to friends and family at Thanksgiving, or considering a gift to your favorite charity.

For the Watershed Association, annual gifts from our donors are the lifeblood of our organization. We depend on the generosity of community members to help keep the river and watershed clean and healthy and are fortunate to have so many loyal donors who give year after year, some for more than 20 years.

What are some of the reasons people support a nonprofit? First and foremost, by giving to a nonprofit organization, you can make progress toward the kinds big goals that usually aren't possible acting alone.

You don't need to have an Ebenezer Scrooge revelation to realize that helping others and improving your community is satisfying, whether you do it by donating your time or money. Of course, the opportunity to make Uncle Sam a partner in your charitable work through a tax deduction is always appealing too.

Whatever your motivation is, we are very thankful that you have chosen to share your gift with the Watershed Association. Thank you for your participation, support, and commitment to our organization.

#### What will your legacy be?

Consider including the Watershed Association in your will, trust or other estate plans. A bequest is one of the easiest ways for you to make a lasting statement about what matters most. Please contact Development Director, Dee Mullen at [mullen@neponset.org](mailto:mullen@neponset.org)