



Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory
Committee

PO Box 397
Huntington, MA 01050

Phone: 413-268-3129, ext 2
E-mail: coordinator@westfieldriverwildscenic.org

WE'RE ON THE WEB:

WWW.WESTFIELDRIVERWILDSCENIC.ORG

**"The Westfield River... It's a
National Treasure"**

Committee Members

Mercedes Gallagher, Bill Babcock (Alt)
Town of Becket

Robert Thompson, Dave Pierce (Alt)
Town of Chester

Nancy Rich, Denise Cormier (Alt)
Town of Chesterfield

VACANT
Town of Cummington

Jeff Penn, Karin Vorwerk (Alt)
Town of Huntington

Carl Lafreniere, John Richardson (Alt)
Town of Middlefield

VACANT
Town of Savoy

Ken Walls
Town of Washington

Jim Caffrey
Town of Windsor

VACANT, Jim Dodge (Alt)
Town of Worthington

Additional members of the Committee include representatives from:

- Westfield River Watershed Association,
- The Trustees of Reservations,
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission,
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission,
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and
- National Park Service.

2009 Annual Financial Report

Project funding provided through the National Park Service's Partnership
Wild & Scenic Rivers Program (except as noted).

Operations & General Expenses	
General Operations*	\$13,590
Conference & Meeting Expenses*	\$2,321
Total:	\$15,911
Outreach & Education	
General Outreach*	\$980
Website Development	\$3,129
Kiosk Update	\$1,875
River Flyover Filming	\$1,400
Total:	\$7,384
Resource Stewardship	
Riparian Conservation Grants	\$15,075
Stream Team Coordinator	\$10,625
Stream Team Supplies & Mapping	\$3,329
Freshwater Mussel Survey**	\$5,000
Water Quality Monitoring	\$2,343
Total:	\$36,372
TOTAL EXPENDITURES: \$59,667	

*A total of \$250 of these funds came from other donations.

** Survey work was completed in 2009 and invoiced and paid in 2010.

Additional program & technical assistance provided by Riverways Program,
Division of Ecological Restoration, Massachusetts Department of Fish & Game

Looking ahead....A Collaborative Partnership

Through collaborative approaches, we have worked with individuals and organizations to accomplish many things on behalf of the Wild & Scenic Westfield River. For this reason, the WRWSAC will join with other conservation partners working in the Westfield River watershed to form a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA).

Through education, early detection and eradication, and management of invasive species at the watershed level, we hope the CISMA will:

- Heighten awareness of invasive species (including plants, pests, & pathogens – terrestrial and aquatic) among partners, towns, governmental agencies, and the public
- Establish an early detection and rapid response framework/network/team
- Work with neighbors/partners to make control efforts more sustainable
- Provide more funding and support to invasive control efforts within the area
- Increase resiliency of our natural habitats to climate change

The WRWSAC is serving on the Steering Committee to initiate the CISMA for the Westfield River watershed. Stay tuned as this exciting new collaboration gets off the ground!



Division of Ecological Restoration's Westfield River Wild & Scenic Coordinator, Carrie Banks, uses a kicknet to collect macro-invertebrates — aka aquatic bugs — from the stream.



Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee

2009 Annual Report

"preserve, protect and enhance the special qualities and outstanding natural resources of the Westfield River Watershed"

Together we go "One Step at a Time"

Our accomplishments this year would not be possible without dedicated volunteers like you. With over 65 active volunteers lending their eyes, ears hands — and yes, even sometimes their nose — for the river, we have been able to make great strides!

Our volunteers have helped steward and maintain the East Branch Trail corridor; assisted a highway crew in stabilizing a river bank with native plants; documented river corridor conditions through water quality, shoreline surveys and photo-monitoring; and built the first steps down Glendale Falls.

"One Step at a Time" Down Glendale Falls is full steam ahead and is a wonderful project to highlight the skills of our volunteers. In 2007, a Stream Team volunteer conducting a Shoreline Survey along Glendale Falls Brook noted poor parking lot drainage eroding several areas and fragile vegetation being trampled as visitors scampered down to the base of Glendale Falls. He recommended something be done!

Partnering with The Trustees of Reservations, the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee (WRWSAC) initiated the "One Step at a Time" Campaign to solicit volunteers and donations to designate an official trail down

Glendale Falls and to improve the parking lot drainage. With remarkable success volunteers and donors stepped forward — many of them sharing memories of visiting this hidden gem in Middlefield over the years or just discovering it in their backyard for the first time.

Sponsored workdays have brought dozen of volunteers out to help survey the parking lot and prep the trail down the falls, as well as help do the grunt work of hauling wooden steps and gravel to locations where steps were being installed.

Although there will be more steps to install next spring, we can celebrate a great start to this project thanks to our wonderful volunteers and donors!



Volunteer, Paul Fennessey, takes a break at the bottom of Glendale Falls

How do you measure a year?

- 65+ volunteers lent their eyes, ears, and hands for the Westfield River
- \$250 or 25 steps donated to "One Step at a Time" Campaign
- 4 River Conservation projects supporting the protection of up to 465 acres
- 7 freshwater mussels identified in Westfield River watershed
- 5 Information Kiosks being updated
- 261 volunteer hours, donations, in-kind services and additional project grant funding valued at \$53,200+
- 56 samples collected at 7 water quality monitoring sites
- 42 miles of roads along river to be surveyed for runoff and erosion
- 350 photos and 1 hour of video taken from a helicopter flying over the river

Special Thanks to:

- Riverways Program, Div. of Ecological Restoration
- Div. Fisheries and Wildlife
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Trustees of Reservations
- Hilltown Land Trust
- Friends of the Keystone Arches
- Westfield River Watershed Assn.
- Westfield River Environmental Center
- National Park Service
- Berkshire Conservation District
- All our Stream Team Volunteers

Inside this issue:

Drainage Study	2
Freshwater Mussels	2
East Branch Trail	3
Riparian Conservation	3
Financial Report	4
Committee Members	4
Looking Ahead...	4



Stonefly casing

Running to the River: How to reduce road run-off?

Ever watch the water run off the landscape during a rainstorm? Standing along the roadway, you might notice sheets of water running off into a storm drain or drainage ditch. In many cases, this road run-off drains directly to the river carrying with it all the oil drippings, road sand and salt, and other contaminants that it picks up along the way,

Funded through WRWSAC's Community Grants program, seven Hilltown communities are taking part in a study to identify areas of road run-off and erosion along the Westfield River. The study

will develop conceptual designs and generate cost estimates on ways to improve the water quality entering the river.

Following the study, WRWSAC hopes to leverage additional funds to implement the study recommendations.

Foresight Land Services, LLC out of Pittsfield will conduct the drainage study. The Communities included as part of this study include Becket, Chester, Huntington, Middlefield, Washington, Windsor and Worthington.

Freshwater Mussel Surveys:

What on earth floated by me?

When you were fishing or swimming along the Westfield River this past summer, did you see a neoprene-clad human body float by you with a long protruding straw just above the surface of the water. You might have been thinking "what on earth was that?"



Ethan Nadeau conducting surveys on Middle Branch

Not to worry, it was likely Ethan Nadeau, a freshwater ecologist, surveying the river for freshwater mussels. In order to better characterize river habitat and to identify projects to enhance aquatic habitat, the WRWSAC sponsored the surveys in the upper parts of the Westfield River watershed.

Previously only 2 freshwater species were known to exist in the Westfield River watershed. With over 51 sites surveyed, a total of 7 species are now known to exist. Species identified in the Wild & Scenic portions during the surveys included: Eastern Pearl Shell (small coldwater streams, native), Eastern Ellipto (Common species), Eastern Floater (typically found in ponds), Eastern Lampmussel (rarest mussel in MA, only

single animal specimens found at two locations), Creeper (Species of Special Concern), and Triangle Floater (Species of Special Concern).

Mussels begin as small microscopic larvae that attach to fish in order to complete their lifecycle. Most mussels are specific to the type of fish that serve as their host and many of these fish are migratory species, e.g. Shad and Atlantic Salmon. With the building of dams, many of these migratory fish are unable to reach their historic ranges in the watershed. Thus the freshwater mussel populations are generally in decline. In several survey locations, specimens only included a single animal. Most of the upper watershed lacked mussels primarily due to the high-gradient, rocky and flashy stream systems. Mussels are sedentary animals and are susceptible to extreme highs and lows in flows and the rocky substrate makes it difficult to burrow their way into the bottom. The Lower Middle Branch and Dead Branch seem to provide the most promising mussel habitat. In the Dead Branch, there are several low gradient sections, as well as a good diversity of fish species to serve as hosts for the larvae.



Sample of freshwater mussels found during surveys.

"When we launched the One Step at a Time project, I could not have known how many lovely stories and moments would be shared with me. Memories of grandparents taking wide eyed children to explore the beauty, wedding proposals in the roar of the falls, friends sharing a special spot, as a way of honoring a devoted colleague and a new mother who has never been to Glendale Falls but plans to take her young son, when he can toddle down the steps, to proudly find his name."

Meredyth Babcock,
Volunteer Project
Coordinator

Community Resource Inspires Community Stewardship: The East Branch Trail

Around Thanksgiving you may have heard some clucking as you walked along the East Branch in Chesterfield. It might have reminded you it was Turkey hunting season and you should be wearing your bright colored vests and hats. Though more than likely you would have joined in on the clucking as you joined friends and neighbors in the annual Gorge Aprés Gorge — a walk/run/bike family event from the Chesterfield Gorge extending 3 miles down along the East Branch Trail.

If you walked the trail that day or visited it at any other time, then you were likely to see one of your neighbors out enjoying the trail as well. We spent a lot of time out on the East Branch Trail this year, sponsoring volunteer trainings and trail

maintenance days. The beauty of the area and the value of the trail as a community resource has inspired several Trail Stewards to step forward and adopt on-going upkeep and maintenance of the trail. We supply the tools, they supply the hard-working hands, energy and enthusiasm!

We have also enlisted the help of an Eagle Scout to design and construct mile markers and destination signs, which we hope to install next Spring.



Volunteer surveying East Branch of Westfield River



Butterfly & Bee sharing sweetness

Neighbors Coming together for Conservation

A Riparian Conservation Grant Case Study

Huntington – For decades, the owner of a little haven on Norwich Hill cared for and loved his land – using it for haying, forestry and recreation. When the owner began to feel unable to continue his ownership, a group of friends and neighbors came together to assist financially due to their love of the site as well as desire to keep it available to the community rather than developed. Twelve years ago, the group formalized to make a more permanent covenant and placed the land into Chapter 61 usage.

After lobbying several agencies unsuccessfully to take over curatorship, the group wanted to make a donation of a Conservation Restriction (CR) in order to permanently preserve the open space for passive recreation and wildlife habitat. However, in order to donate a conservation restriction, costs for an appraisal and legal fees, as well as a monitoring fund, are needed. With a \$3000 grant from WRWSAC's Riparian Conservation fund in hand, the owner and neighbors plan to permanently protect the land under a conservation restriction sometime in 2010.

The Norwich Hill Wildlife Sanctuary is a 64.9 acre parcel on Cullen Hill Road in Huntington. It embodies several types of local habitats including open maintained fields, mature successive forest, feeder streams and 1,350 feet of riverbank along Pond Brook – a coldwater tributary to the East Branch of the Westfield River.

When completed, the Norwich Hill Wildlife Sanctuary conservation restriction (CR) will be held by the Hilltown Land Trust (HLT). HLT conserves active farmland and other working rural properties, native plant and wildlife habitats, local watersheds, and lands that preserve the scenic and rural character of the Hilltowns.

WRWSAC is delighted the Riparian Conservation Grant program is able to help these neighbors in their quest to conserve the land they love. We hope the 4 projects totaling 466 acres funded this past year will be successful in reaching their conservation goals and funds available this coming year will support similar projects in the region.

"Your grant program is a great aid to partners and an important factor in moving forward on-the-ground conservation work in the Westfield river basin."

Rob Warren, The Nature Conservancy, commenting on collaborative project to protect a tract along the West Branch



Volunteers receive instructions on how to install steps at Glendale Falls.