

WESTFIELD RIVER NOTES

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Dear Westfield River Friends,

In honor of the 15th Anniversary since the Westfield River's Wild & Scenic designation and 40th Anniversary of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, we had cake!



This cake by Semper Pie Bakery in Russell was enjoyed by all at the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Anniversary Celebration.

Not only did we get to eat cake, but we also welcomed exciting news from Congressman John Olver. The Westfield River will be receiving a \$100,000 federal appropriation through the Partnership Rivers Program to support projects along the Wild & Scenic Westfield River. This has been the culmination of many years of hard work by the members of the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee and our partner organizations. In order for the Westfield River to receive these funds, we had to have several things in place. Of utmost importance was an active and engaged group of people who work diligently to protect and preserve the remarkable resources of the Westfield River valley.

Further, we had to demonstrate a commitment by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and local communities to help administer the Wild & Scenic designation. Support has come in many forms, including services provided by Carrie Banks, Westfield River Wild & Scenic Coordinator with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Riverways Program in the Department of Fish and Game. Support from our member organizations, including the towns, planning commissions and conservation organizations, has also been important. Participation of over 65 Stream Team members also confirmed the dedication of our local volunteers.

We have a plan in place to put this money to good use and hope to highlight some of the projects and activities in our upcoming newsletter. In this issue, check out the question of the month to learn about the new volunteer water quality monitoring program – the Committee will be providing matching funds to purchase equipment and supplies for this important program.

~Robert Thompson, Chair
Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee

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CONGRESSMAN JOHN OLVER ANNOUNCED FUNDING FOR THE NATIONAL WILD & SCENIC WESTFIELD RIVER AS PART OF THE 15TH WILD & SCENIC ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Huntington, MA – On Monday, June 30th, members of the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee and Congressman John Olver gathered along the banks of the river to celebrate the 15th Anniversary of the Westfield River’s National Wild & Scenic designation and the 40th Anniversary of the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

During the event, Congressman John Olver announced a \$100,000 federal appropriation for the Westfield River through the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Program. These funds will support projects along the Wild & Scenic reaches of the Westfield River – including volunteer water quality monitoring, information and interpretative kiosks, Stream Team activities, trail improvements and extensions along the East Branch Trail, and other community projects.



“We can be quite certain the money will be well expended when you see the kind of activity, the scope and breadth of the organizations here,” remarked Congressman Olver. “What I’ve seen is all the communities well represented and activity that has gone on with enormous care and dedication to the ecology of the river. I want to congratulate all of you from the communities and organizations that have put so much of your time and effort into the development of this program.”



The National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act, signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on October 2, 1968, protects the free-flowing waters of many of our nation's most spectacular rivers. Forty years later, over 11,400 miles of 168 rivers in 38 states and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have been protected under the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System.

The Westfield River became Massachusetts’ first National Wild & Scenic River when forty-three miles were designated on November 2nd, 1993. Fifteen years later, the designation has expanded to encompass over 78 miles of the Westfield River’s three major tributaries and headwater streams.

“The Wild & Scenic designation and the protection of this beautiful river is important for all of us in the Hilltowns, in western Massachusetts and is significant to the Commonwealth as well as the nation,” remarked Bob Thompson, Chair of the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee. “Few rivers provide the habitat, beauty and opportunities of the Westfield River. The designation brings us all together to protect this outstanding river.”

As a state-administered Wild & Scenic River, the Westfield River is unique in that the management of the National Wild & Scenic designation is accomplished through locally-based and state protection. Since a mix of public and private lands border the designated reaches of the Westfield River, state and federal agencies, landowners, business owners, and other community members share responsibility for the Wild & Scenic River designation and management.



“Just as the designation is in perpetuity, we have to keep the partnerships sound and healthy in order to keep the river sound and healthy,” noted Jamie Fosburgh, National Park Service’s Northeast Rivers Program Manager. “That is what the Committee and everyone we see here today are doing – keeping that partnership healthy so the designation will be productive and healthy for the next generation.”

WILD & SCENIC QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

QUESTION: WHAT WATER QUALITY MONITORING OCCURS IN THE WESTFIELD RIVER BASIN? HOW DO I KNOW THE WATER IS SAFE TO SWIM IN?

ANSWER: While local groups and students at Westfield State College (WSC) have conducted sporadic samplings in the watershed and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) conducts concentrated sampling of many parameters at selected sites once every five years, no consistent data has been collected at specific sites at monthly intervals for consecutive years.

During the Fall of 2008 and Spring of 2009, the Westfield River Environmental Center (WREC) at WSC will launch a volunteer water quality monitoring program for the Westfield River watershed. The focus of the program will be to address water quality conditions including physical, chemical, and biological parameters. In the past year, a Steering Committee comprised of members from the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee and several other organizations developed a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and applied for funding to launch the program. Funds for the program have been secured through the 604(B) Grant Program with matching funds being provided by WRWSAC to purchase equipment and supplies for the program.

The 2001 MassDEP Water Quality Assessment Report states that several sections of the Westfield River and a number of its tributaries are impaired due to bacteria contamination from storm water runoff. Bacteria contamination has led these stretches of river to fail to meet designated uses such as primary (e.g. swimming) and secondary (e.g boating) contact recreation. In order to address this failure, bacteria sampling at targeted locations will be conducted to identify the sources of contamination. Several areas will be the prime focus of bacteria monitoring based on water quality data collected during prior studies and proximity of the bacteria contamination to public swimming areas. The five-Year Watershed Action Plan cites the Main Stem of the Westfield River in the vicinity of the two DCR state beaches (Windsor State Forest and Gardner State Park) as being highly impacted. So much so, that they have been closed to swimming. Following closure of Gardner State Park swimming area in 2006, MassDEP conducted targeted sampling to track a source upstream of the Gardner beach but was unsuccessful in determining a source of bacteria.



Water quality sampling has been sporadic in the watershed. In the next year, a volunteer water quality monitoring program will be launched.

Twenty (20) baseline sampling locations have been selected – seven of these are located along the Wild & Scenic reaches. There will be four sites on the East/Main Branch of the river: two near Windsor State Park beach, one at Gardner State Park beach, and one at the USGS Knightville Dam gage station. The Middle Branch site will be the USGS Goss Heights gage station, below the Littleville Dam and the West Branch site is at the USGS gage station in Huntington. There will be one site on the main branch at the rest area opposite the Huntington Health Center.

Data gathered during the project and results will be posted on the <http://envcenter.wsc.ma.edu/water-quality-monitoring>. The results of the project will also be presented at the annual meeting of the Westfield River Watershed Association and the Westfield River Symposium.

In Massachusetts, municipal Boards of Health (BOH) are responsible for insuring monitoring occurs at swimming areas which are either “public” or “semi-public,” i.e. swimming areas associated with hotels, campgrounds, apartment or condominium complexes, country clubs, camps or other establishments. Informal river access areas do not fall under these regulations. However, some BOH will sample these locations if water quality problems are suspected.

Bacteriological monitoring should occur within five days of opening of the bathing season and at least weekly during the bathing season. For freshwater, indicator organisms can either be E. Coli or Enterococci and BOHs can sample for either. No single sample of E. coli should exceed 235 colonies per 100 ml (or the geometric mean of the most recent five E. Coli samples should not be greater than 126 colonies per 100 ml). In the case of Enterococci, no single sample should exceed 61 colonies per 100 ml (or the geometric mean of the most recent five Enterococci samples should not exceed 33 colonies per 100 ml).

When water quality samples exceed standards, then the BOH is responsible for immediately posting signs warning swimmers of swimming closures. These signs should contain the reason for the closure, the date of the posting and the name telephone number of the BOH.

UPCOMING EVENTS

WESTFIELD RIVER WILD & SCENIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WILD & SCENIC MONTHLY MEETING: Thursday, September 11th from 6:30-8:30pm at a location to be determined.

Our monthly meetings are held, on a rotating basis, in one of the Wild & Scenic Communities. All our meetings are open to the public and everyone is welcome. Meeting agendas are available a week before the scheduled meeting date. Contact (413) 268-3129 or river_banks@hotmail.com for more details.

EVENTS SPONSORED BY WESTFIELD RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION:

1955 Flood Documentary DVD: The Little Black Dog Gallery, in partnership with WRWA (the Westfield River Watershed Association), will sell DVD's of *Five Feet and Rising: The Flood of '55*. This 28-minute documentary produced by Jack Hayward of Hayward Communications and co-produced by Mark Saint Jean of Westfield State College in cooperation with WRWA, recounts the devastating Westfield River floods of August 1955. The film includes a number of interviews with Westfield residents recalling their experiences of the 1955 event - the largest recorded flood in Westfield's history. The Little Black Dog Gallery, located at 16 Union St. in Westfield, is open from 10 - 5 on Monday through Saturday and from noon to 5 on Sunday. Non-profit organizations can obtain free copies of the DVD by contacting Kathy Meyer at 568-4252.

Westfield River Exhibit: WRWA partnered with The Pilgrim Candle Marketplace in Westfield in the creation of an exciting new Westfield River exhibit, which was unveiled on November 24 and will be available for viewing afterwards during The Pilgrim Candle Marketplace's business hours of **M-F 10-5 and weekends from 12-5**. The Pilgrim Candle Marketplace renovated unused space and developed it into a large exhibit highlighting the history of the area, celebrating the Westfield River in all its wild and scenic glory, and depicting the Great River Bridge Project in its various stages of construction. The display is divided into the Past, Present and Future. The Past features historic photos and drawings of the river and Westfield. The Present includes a large poster on the Westfield River highlighting its Wild and Scenic features. The Future includes architectural drawings and models of the Great River Bridge. WRWA funded the printing of the Present poster, which is a reprint of a display posted in a kiosk on Route 20 in Huntington.

Hike Gobble Mountain: Gobble Mountain is a Nature Conservancy Property in the town of Chester. As the name implies, there will be a climb and it can be a bit steep at times. Hence the reason for the early meeting time. The trail, an old road really, will allow us to wind our way up the mountainside. Eventually we'll level out and find ourselves in amongst some unusual rock cliff. After a touch over one mile, we will crest out at the site of an old fire tower. The views from the top of the Westfield River and its watershed are well worth the effort of the climb. Bring along a snack, plenty of water, binoculars. Dress for the weather and you may want to wear solid hiking shoes. It can be a bit rocky in places. Meet at the Chester Elementary School on Middlefield Road at 8:00 a.m. on **Saturday, Aug 23** (expect to be back by noon). Please call [Tom Condon](tel:413-564-0895) (413-564-0895) to sign up so that you can be contacted if weather conditions force a cancellation.

EVENTS SPONSORED BY THE HIGHLAND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE:

To register for HCI-sponsored events or for more information about any of the events listed, contact HCI at 413/268-8219 or email highlands@ttor.org

I Spy! (ages 3-9)

Saturday and Sunday, Through Columbus Day | 1PM - 5PM

Bryant Homestead, Cummington 413.532.1631 x13

Be a detective! Discover the Homestead's secrets on this self-guided walk using a hands-on "spy pack." Members: Child \$4. Nonmembers: Child \$6. Special family rate. All children must be accompanied by an adult.

Boreal Forest Fauna and Flora Trek

Sunday, August 10 | 10 AM – 1 PM

Notchview Reservation, Windsor 413 684-0148

Experience the “Berkshire Plateau” on a moderate hike in a boreal forest and learn about the unique flora of this forest type rarely seen in Massachusetts.

Dam Day Two at the Bryant Homestead

Saturday, August 16 | 9AM- 12PM

Bryant Homestead, Cummington

Volunteer to build a number of small dams to stop erosion.

Gratefully FREE to all. Please register by calling 413.532.1632 x13

Historical Pioneers of the Highlands Forest Industries

Saturday, September 13th | 10AM- 12:30PM | Free and open to all

Notchview Reservation, Windsor 413.268.8219

Forests once fueled local industry, from charcoal production to glassmaking. Walk with us to see the remains and hear the stories of these important industries.



Berkshire Hikers Full “Harvest Moon” Hike at Notchview

Sunday September 14 | 7:30PM-10PM

Notchview Reservation, Windsor, 413.532.1631 x13

Experience Notchview at dusk on this early fall, moderate full moon trek. Hear the sounds of the forest as night settles in and watch the full moon rise over Sawmill Field. Bring a headlamp/flashlight. The Trustees of Reservations members and Windsor residents free, Nonmembers adult \$5, children 10 and up \$3. Directions provided upon registration.

Backcountry Trek at Notchview
Sunday September 28 | 10AM-1PM

Notchview Reservation, Windsor, 413.532.1631 x13

Hike the rugged backcountry of Notchview on and off the trail. Look for cellar holes and other signs of the abandoned homesteads throughout the reservation on this 4-mile strenuous hike. The Trustees of Reservations members and Windsor residents free, Nonmembers \$5.

Bryant's Big Trees

Saturday, October 4th | 10AM – 1PM

William Cullen Bryant Homestead, Cummington Pre-registration required. 413.269.8219

Walk among ancient giants on the Rivulet Trail with old-growth forest expert Bob Leverett as your guide.

Members: Adult/Child \$4: Family \$12.

Non-Members: Adult/Child \$6: Family \$15.

Forest Conservation Zoning

Wednesday, October 15th | 7PM- 9PM | *Free and open to all*

Chesterfield Senior Center, Chesterfield 413.268.8219

A groundbreaking approach to zoning aims to protect a town's rural character and the health of its forests. Find out how the town of Shutesbury, MA is leading the way.

We would love to hear about your events and activities in the Westfield River Watershed. Contact Westfield_River_Notes@hotmail.com to list your events.

Membership of the Committee

Town of Becket VACANT, Mercedes Gallagher alternate (Treasurer)

Town of Chester Robert Thompson (Chair), Dave Pierce alternate

Town of Chesterfield Matt Barron, Denise Cormier alternate

Town of Cummington VACANT, Judy Moore alternate

Town of Huntington Jeff Penn (Vice-Chair), Karen Vowerk alternate

Town of Middlefield Carl Lafreniere, John Richardson alternate

Town of Savoy VACANT

Town of Washington Rida Vilner

Town of Windsor Jim Caffrey (Secretary), Deborah Balmuth alternate

Town of Worthington Helen Sharron Pollard, Jim Dodge alternate

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Joan Kimball, Jennifer Howard alternate

National Park Service Liz Lacy, Jamie Fosburgh alternate

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Chris Curtis, Anne Capra alternate

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Melissa Jette, Gale LaBelle alternate

Trustees of Reservations Jocelyn Forbush, Wendy Sweetser alternate

Westfield River Watershed Association VACANT

Please feel free to pass this along to other friends of the Westfield River. To subscribe to Westfield RiverNotes send an email to Westfield_RiverNotes@hotmail.com.