



MERRIMACK RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL, INC.
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The Voice of the Merrimack

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A WORD FROM THE ED



What an amazing year so far! Our office is completely bustling with activity and transitions, which is why this issue is double the size of previous issues. We hope you enjoy it!

Inside this edition you will see that we have two new employees. We said goodbye to Kimberly Biedermann, our Education and Monitoring Coordinator, who moved back to Wisconsin to be closer to her family. We also said goodbye to Dahnne Tran, our Membership Coordinator, who is going to Wellesley College in the fall. Both of these outstanding employees trained their replacements and will be missed. Look for information on their replacements inside.

This edition also talks about the MAPP Project. This amazing project is a landmark venture for this organization and the watershed. MRWC is monitoring the Merrimack River in Massachusetts, which has not been done consistently by any state or federal authority in over a decade. The board and I are very proud of this accomplishment, and we hope to continue it through the generous donations of our members. You make this project possible.

Thank you for your continued support!
Christine Tabak, Executive Director

RIVER NOTES

Gwen Whitbeck
MRWC Director & Paddling Program Co-ordinator

As you read this newsletter, our 2007 paddling season will be coming to an end. It's also the time of year we start working on the 2008 schedule.

The 2007 paddling season got off to a successful start even though we had encountered flooding on many of our rivers and streams. Somehow, the rivers dropped to a safer level just in time to allow us to continue with our schedule as planned.

Our first couple of trips normally require wetsuits/drysuits and are aimed more at the whitewater community. The higher water certainly added to the enjoyment on the Rte 31 section of the Souhegan River. The water level on this particular section drops so quickly in the spring that the location of the trip has had to be moved in previous years.

If you plan on joining us next year we do ask that you have some paddling experience and are self-sufficient. Even though we paddle at a leisurely pace we need everyone to keep up. Trip leaders are there to guide the trip and to see that everything runs smoothly. Although they may have the expertise, they are not in the position to offer involved training.

All of our trips are offered free to the public, however membership is the key ingredient that keeps them going. If you aren't a member please join us both on and off the river. You'll automatically receive a paddling brochure at the beginning of the season and newsletters provided by the MRWC office throughout the year informing you of the work being done on and around the Merrimack.

In ending, I'd like to personally thank each of the trip leaders for their valuable time, dedication and effort they put into making their trips, as well as this program, a success. Each trip leader brings an individual approach and expertise to their trip(s) making them enjoyable to all participants. Because of them, we not only increased our membership but have met numerous new friends whom we hope to see on the rivers for years to come.

See you on the river.



Welcome New Staff!

The MRWC would like to extend a warm welcome to two new staff members.



Tracie Sales
Water Resources Manager
Tracie handles the day-to-day management of the Merrimack River Water Quality MAPP (Monitoring, Analyzing, Protecting and Promoting) Project with a background in Conservation Biology and experience in project management and data analysis. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Physics from Wellesley College and an MBA from Babson College.

Currently, Tracie is enrolled in the Environmental Studies Master's Degree program at Antioch University New England, where she has only a thesis to complete before graduating. Before joining the MRWC, Tracie led intern data collection teams, one working in western Massachusetts state forests and the other in wildfire prone areas of western New Mexico. A resident of New England for over two decades, Tracie is new to the Merrimack River region but is excited to learn all there is about this area.



Murielle Georges
Membership Coordinator
Murielle assists with database management and recruiting more membership support for the MRWC. She is a recent graduate of Lowell High School and will be attending UMass Lowell in the fall of 2007 with a special interest in Social Sciences. Working for the MRWC has been an

enjoyable experience for Murielle because she believes in working towards a worthy cause, such as charities and the environment. Outside of work and school, Murielle is also involved with her church, where everyone works together to send money and food to the needy inhabitants of Haiti.

Membership

While MRWC is making a direct impact on the river, it is our members that make the biggest ripple. The funding we receive from our members enables us to monitor the river, educate people on the importance of water cleanliness, work with local communities to prevent contamination, and promote a healthy water quality. Projects supported by member funds are what make membership so important. Without the sponsorship of our members we would not be able to protect the water quality in our watershed, something that is vital to the sustainability of our homes, businesses and lives. For more information, check us out on the web at <http://www.merrimack.org>.

MAPP PROJECT

Merrimack River Watershed Council, Inc. (MRWC) is pleased to announce that it has received a financial boost with a \$45,000 grant from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust (the Trust). This funding will enable MRWC to continue and further its new volunteer water quality monitoring program.

The project is an extension of the MRWC Volunteer Environmental Monitoring Network (VEMN) introduced in the Fall 2006 Mid-stream News (www.merrimack.org/mrwc/news/) and is entitled the *Merrimack River Water Quality Monitoring, Analyzing, Protecting, and Promoting (MAPP) Project*. Monitoring is vital to gathering baseline data about the quality of water. We will be Analyzing the data gathered to determine the sources of pollution. Once these sources of pollution are discovered, we will work toward Protecting the Merrimack River by forming public and private partnerships to reduce, if not cease, these sources of pollution. We will be Promoting a healthy ecosystem through education and outreach to various watershed stakeholders.

According to Trust Executive Director Robbin Peach, the Trust will provide over \$1.5 million in grants to over 50 organizations this year, thanks to motorists who choose to purchase one of the Trust's specialty license plates.



"Trust plates, including our signature Whale Plate, are the only specialty plates that exclusively fund environmental initiatives," said Peach. Half of the registry fee for each Trust plate is donated to the Trust to fund water-focused environmental education and protection programs.

To date, the MAPP project has been focusing on Monitoring. We have acquired four YSI 556 multi-probe meters, five Secchi disks and four Global Positioning System (GPS) units as a result of a grant from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) and equipment donations from the EPA. These tools, along with the grant MRWC has received from the Trust, are being used by our 45 recently trained volunteers to collect data such as water temperature, conductivity, salinity, pH and clarity at predetermined locations on the river. River monitoring teams are also collecting water samples for bacteria testing by the EPA. One section of the river, between the New Hampshire border and the Pawtucket Dam in Lowell, has already begun weekly monitoring and monthly water sampling, while monitoring in the other three sections is now getting underway. Our goal is to have 16 teams of three people (one motor boat operator and two samplers) who can monitor a section of the river once a month through October.

In the fall we will begin step two of the project, data Analysis. Based on our discoveries, we will modify some of our 2008 monitoring locations on the Merrimack River to focus on hotspots. As we learn more about the sources of pollution on the river, we will be able to tackle the last two portions of our project, Protecting the river and Promoting the river's health.

Former Boston television meteorologist and active environmentalist, Bruce Schwoegler, is an avid supporter of the Massachusetts Environmental Trust. "Trust funding enables organizations from Cape Cod to the Berkshires to tackle critical water-related issues that affect us all," said Schwoegler. "The health and welfare of every living being is dependent on clean waterways and related ecosystems. This inextricable link within our environment is extremely important, and the Trust is offering everyone an easy opportunity to get involved and make a significant difference in the

preservation of the Commonwealth's water resources." Information about the Trust, the programs it supports, and the specialty license plate offerings can be found at www.MassEnvironmentalTrust.org.

If you would like more information about the MAPP project, or are interested in helping us collect data, please contact Tracie Sales at 978-275-0120 ext. 13 or via e-mail at tsales@merrimack.org.

REMEMBERING FRIENDS

Gwen Whitbeck

Normally my contributions to our newsletter consist of fun, future activities on our rivers. However, there are times when other news should be shared. The spring of 2007 brought great sadness to many of us. Two of our very good friends and members of the MRWC have, unfortunately, passed on.

Bill Valentine, 6/1/47 – 3/25/07

Bill was a major contributor to the MRWC for over 14 years and will be greatly missed now and in years to come. His dedication as a trip leader and as the Council's treasurer has left a void that will be extremely difficult to fill.

Some of us can remember the first trip Bill joined us on. He wasn't the trip leader nor was he active with the organization, but assistance was needed redirecting traffic to the correct put-in location. Bill directed traffic that day and opened a door that would lead to years of hard work for the MRWC which became a major part of his life. Many of our paddling partners and trip leaders are the result of Bill's love of our rivers. He had a willingness, desire, and determination to pass this love on.



Paul Fisher, 4/20/21 - 5/5/07

Although Paul hadn't been active for the past few years due to health problems, many of you will remember seeing him on our canoe and kayak trips with his beautiful hand-made blue kayak.



Paul was extremely active when the MRWC had its Southern NH Chapter, never missing a monthly meeting and always available to enthusiastically serve on any committee. Ready to paddle at a moments' notice, he'd be sure to bring along his sense of humor. His love and concern for our watershed was contagious. We are thankful to him for many years of leading trips and for introducing us to some of his favorite rivers.

Both of these men have played an important role in the MRWC's continued growth. We will feel the void, but can be thankful that our paths crossed and that we had an opportunity to share so many good times. Their friendship has made our lives richer and our memories will be lasting. Our hearts go out to their families and friends. We wish them the strength to get through their difficult times and, though their road might be sad, we hope they take comfort in knowing it is shared by many.

OUR DAY ON THE BOAT

Dahnie Tran & Murielle Georges

On the morning of July 19th, two young interns from the MRWC boarded on a boat ride around the Merrimack River in Lowell, MA with the National Park Service and volunteers of the Student Conservation Association (SCA). Dahnie Tran and Murielle Georges were your typical teenagers eager to learn everything about what made the river such a vital part of everyone's lives.

The point of this trip was to show the public how important it was to monitor and examine a river. Our organization has taken on this role because, based on past research, there has not been any consistent testing done or data collected on the Merrimack River in the last ten years. The National Park Service decided to team up with our organization because we are part of one community and have one shared mission – to preserve a way of life. In this case, it is the health of our rivers.

The Merrimack River has played a crucial role in people's lives for hundreds of years. It is still used today for our mills, recreation, swimming, drinking water and other food sources. Unfortunately, the river sometimes contains harmful chemicals, waste products and other pollutants. Some of these come from mercury that precipitates into the water from the rain or power plants that burn coal which drifts in the air and falls into our streams. Others come from effluents and storm water that flow into the river. However, monitoring on a regular basis will keep us on top of potential problems, which will help us keep our rivers clean and healthy for our enjoyment and survival.

We started off our journey at the Swamp Locks in Lowell and continued down the river. Two rangers from National Park Service, Cathy Neveux and William Morton, used MRWC monitoring equipment, funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, to test the water. Water monitoring is a form of standardized testing that is EPA-approved and is performed the same way each time with a reliable reading. It is nearly impossible to go to the exact same place to test the water, but if you try to get to the same spot each time, you'll soon see a trend. We were able to accomplish this by using a Global Positioning System (GPS) device, which is not exactly precise, but is very close when trying to test in the same vicinity. Testing the water is done about once a week, which allows us to see a trend in the river. While examining the color of the water, we noticed that it was not clear, like the water that we normally drink or bathe in, but it was a shade of a really dark green that was just a "wee bit acidic," noted Ranger William Morton. Although the water was not dangerous, we knew that the river was not at its best potential. We ended our journey at Stony Brook and rode back to Swamp Locks, wondering what we can do to help change the river's state back to its natural form.

Without science, testing and research, no one will take our rivers seriously. Local citizens need to realize that by not protecting these rivers, we are jeopardizing our ability to lead a happy, healthy life. That is why we need everyone's help in this mission to preserve and protect the Merrimack River and its watershed. You can help today by becoming a member, giving a donation beyond your membership or donating your time to volunteer. Everything we do now can shape the future of the Merrimack River and the rest of its watershed.



Announcements

GoodSearch is Good News for the Council

What if the Merrimack River Watershed Council, Inc. earned a penny every time you searched the Internet? Well, now we can! GoodSearch.com is a new search engine that donates half its revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. You use it just as you would any search engine, and it's powered by Yahoo!, so you get great results.

Just go to www.goodsearch.com and be sure to enter "Merrimack River Watershed Council" as the charity you want to support. Just 500 of us searching four times a day will raise about \$7300 in a year without anyone spending a dime! And, be sure to spread the word!

Emails.....

Do you have an email address? We would sure like to know it! You can also let us know if you would like to help us reduce paper waster and get Mid-Stream News, renewal notices, and other news via email. Let us know your preference.

Check the Website!

Check us out at www.merrimack.org. You'll find a listing of all trips being offered this season. And.... did you know that you can now renew or donate online!

THE ORGANIC COW AND EARTH SHARE OF NEW ENGLAND CONTINUE SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

Start Clipping!

Over the past five years through the Clip for a Clean New England program, Organic Cow has received thousands of milk carton clips from people like you who care about the environment. Please keep clipping. The Organic Cow will donate .50 cents for every strip you send in! That added up to \$100,000 for Earth Share of New England members like the Merrimack River Watershed Council last year, and more this year.



The more you clip, the more you can contribute to organizations that further environmental education, prevent of global warming, conserve natural resources, preserve family farms and promote animal welfare. To find out about their products, and organic dairy farming, visit www.theorganiccow.com.

Earth Share of New England was established in 1992 to foster environmental philanthropy through public education and workplace giving. Its membership consists of local, national and international environmental nonprofit organizations, including the Merrimack River Watershed Council, dedicated to a wide variety of issues, from fighting global warming and protecting clean water and air to preserving open space, promoting clean energy, strengthening environmental education, saving endangered species and providing safe, enjoyable outdoor recreation. For more information about Earth Share of New England, or to learn about encouraging your employer to host a workplace giving campaign, visit the site at www.greenfornewengland.org or contact nora@earthshare.org.