

PARKER RIVER CURRENTS

May 2011

Helping PRCWA Hands Needed for This Cause

HEADLINES

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Background -Last year PRCWA wrote a letter to Massachusetts Preservation in connection with establishing a four acre open space buffer on the backside of the Newbury Lower Green, just before the Route 1A Bridge over the Parker River. These four acres, under a conservation restriction held by Essex County Greenbelt, will provide an open space buffer between the Green and the soon to be housing development on the former Bushee estate abutting the Green. It would also visually protect the colonial ambiance of the Lower Green

Environmental benefits gained by maintaining this buffer area as open space are:

- 1.Continuing natural vegetation which filters runoff to the Parker River.
- 2.Removing the threat of increasing runoff pollution and decreasing groundwater recharge from impervious surfaces associated with development.
- 3.Maintaining habitat protection for grassland bird species which are in serious decline.
- 4.Providing continuity as a wildlife corridor connection to the River.

Making the Project a Success - Jim Roy and other PRCWA members on the Save the Lower Green Committee are more than halfway towards raising the \$500,000 needed to purchase the four acres. They must raise the remainder by September 1 or these acres will also be subdivided and built on, diminishing this historical landscape and losing the ecological benefit of the open space.

On June 11-12 the Committee is having a **Heritage Fair on the Green.** Planning is well under way - there will be booths, demonstrations, children's games and events, re-enactors, animals, bake sales, and a silent auction. The Committee hopes to raise about \$20,000 ... **BUT help is needed!** Volunteers are needed to run the gate and parking, make goodies for the bake sale, take tickets, etc. There are lots of "jobs" to fill.

Help to make the fair a success. To volunteer please call our machine at 978/255-2639 and leave your name and return phone number. Someone will get back to you by the end of the month.

PLEASE HELP - IT'S NOW OR NEVER FOR THE GREEN!

Volunteers Needed for Water Quality Monitor

PRCWA Water Quality Monitoring Program needs two volunteers for sites in Georgetown. A description of what this involves is described below.

1. Water Quality Monitors take a water sample at the same designated place on the 4th Tuesday of each month, April through November.
2. The sample can be taken any time after daybreak and takes about 1/2 hour.
3. When you take the water sample, some quick on-site tests are done.
4. Take the sample back to the PRCWA office by 9 AM so the WQM coordinator (Lynette Leka) can take it to the lab and complete the rest of the tests.
5. No experience needed and training is provided.

A sub can be arranged if we know ahead of time that a volunteer can't do their site on the sampling day.

If you are interested in learning more about being a water quality monitor please contact the coordinator Lynette Leka lynette.leka@yahoo.com or leave a message on the office phone machine 978-462-2551



DRUGS IN THE WATERWAYS

Most households have a box somewhere filled with old, unused, perhaps outdated drugs. What are you to do with these? Until recently, most municipalities told you to flush the pills down the toilet, but no one was concerned about the environmental impacts associated with this practice.

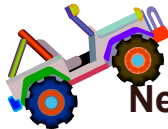
What happens when you flush medications? The wastewater treatment center isn't set up to filter out these drugs, so they end up in our waterways. The USGS did a sampling of waterways across the country and found a disturbing number of drugs and other pollutants: steroids, non-prescription medications, hormones as well as other products such as plasticizers, fire retardants, insect repellent and detergents.

Recently many towns sponsored "take back old prescription drug" events. Residents were encouraged to dispose of them at police stations and other facilities. In Massachusetts 12,354 pounds of unwanted drugs were collected at 173 drop-off sites across the State at the most recent collection date. Most local police departments can tell you the location of drop-off boxes for your community. The drugs collected will be incinerated by waste management companies that are cooperating with this important effort. Anyone can drop off unwanted medications in Newburyport 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the drop off box in the lobby of the police station on Green Street. This is a step in the right direction to resolving the problem of unwanted drugs finding their way into our waterways.

Anyone Can Contribute Data to the Turtle Roadkill Study

Each year, thousands of turtles are killed on highways in Massachusetts as they move between wetlands to seek nest sites. Turtle protection has been an especially important part of PRCWA's work. For the second year PRCWA will participate with the Mass. Dept of Transportation survey to identify and monitor problem road crossings for turtles. The Mass DOT program is a long-term and multifaceted effort to minimize the impact of the existing roads on rare and nongame wildlife, while improving highway safety.

A PRCWA survey team has been organized to monitor certain roads in the watershed with known high turtle fatalities. They will record their observations directly to the State's website www.linkinglandscapes.info. However, everyone is encouraged to submit information on road kill hotspots at this link. The website provides an opportunity to contribute data and read more about the proactive efforts to protect rare wildlife, via the links on the website. It has four components: (1) a statewide wildlife road kill database, which allows the public to document wildlife road kill observations through an online mapping interface; (2) a study that identifies turtle road-crossing "hotspots," and prioritizes sites for transportation infrastructure improvements; (3) a database that allows the public to document the migration routes of amphibians across roadways. This project is a wonderful example of Citizen Science – we hope many PRCWA members will check out the website and contribute.



New Rules for Off Highway Vehicles

Imagine you are a rare species female turtle making your way to a nesting area when suddenly an Off Road vehicle, on an illegal trail, bears down on you. This is a problem in several areas of our watershed where PRCWA is conducting turtle research on rare turtle species.

Illegal riding of OHVs causes tremendous damage across the state each year. Conservation areas are often protected with public dollars for wildlife habitat or their natural beauty. While some areas have designated trails, illegal riding is a widespread problem. Locally, PRCWA is working with Town officials and State environmental enforcement officers to address this problem. We are appreciative of their help with this very troublesome issue.

In 2010 the State Legislature passed **An Act Regulating The Use Of Off-Highway And Recreation Vehicles**. The new law strengthened requirements for registration of all OHVs, increased penalties for illegal riding on public or private lands, and created new education requirements for young riders. It also established a dedicated fund for fees and fines to be applied to support enforcement and the acquisition and maintenance of legal trails.

LYME DISEASE

Essex County has a high rate of Lyme disease which is caused by bacteria transmitted by the bite of a deer tick. Adult deer ticks are about as big as a sesame seed, but nymph deer ticks are as small as a poppy seed. Deer ticks must remain attached for 12 - 24 hours for the bacteria to transmit. Deer ticks are found in grassy locations and woodland, shrubby, and brushy areas with lots of fallen leaves, especially in summer, but even on warmer days of winter. Deer ticks seek areas where there is some moisture,

Victims of deer tick bites usually have a slowly-spreading circular, red, bull's-eye-shaped rash where the tick attached, but not always. Other early symptoms such as fever, headaches, a stiff neck, joint and muscle pain, and severe fatigue are easily confused with illnesses such as flu. In early stages without a recognizable bulls-eye rash, diagnosis is difficult. Lyme disease may be cured by early diagnosis with appropriate antibiotic treatment, but it may persist in the human body for years, if not properly treated.

Avoiding a Bite

- Wear light colored clothes and wear long pants and shirt.
- Tuck pants into socks. Tuck shirt into pants.
- Wear a tight fitting shirt if possible to create a barrier.
- Use 20 -30% insect repellent with DEET.
- Do a "tick check" after being in tick prone areas. Especially check armpits, scalp and groin areas. Remove clothes and wash in hot water.
- Pets can bring ticks into a home where they can survive for a few days. Groom your pets and inspect them daily.

Tick Removal

- Put the tweezers close to the skin where the mouthparts are attached and carefully pull straight back. Take your time.
- Do not use your bare hands to remove the tick. Do not squeeze the tick's abdomen or you may inject more bacteria into the site.
- Clean the area with alcohol, or apply an antibiotic cream and wash your hands..
- Call your doctor.

Size comparison for lyme disease carrying deer tick





Pest Alert: ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE

Asian Longhorned Beetle ("ALB") is an invasive wood-boring pest that was discovered in Worcester, MA in August 2008 and in Boston in July 2010. ALB attacks maple, birch, elm, willow and other hardwoods, making it a huge threat to the trees that grow in our parks and along every street. This pest also puts the livelihood of our state's forests as well as our nursery and maple syrup industries at risk.

ALB spreads through the transport of firewood or logs from infested areas. Once a tree is infested with ALB, there is no cure - it must be cut down.

Help protect your community from this invasive pest:

- Check trees for exit holes that are perfectly round and smooth, about 1/2 inch in diameter.
- In the summer, look for shiny black beetles, about 1 inch long, with bright white dots and long, banded antennae.
- If you think you see ALB or ALB tree damage, report it at <http://massnrc.org/pests/alb> or call toll-free: 1-866-702-9938

Helpful Websites:

- Mass. ALB Cooperative Eradication Program:
<http://massnrc.org/pests/alb>
- ALB Media/Outreach Info:
<http://massnrc.org/pests/alb/albmedia.htm>
- USDA ALB Info:
<http://beetlebusters.info>



<http://mass.gov/agr>



Political Corner



It has been a little over 42 years since a river caught fire in Cleveland due to generations of industrial waste fouling the Ohio basin. The Cuyahoga River fire was, for many, the impetus that finally compelled people to launch the environmental movement against an industry that was flagrantly polluting our rivers and water supplies. Activist and Folk singer Pete Seeger would sail his boat, *Clearwater*, up and down the Hudson with the message that the government needed to act to clean up the mess it had helped create. "*This Land is YOUR Land*" he would sing and the people at his concerts would echo, "*This land is MY Land.*"

The government finally started paying attention. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created and the Clean Water Act was passed in 1972. The nation would begin the long process of finally making those liable for polluting our coasts and inland wetlands, responsible for its restoration. The Parker River Clean Water Association salutes our members who have played an important role in the preservation and restoration of our watershed and ecosystems.



Cuyahoga River Photo – Cleveland Plain Dealer

Your letters to the EPA in support of the new storm water permits, called MS4s have been successful! The new permit will have effective preventative measures in treating contaminated storm water before it enters our water bodies. On another front, PRCWA members should be proud to know that they sent in over 10 percent of the postcards to the New England Fisheries Council promoting "Honest Bycatch" of river herring, according to the Herring Alliance.

Despite our efforts, the environmental movement is under attack. National groups and special interest lobbyists are determined to gut or eliminate the EPA. The term 'backsliding' is often heard from our colleagues at the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance in regards to the issue of Safe Yield (SY), the legal standard in determining how much water can be withdrawn from a well source. Currently, state agencies, which are two decades tardy in determining SY, are considering removing environmental factors as a condition in determining SY, leaving many to question then, "safe for whom?" Their decision is scheduled to be handed down in June, and will strongly influence new water withdrawal permits for cities and towns that will remain in effect for the next 20 years!

Also of grave concern are skyrocketing CO2 levels in the atmosphere that are likely to cause rising sea levels, which threaten our coast and the Great Marsh. See <http://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/history.html>, and ask yourself, what kind of legacy we are leaving for our grandchildren?

The Board of PRCWA remains ever diligent in protecting our wonderful but sensitive natural resources in the Parker River watershed, and we will continue to keep our members informed of the efforts taking place at the federal, state and local levels. We must not backslide to an era that led to this degradation. Instead, we should honor those who started America's environmental movement by stepping into their shoes and taking action. After all, *this land was made for you and me too!*

Music to My Ears



Dear Friends and Members,

A few weeks ago Norm and I were eating dinner in a local restaurant when a State environmental worker who has been involved with several PRCWA projects came in with her husband. As she introduced us she said, "These people are with Parker River Clean Water – they are one of our best watershed groups. They focus on the really important things and get the job done." What a rush of pride I felt for our organization – small, all volunteer, but highly regarded by professional environmental people who come in contact with many nonprofit organizations similar to PRCWA. It tells me that we are accomplishing the goals of the organization and leaving our mark. I say this over and over, but it's true – it wouldn't be happening without you and your support. Your gifts and membership help with our projects and the expenses needed to keep our doors open. Thank you so very much.

Our spring programs are getting under way – Water Quality Monitors have taken the first water sampling; we partnered with the local Trout Unlimited chapter on a Mill River clean up; boaters paddled the upper Parker River; Fish counters have been at work tallying herring at the Central Street fish ladder – our data was very helpful in persuading the New England Fishery Management Council to include a study for better monitoring of herring bycatch by large corporate midwater trawlers; and the turtle roadkill survey will begin in May.

Finally, our February Flatbread Fundraiser was a tasty success with music by our own Nick Hurlin and Fiddlers' Loft.

In September, the Little River Nature Trail will be a featured event for the Essex County National Heritage Trails and Sails events. We NEED volunteers to help with the Sign Garden at the head of the trail and donations of plants. Please contact Jerry Mullins indyjerry@hotmail.com or call the PRCWA office 978-462-2551 and leave a message. We want to showcase the gardens for visitors.

Thanks so much for all your help and support.

Best,
Marlene Schroeder, President

PS – Don't forget to volunteer for the Lower Green project mentioned on page one.

Parker River Currents

Membership Dues - It's That time!

Yes, it IS TIME to RENEW your membership, or JOIN the Parker River Clean Water Association. You are on our mailing list because we believe that you are interested in what we are doing – and have participated with us in some of our programs – or have attended one of our annual meetings. Please use the form below to return with your contribution - - and THANKS!

Please mail to: PRCWA, PO Box 798, Byfield, MA 01922

Name: _____
Address: _____

Email: _____
Phone: _____

_____ \$15 Individual
_____ \$25 Family:
_____ #Adults ____ #Children ____
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