

PARKER RIVER CURRENTS

APRIL 14, 2018

SAVE THE DATE!!

PARKER RIVER CLEAN WATER ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

HEADLINES

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Please mark the date for our annual meeting!

Michael Piantedosi will be presenting New England Wild Flower Society's (NEWFS) role in the region, and in particular in areas in proximity to the Parker River Watershed. NEWFS works with restoration and resiliency projects ranging from dam removals to salt marsh plantings. Michael will also discuss how the home gardener can take action in their own gardens and in their community, especially in and around the coastal communities of New England

Michael Piantedosi is the Seed Bank Coordinator of New England Wild Flower Society and is currently working with Seeds of Success (SOS), a native seed collection program led by the Bureau of Land Management. SOS collects wildland native seed for research, development, germplasm conservation and ecosystem restoration.

www.parker-river.org

PRCWA is very fortunate to have this well-known authority on native gardening as the keynote speaker at our annual meeting on Saturday, April 14, 1:30-4:00, at the Newbury Library on Lunt Street in Byfield, exit 55 off Rt. 95, Central Street west a short distance to Lunt Street.

The annual meeting will begin with reports and reviews of our projects this year, followed by refreshments, the key note speaker, and a question time to speak with Michael. Be sure to mark your calendar for April 14th at 1:30 PM. We look forward to seeing you then!

Little River News

Many years back, an ad-hoc group in Newburyport, Citizens for Environmental Balance, conceived the idea of a nature trail through a tract of land that MassDOT donated to the City. Parker River Clean Water Association, as a 501(c)3, working with the Conservation Commission helped it become a reality. This area included one of the very sensitive headwaters of the Parker River Watershed and suffered from a lot of urban pressures contributing to erosion, pollution and flooding resulting in property damage downriver.

The city has spent millions to protect this area outright buying the land or working with property owners to enact conservation easements. Yet most of the area was not monitored and was largely forgotten. A dire warning was ever present, "If you don't use it, you will lose it." It wouldn't be long before the citizens under pressure from developers and financial needs, would forget why they protected this land and it would be lost.

To make sure the land stays protected and to use it as an educational tool, PRCWA has expanded the trail system into five paths each with a parking area and instructional signage. Working with the Conservation Commission, the Community Preservation Committee and the Essex National Heritage Commission, kiosks were installed to educate the public on the vernal pools, wetlands and wildlife that inhabits the area. The Boy Scouts and PRCWA volunteers have built bog bridges to protect vernal pools and wetlands along the Little River Trails.

Tropic Star Development has established a five-car trail head behind the new CVS and gas station on Storey Avenue, and UFP Technologies created a 10-car trail head on Hale Street that has been extremely popular. In addition, work is progressing on upgrading the handicap-accessible Gloria Braunhardt Bike/Pedestrian Trail that will soon be taking in increased traffic as the William Lloyd Garrison Bike/Pedestrian Trail that crosses the John Greenleaf Whittier Bridge over the Merrimack River ends where Gloria's trail begins!



The Turtle Times

Mark Irving, PRCWA's head-start coordinator for the Blanding's Turtle program, has reported on another successful summer in protection of this State-listed "Threatened" species.

We had a really good success rate with our 17 protected nests, which yielded nearly 170 hatchlings. One premature nest was taken to the Turtle Rescue League to be incubated at their Southbridge location for six weeks. We are pleased to report all those eggs successfully emerged!

All hatchlings were returned to the wild except for 50 that were held for head-starting in area classrooms and learning centers.

The head-starting locations included:

The Amesbury Elementary School
Cashman School in Amesbury
Amesbury Middle School
Bagnall Elementary School in Groveland
Doyon Elementary School in Ipswich
Hunking Middle School in Haverhill
Newburyport High School
Bresnahan Elementary School in Newburyport
River Valley Charter School in Newburyport
Our Secret Garden Pre-School in Newbury
The Georgetown Peabody Library



**Bresnahan School students help
with the release of Blanding's Turtles**

PRCWA would like to thank the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, which helped fund our turtle program the last two years. Other funders included the Georgetown Conservation Commission, EBSCO Publishing and the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP).

We would like to thank our Blanding's Turtle biologist Mark Grgurovic for his great skill in overseeing the protection and monitoring of this special creature over the past 18 years, as well as our many volunteers who have help us throughout the season!

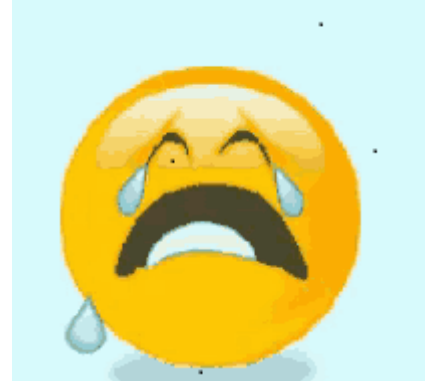
Tids & Bits



Robbing Peter to pay Paul

It was recently learned that Ipswich is proposing to site another well in the Parker River watershed to supplement residents with enough water to support increase of summertime consumption. The well is being proposed along Bull Brook off Linebrook Road. MassDEP has given the Town the go ahead to begin the permitting process.

The Ipswich River Watershed Association (IRWA) opposes the project knowing how stressed the Parker River is during most summers. The Bull Brook tributary, which feeds into the Egypt/Rowley river in Rowley, now runs dry for over nine months of the year. PRCWA plans to carefully monitor and comment on the project.



The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Mass Fish & Wildlife announced the purchase of additional lands in the area known as “Turtleland” on the Georgetown/Groveland border. The purchase preserves priority habitat for rare species, protects the water supplies for both communities, and helps connect a natural trail system.

There remains a few unprotected parcels left in this over 600-acre reserve that is a combination of municipal and State land acquisitions. A local developer is planning a soil reclamation project and eventual development of the site in Groveland off Sewall Street.

NHESP has issued a “Take” of a Threatened Species, the Blanding’s Turtle, thus triggering a higher level of scrutiny under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) over the project. PRCWA plans on commenting in order to create the best mitigation possible.



Tids & Bits (continued)



Water Quality Testing

PRCWA plans on upgrading its test procedures and equipment for the upcoming water quality season. We have been looking at the use of multi-parameter probes to reduce yearly chemical costs and to make sampling less time-consuming and easier.

We plan on reducing sites where other agencies and groups are also monitoring in the tidal area of the watershed. The new probes will be able to accumulate much of the field data that volunteers currently submit.

For now, our focus will be on dissolved oxygen content throughout the basin, an important factor in determining the viability of the aquatic resources in the river system. Stay tuned for more communication on training sessions and news on this new endeavor.

River Hero Honored

Tim Purinton was honored by the Massachusetts River Alliance with a “River Hero” award for his many years of State service as Director of the Division of Ecological Restoration, formerly the Riverways Program.

Being a native of Byfield, Tim was held in high regard at PRCWA, as the first Director of our organization. Tim co-wrote with Dave Mountain, the Tidal Crossing Handbook, which served as a model assessment on determining the effect of coastal barriers on our marsh ecosystem.

Tim will be leaving the area to work in Maryland for the Nature Conservancy. A longtime advocate for the Larkin Mill Dam removal, we at Parker River can guarantee him, the dam will be coming down, one way or another in his lifetime.





UPCOMING EVENTS

BIOBLITZ – April 28th

PRCWA will be sponsoring an informative nature walk on Saturday, April 28th. Participants are invited to download the iNaturalist mobile application. iNaturalist is a platform for biodiversity research, where anyone can start up their own science project with a specific purpose and collaborate with other observers.

Plans are to meet at the West Street athletic fields in Georgetown at 9 AM and proceed along trails banks overlooking the Parker River. As we document the natural indicators of spring, learn from guides about the history of this 200+-acre protected area co-managed by the Georgetown Water Department and Conservation Commission.

Check out our Facebook page to learn more.

Dedication Ceremony – June 9th!



Plans are in the works to have a Dedication Ceremony on the completed Little River Trail System on June 9th at 10:00 AM at the trail head at the end of Colby Farm Road (formerly Crow lane).

A Memorial will also be held for the late Marlene Schroeder highlighting her life achievements and in gratitude for her intense efforts to protect this sensitive area.

In addition, the Marlene Schroeder Nature Trail, officially recognized by the city, will be dedicated. There will also be invitations and recognition to many organizations and people who have been responsible for making the Little River Trail System a reality. Everyone is encouraged to attend.





RIVERS THREATENED

Through several State administrations, money spent on environmental programs has been cut to about a half of one percent of the state budget. The Massachusetts Legislature considered, but backed off in taking over stormwater permitting from the EPA. It is a big victory for environmental advocates who fought against this proposal. Why would the State have wanted to take on the stormwater program during tough fiscal times, when the federal EPA is already doing the job for us?

The truth may be the reluctance of municipal governments to spend money on our shared environment. Based on past experience with water-related regulations, municipalities know they have more influence over state regulators at MassDEP than they do over federal regulators at EPA.

Recently, DEP released water quality results of all testing done in the Parker River since 2005. PRCWA found only one testing analysis of one minor tributary occurred during this time period.

State environmental agencies have been doing a poor job of managing our water resources. One need only hark back to the inadequate response to the drought emergency of 2016.

At a meeting a few months ago, DEP informed water suppliers that the Parker River could safely yield an extra 12 million gallons a day for future development needs, despite well-known documentation that the river is highly stressed by water withdrawals and routinely runs dry to the detriment of herring, threatened turtles, and other aquatic wildlife.

Give the State primacy to regulate stormwater? PRCWA said, "Thanks, but no thanks!"

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 ____
- _____ \$50 Supporting
- _____ \$100 Contributing
- _____ \$250 Sponsor
- _____ \$500 Patron
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