

PARKER RIVER CURRENTS

JANUARY 29, 2012

SAVE THE DATE!!

PARKER RIVER CLEAN WATER ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING

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Please mark the date for our annual meeting. Mr. Paul Roberts will be presenting a lecture on "Hawks of the Parker River Watershed." Paul M. Roberts is the founder of the Eastern Mass Hawk Watch (www.massbird.org/EMHW), an organization whose mission is to promote the study and conservation of hawks locally and on a continental scale by monitoring migration in Massachusetts. He also is President of the Northeast Hawk Watch, and a Director and former Chair of the Hawk Migration Association of North America (HMANA).

With an email address that begins "Phawk"....there can be little doubt as to where Paul Roberts' passions lie!

PRCWA is very fortunate to have this well known authority on hawks as the keynote speaker at our annual meeting on January 29, 1:30-3:30, at the Newbury Library on Lunt Street in Byfield, exit 55 off Rt. 95, Central Street west a short distance to Lunt Street.

Paul is a well known, very popular workshop and trip leader who has led innumerable hawk watching events in our area. His presentations are exciting and he will have you flapping your wings right along with him as he demonstrates how rough-legged hawks hover over the marshes to hunt.

Paul is an active trip leader for Mass Audubon, and a member of several other hawk organizations and bird clubs. He is a really special and entertaining speaker that you won't want to miss.

The annual meeting will begin with reports and reviews of our projects this year, followed by refreshments, the keynote speaker, and a question time to speak with Paul. Be sure to mark your calendar for January 29th at 1:30. We look forward to seeing you then!

PRCWA and the Rescue of Newman Farm Meadow and the Newbury Lower Green



The title of this article sounds a bit like a story from a kid's adventure series. Indeed, this accomplishment had all the elements of an adventure story - hope, disappointment, courage, leadership, people rising to meet the challenge, and of course the triumph of success in the end.

PRCWA played a role in this success story. Our first action was to send a strong letter off to PreservationMass, listing environmental reasons to be considered as they made their determination of whether or not the project should be added to the Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources in the Commonwealth. Other organizations added their voices and the property was successfully included in the list.

Next, PRCWA reached out to our friends and members by featuring the project in an article on the front page of our newsletter. The response was enthusiastic support to help with fundraising, activities, and critical financial contributions and the needed funds were raised.

This is one more example of the strength of grassroots organizations pulling together so future generations will enjoy this historic landscape which also provides a wildlife corridor from Old Town Hill to the Parker River, saves the land from the non point source pollution of impervious surfaces associated with development, and preserves habitat for declining grassland species.



Year of the Turtle

The US Fish & Wildlife Service pronounced 2011 as the 'Year of the Turtle' and in doing so announced that \$4.9 million in grants will be going to six state fish and wildlife agencies to help conserve and recover Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) through the State Wildlife Grants (SWG) Competitive Program. The Parker River Clean Water Association has been informed they will be a recipient of some of those funds in support of Blanding's Turtle research in the coming year.

This project will maintain and enhance functional wetland and upland wildlife habitat in New England, New York, and Pennsylvania by applying conservation principles and practices needed to support a healthy Blanding's turtle population. The project will seek to prevent further declines by developing and initiating implementation of a regional conservation plan to: identify and protect genetic variation among the Northeast's turtles to improve habitats critical to their survival; develop monitoring protocols to detect status and trends; and create or enhance at least five nesting areas.



Support for PRCWA Blanding's Turtle program remains popular with our members, whose diligence has paid off in a very successful year. A record number of Blanding's hatchlings were released this year, along with a number of new adult finds. We would like to give thanks to our tremendous volunteers, major funding partners - the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, the Entrust Fund, and BTA/BOLT - as well as the support of the towns of Boxford, Georgetown and Groveland. PRCWA would like to give a special thanks to our program leaders, Susan Speak and Mark Grgurovic. They are truly an inspiration to our volunteers because of their devotion in protecting this threatened species in our area.



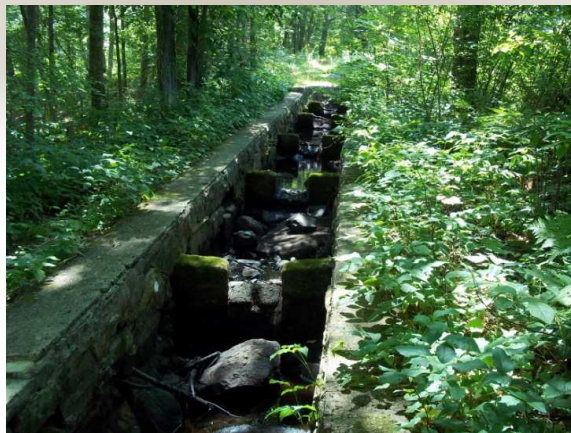
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS FISH?



There is good news regarding NOAA's status review for listing river herring under the Federal Endangered Species Act (ESA)! NOAA recently announced that the National Resources Defense Council's (NRDC) river herring petition presented sufficient information to initiate a 12-month scientific review to determine whether to take action.

If river herring are listed under the ESA, they will be better protected against ocean bycatch, out-dated dams, water pollution and other threats. The public comment period for river herring has been extended to February 3rd. If you haven't already, please send in a letter asking for a comprehensive and independent review and include any information you have on these species. For more information on how you can help, check out the latest news at: <http://www.herringalliance.org/>.

The news is not so good regarding the Town of Newbury's decision to not remove the Larkin Mill Dam. The dam and fish ladder have been in disrepair and neglect for decades. The option to remove the obstructions with the help of federal and state grants was not approved at a recent Selectmen's meeting. Copies of newspaper articles regarding the issue can be found on the PRCWA's website, www.parker-river.org. We urge the citizens of Newbury to contact the Selectmen and ask that they reconsider their decision to not remove the dam.



Crumbling section of Larkin Dam Fish Ladder





Trails and Sails Events Enjoyed

PRCWA participated for the first time in the annual Essex National Heritage Trails and Sails Countywide offering of events in September. We offered two events on The Little River Nature Trail - a birding walk led by Sue McGrath of Newburyport Birders and a nature walk led by Bob Metcalfe of Discovery New England. Both events were enjoyed by people, whether they were first-time visitors to the trail or frequent users.

Our trail sign garden is going to sleep for the winter, but if you are interested in helping to maintain these gardens which welcome all who enter the City from I-95, please call the office and leave a message of your interest for Trail steward, Jerry Mullins. The office phone number is 978-462-2551.



Volunteers Needed

Undersized culverts and crossings can cause serious flooding and disrupt continuity to migrating fish and wildlife. PRCWA, partnering with the Parker-Ipswich-Essex Restoration (PIER2) team is looking for volunteers to help to inventory culvert crossings in our watershed. This important effort is being sponsored by the UMass Wildlife Extension in Amherst and is part of a new computerized database (learn more at www.masscaps.org) that will help prioritize improvements to stream crossings throughout the State. Once trained, a volunteer can assess a culvert in about 15 minutes. If you are interesting in helping with this effort, please contact the PRCWA office at (978 462-2551) or email parker.river@verizon.net.



Lessons from the Chickley River

As witnessed by the photos and videos of late summer, Hurricane Irene caused traumatic damage to homeowners and business owners in Western Massachusetts. The DEP issued 'emergency regulations' to be placed in effect to assist in cleanup efforts and repair infrastructure damage. The Town of Hawley, which sits on the Chickley River (a tributary of the Deerfield River) was hit particularly hard by the storm event. The community was practically isolated from the rest of the world due to extensive road damage and it was necessary to act in an expedited manner to relieve many of the communities.

At a recent Mass Rivers Alliance meeting, Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC) Director Andrea Donlon said after initial repairs restored roads and utilities along the Chickley River, the Town of Hawley retained the contractor to do much more. Without knowledge or approval from DEP, over 5 miles of the river was altered and straightened and high berms were placed along the riverbank disconnecting the river from its flood plain. With no erosion controls in place, wildlife officials fear sedimentation may have caused irreparable harm to its cold water fisheries listed as State protected priority habitat.

As stated by Andrea Donlon, "The straightening and dredging of the Chickley for several miles went way beyond what was necessary to repair and protect roads, bridges and private property. The work also did not return the Chickley to pre-flood conditions. Not only did the work harm wildlife and habitats, it also likely increases future flooding."

When alerted to the damage along the Chickley, CRWC sent DEP a strongly-worded letter demanding that they take immediate enforcement action. CRWC got the Army Corps and the EPA involved in order to enforce federal wetland protection regulations. While initially apathetic to the watershed's plight, DEP has since demanded that the contractor cease and desist operations, and issued an enforcement order for reparations.

The contractor, ET&L, has removed the large berms along the river banks, but the Town of Hawley has been balking at restoring the river to pre-flood conditions. We have learned that Hawley is now consulting with politicians and lobbyists to fight further restoration.

PRCWA stands in unity with the river advocates of the Connecticut River Watershed Council. We applaud their leaders who took decisive action in order to protect the health of an important tributary of their basin. An important lesson for people to learn is you cannot always depend on the action of government or others to correct a wrong. Don't be the one who says, "Why don't *THEY* do something?" Remember, the one person you can always depend on is *YOU*!





Message from PRCWA President Marlene Schroeder

Hello Friends and Members,

When I was teaching, I always did a year long unit about the changes that occurred through the seasons. About this time of year we would review what had happened so far, and I would teach the students this little verse.....

The year has turned its circle,
The seasons come and go.
The harvest all is gathered in,
And chilly north winds blow.

It seems that we can do the same for PRCWA and its activities, now that most of the projects are wrapped up and "chilly winds" have begun to blow across the marshes, through the woods, and ice is forming in the wetlands.

In the newsletter, you can read about turtle protection and our other important programs, land protection, and participation in the Essex National Heritage Trails and Sails events on the Little River Nature Trail, updates on river herring, and political issues affecting the watershed.

One change that wasn't planned for was my having to deal with a long term illness that requires me to take a lesser role in PRCWA for now. Fortunately, Vice-president George Comiskey and I have really functioned more like co-leaders, so the organization is in his very competent hands and I know everyone will help to continue the mission of protecting our beautiful watershed and river.

Marlene Schroeder



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
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PARKER RIVER CLEAN WATER ASSOCIATION
Public Welcome
Annual Meeting
Sunday January 29, 2012
1:30-3:30
Newbury Library in Byfield on Lunt Street
Paul Roberts ~ Keynote Speaker

Parker River

CLEAN WATER Association
PO Box 798 Byfield, MA 01922
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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED