

Parker River

Currents

Volume 18

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ANNUAL MEETING

JANUARY 31, 2010

Focus on Vernal Pools



The 16th annual meeting of the Parker River Clean Water Association will be held on January 31, from 1 – 3 PM at the Newbury Library in Byfield on Lunt Street.

Members and the public are invited to learn about vernal pools in a presentation by the Cape Ann Vernal Pool Association.

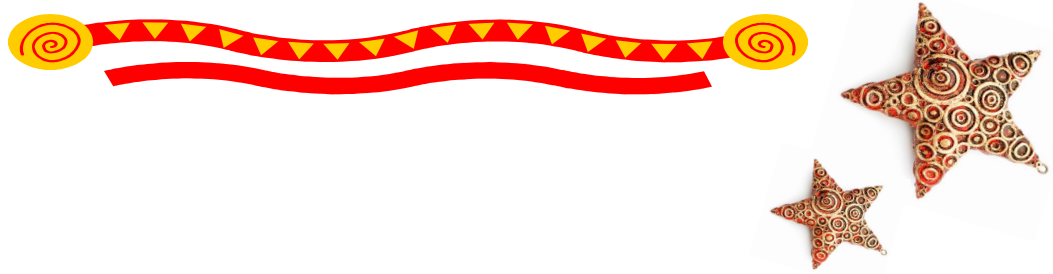
Refreshments will be served.

Directions to the Library - From Route 95 take exit 55 Central Street West about 1/16th of a mile and turn left onto Lunt Street and go to the library at the end of the block.

For further information leave a message at 978-462-2551



THE AMAZING PRCWA VOLUNTEERS



Dear Members,

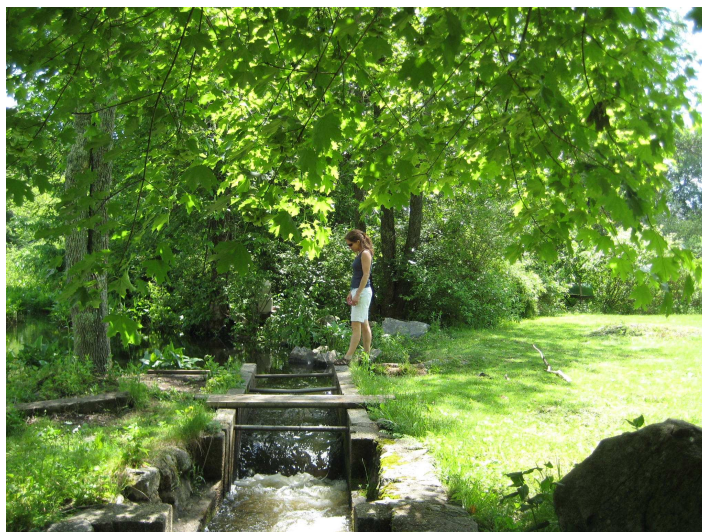
You can help us to grow our organization by encouraging other like-minded people to join PRCWA. A membership application is on the last page of this newsletter.

As you know, Parker River Clean Water Association is an all volunteer organization, only hiring contract workers when we don't have the expertise to do it ourselves. Recently we were working on a grant application that required us to detail the number of volunteer hours members contribute annually. While I expected it to be a large number of hours, I was surprised at how many hours it turned out to be. Would you believe that all the volunteer hours together from our various projects plus the number of hours for administrative work turns out to be approximately 3000 hours annually? Absolutely amazing! The volunteers are indeed the life blood that keeps PRCWA going. While PRCWA may not be a large organization, we are well respected by other environmental organizations and government environmental entities because of the quality and reliability of our work –

Thanks Volunteers – you make us a successful organization.

Marlene Schroeder, President

George Comiskey, Vice-President



Amy Madden, Volunteer Fish Coordinator

WHAT ARE VERNAL POOLS?

Vernal Pools are unique depressions that fill seasonally with water from rain and snowmelt. Some animals breed only in vernal pools and their presence is a requirement to certify the pool with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Vernal pools which have been certified receive protection through regulations intended to protect them.



Mole salamanders and wood frogs make their way to breed in vernal pools in early spring on rainy nights. Road kill is a serious problem for them at this time. Concerned people often venture out on these rainy nights to “cross” frogs and salamanders safely to the other side of the road to continue their journey to their ancestral vernal pool. No one knows for sure how they find their breeding pools, but evidence suggests they use smell and celestial cues.



VERNAL POOL CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP

On February 28, 2010 PRCWA will host a workshop from 1 – 3 PM at the Newbury Library, to learn how to certify a vernal pool. The workshop will be led by members of the Cape Ann Vernal Pool Association. Participants will learn about the requirements to certify a vernal pool.

A small materials fee of a few dollars will be charged and registration will be required. The public is welcome. Children 6 and older with an adult are welcome. To register or for further information leave a message on the PRCWA phone machine 978-462-2551.

Young Stewards and Coffin's Island Conservation Land

Cub Scout Den 5 from Pack 44, Newbury, under the leadership of Kristen Poulin & Ellen Manning, built these handsome kestrel birdhouses for the Coffin's Island public conservation land located on Scotland Road in Newbury. With the help of their parents, the boys have planned a trail work party to clean up and trim the trail that winds through the area.

Read about Coffin's Island at [www.http://www.thecommonpasture.org/](http://www.thecommonpasture.org/) Parking is across the street from the entrance gate with the Coffin's Conservation Land sign. The public is welcome to enjoy this area from dawn to dusk.



BIG CHANGES MAY BE AHEAD FOR THE DEP

Rumors are flying regarding possible big changes that may happen to the Department of Environmental Protection, largely because of budget cuts. Already 35 full-time employees and 4 contractors have been laid off. Many scenarios are being floated that will greatly weaken or gut the DEP. Here's what's on the table: The possible elimination of DEP's Wetlands Program, radical downsizing of staff, regulatory revisions and statutory changes--all decided by Jan. 2nd. PRCWA is keeping a close eye on the situation which is expected to unfold in the very near future.

The Massachusetts environmental budget has dropped from 1.1% in 2002 to just 0.7% today and appears likely that it will decrease even more. What does this mean about priority for clean air, water, and soil?



PRCWA and FLATBREAD BENEFIT NIGHT TUESDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2010



On February 23, 2010, the Flatbread Pizza Company in the Amesbury Millyard complex will hold a benefit night for Parker River Clean Water Association. Part of the Flatbread mission is to support local organizations that have an impact on local communities. This is accomplished through the benefit nights that are held on Tuesdays at the restaurant. The Flatbread Company will donate \$3.50 for each large flatbread and \$1.75 for each small flatbread sold during the benefit. Donations typically range from \$400 to \$1,000 for organizations that actively get the word out.

You can support PRCWA by participating in the Flatbread fundraising night - hold a pizza party for your friends, or enjoy your pizza at the restaurant. See you at the restaurant February 23, 2010 to eat in or takeout - Tell your friends to join you. Proceeds from this fundraiser will help to underwrite the PRCWA Vernal Pool Certification workshop for the public on February 28, 2010. For further information, call 978-462-2551 and leave a message.

REMEMBER THE NATURAL HERITAGE PROGRAM ON YOUR STATE TAX FORM!



Please contribute to endangered wildlife conservation on your state income tax form. Endangered species conservation in Massachusetts depends on you! A major source of funding for the protection of rare and endangered species in Massachusetts comes from voluntary donations on state income tax forms. Over 20,000 tax filers support the program each year.



THIS INSECT COULD THREATEN TREES IN THE WATERSHED GET YOUR FIREWOOD CLOSE TO HOME

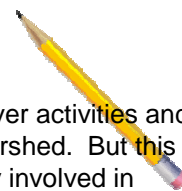


Other Massachusetts watershed organizations have already begun to spread the word to their members about this insect. Acquaint yourself with the facts, so you can recognize it. If you spot one, take a photo or collect the insect in a container and freeze it, then report it to Jennifer Forman Orth of the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture. Jennifer.Forman-Orth@state.ma.us Phone - 617.626.1735. The insect is easily spread through the movement of infested tree-based materials such as wood pallets, logs and firewood. Get your firewood from a vendor close to your home or destination. If you move firewood, you could be giving these pests a free ride to new territory.

The Asian Long-horned beetle spells danger for our native trees and forests. It was introduced in 1996 through solid wood packing material from China. In 13 short years it has been found in Chicago, New York, New Jersey, and now it is just 50 miles away in Worcester where thousands of trees in Worcester have already been cut and burned in an attempt to control its spread. An area of 74 square miles in and around Worcester has been identified as being infested. There are no known ways to eradicate it other than cutting infested trees and burning the wood. Residents are being trained to identify and survey trees to find more infestations. This pest particularly attacks maples, and also birch, horse chestnut, poplar, willow, elm, ash, and black locust. It is considered a serious threat to the nursery, lumber, wood products, maple syrup, and tourism industries in our state. If it became established over a large area, it could also significantly disrupt the forest ecosystem.

Females chew a place to lay their eggs leaving oval to round wounds in the bark. Larvae from the eggs chew banana-shaped holes in the heartwood, on which they will feed during fall and winter. Adults emerge in the spring through large, 3/8" round holes that occur anywhere on the tree. These holes can number in the thousands per tree. Adult beetles are 1 to 1 1/2 inches long, shiny-black with white spots. They have black-and-white banded antennae that are at least as long as their bodies. The upper sections of the legs of the adults are whitish-blue. The invaders are invisible until late summer, when adults emerge and infest more trees.

Political Notebook:



They say conservation involves 50% biology and 50% politics. Those of us who enjoy river activities and the outdoors would like to devote all our time to enjoying the natural wonders of our watershed. But this year turned out to be one of great environmental consequence and PRCWA was actively involved in legislative testimony on Beacon Hill.

PRCWA is a sponsor and testified in support this summer of House Bill 834, an Act relative to the Sustainable Water Resources. The bill would require the State to adopt streamflow standards for our imperiled rivers, allow municipal water suppliers to impose small fees (called water banking or offsets) for new development, and the bill would also give communities the option of removing dilapidated dams. Over 20 watershed groups and river advocates sponsored this bill, including the Essex County Greenbelt Association, Mass Audubon, Ipswich River Watershed Association, Merrimack River Watershed Council, Mass Association of Conservation Commissioners and The Nature conservancy. Area legislative sponsors included State Representative Barbara L'Italien and State Senator Bruce Tarr.

A political issue people may have heard about was the recent flak over the determination of "safe yield." The concept of Safe yield in regards to Massachusetts water withdrawals has long been known as the volume of water that can be removed from surface or groundwater without causing unreasonable damage to the environment. A new methodology calculated by the DEP caused river advocates to boycott the agency's Water Advisory Committee. The Charles River Watershed Association determined the new standards would allow public water suppliers (PWS) the ability to withdraw a greater volume of water than what is in the Charles River on any given day. The methodology would have allowed PWS to withdraw more than **11 times** what is allocated for the Parker River annually. The new allocation for the Parker was absurd given that the river frequently runs dry in the summertime. PRCWA, along with many watershed groups, sent letters of protest into Governor Patrick's administration. The successful effort caused Mass DEP to suspend their earlier determination and write a statement of clarification. DEP and the Water Advisory Committee are now working towards a sensible approach to water permitting that involves creating streamflow standards. PRCWA would like to thank Governor Patrick and the Mass Rivers Alliance for quickly acting to bring the both sides back to the table on this important issue.

PRCWA board members also were in attendance at the Statehouse to testify **against** House Bill 4167. The consequence of passing this bill would effectively gut the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) would only be able to review projects that involve "significant" habitat. The caveat is that there are no areas in the Commonwealth designated as significant habitat. Over 60 environmental groups have signed on to a letter composed by Mass Audubon in protest. PRCWA urges members to write to Senator Tarr, a member of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, and urge him to vote for an unfavorable recommendation. Tell him this bill would be devastating to rare species protection.

This is a well researched article on the MESA bill –
<http://www.valleyadvocate.com/article.cfm?aid=10912>



PRCWA Board members attend MESA
October 6th hearing.

*Front left row: Jack Van Loan (in middle),
Marlene Schroeder on right.*

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Currents

ANNUAL MEETING – Public Welcome!
Sunday January 31, 2010 1:00-3:00pm
Newbury Library in Byfield

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
- _____ \$1,000 Benefactor