

# Parker River Currents

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Ben Gahagan, Fish Biologist with the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries, will be the keynote speaker at the Sunday, February 23 annual meeting of the Parker River Clean Water Association (PRCWA) to be held from 1- 3:30 PM at the Newbury library in Byfield on Lunt Street.

This past season Ben Gahagan has been monitoring the herring run using an electronic device that can count fish both day and night. Comparisons will be made between the data obtained by visual counting and electronic counting to further help understand and foster improved conditions for herring migrations.

Ben has been studying the entire length of the Parker River. His talk will cover information about conditions of the herring migration from the mouth of the river to upstream fish ladders, ponds and potential spawning areas.



Fishermen as well as the public and PRCWA members will find this talk very informative and interesting. Please join us to learn more about the annual journey of river herring as they attempt to swim upstream and spawn.

Directions: (Exit 55 from I-95., Central Street west, go 1 block and turn left on Lunt Street). The public and PRCWA members are invited to this free meeting.

Refreshments will be served.



**Come to the PRCWA Annual Meeting**  
**Sunday, February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2014**

# PRCWA Takes Part in Trails & Sails

Visitors to the LRNT were treated to expert-guided walks this past fall as part of Essex National Heritage Trails & Sails two free weekends of events. Animal tracker and licensed Maine guide Bob Metcalfe led a group of curious onlookers, who were delighted to learn what other critters were using the trail.



*Bob Metcalfe checks his field guide*



*Steve Grinley (in back) listens for a Pine Warbler*

Steve Grinley took time off from his Bird Watchers Supply & Gift Shop at the Route 1 traffic circle in Newburyport to teach an interested group about the birds that frequent the forests of the LRNT. A beautiful Green Heron was spotted in the nearby swamps of the Little River that day.

## LITTLE RIVER NEWS



Thanks to the Newburyport Community Preservation Committee, the Little River Nature Trail will soon have two new Kiosks on either end of the trail off Storey Avenue and Hale Street. Visitors to the trail will now have a central location that will allow for up-to-date information on current conditions or to alert people of any changes to the trail system. A special thank you goes out to Jerry Mullins for his efforts in putting together the project plans.



# PROTECTING THE GREAT MARSH

Parker River Clean Water Association board members attended the Great Marsh Coalition 2013 Symposium. The event was well attended with many marsh community town planners, conservation agents, various environmental groups, environmental/ civil engineers, MA state managers and coordinators from Coastal Zone Management, as well as the environmental planner for the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. They all gathered at the Great House at the Crane Estate in Ipswich, MA to share their findings on the effect of climate change on the Great Marsh.



*Photo by Mark Wilson – Boston Globe*

The Great Marsh has served our communities well as the buffer zone from the flooding and eroding effect of increasingly frequent major storms. Yet the human effect we have on our marshes is greatly diminishing the Marsh in its keeping with the struggle against rising sea water, frequent flooding due to rapid changes on rainfall frequencies from deluge to drought, and the onslaught of human caused excess of nutrients, bacteria, and sediment to our buffering Great Marsh. Urgent action is needed!

Speaker presentations from the Great Marsh Coalition 2013 Symposium can be viewed under “Resources” at <http://www.greatmarsh.org/>

# SPEAKING OF CLIMATE CHANGE

## Scientists Locate Natural “Strongholds” That Could Protect Nature in the Face of Climate Change

PRCWA members attended a workshop, “**Land Conservation Strategies to Address Climate Change**,” sponsored by the Essex County Greenbelt Association on December 7 at the Hamilton-Wenham library. Dr. Mark Anderson, an ecologist with the Nature Conservancy for 16 years, was the featured speaker. The focus of Dr. Anderson’s talk was identifying the most important landscape areas to conserve in the face of climate change.

Dr. Anderson thinks about conservation science with a focus on resiliency, the capacity to recover. If species must move because they aren’t adapted to climate changes in their present area, we must have protected areas with characteristics for resiliency when species show up in the new areas. Having **many surficial geology types and a wide elevation range appears to increase a region’s chances of supporting biodiversity**, and having calcareous bedrock or coarse sediment increases those chances further.

A study by the Nature Conservancy warned that these resilient natural areas must be protected from damaging development, pollution, and other negative actions. “If we work to keep these special landscapes strong, they will help keep nature strong as the threats of climate change continue to grow. These areas will be critical to all life, serving as breeding grounds and seed banks for species that otherwise may be unable to find habitat due to climate change. They could also serve as essential resources for food and water as society deals with the threats of climate change.”

The study also looked at whether roads, dams, development or other fragmenting features have created barriers that prevent plants and animals from moving into the resilient areas. Important linking corridors were identified in the study. To survive the changing climate, some species will be able to relocate to local areas, while others will need to move great distances to entirely new landscapes.

Unfortunately there will be many species that will not be able to relocate as climate change makes their areas unlivable. That is why the ultimate goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and stop climate change from worsening. Until that happens, these resilient landscapes offer a needed safety net to allow many species to survive, interact, and ensure healthy natural systems.

Already the study is being used by government agencies and others to create a roadmap of where conservation activities should take place. Here in Massachusetts, many of the resilient landscapes are also areas we have already protected, but a more comprehensive assessment needs to be done.



# When the well is dry, we know the worth of water

Benjamin Franklin, 1746

You wonder if the residents affected by the California drought and the West Virginia chemical spill understand now what Ben Franklin was talking about back in America's founding days. Can we ever be too cautious about implementing policy and regulations meant to protect our water supplies?

In the book, "Unquenchable Thirst," author Robert Glennon describes the long history of water woes facing western states as they fight over rights to the Colorado River. Whose crazy idea was it to build a city (Las Vegas) in the desert to provide water where typical household usage is 600 gallons a day, while much needed farm communities to the west watch as the river dries up? There are 300,000 W. Virginians that now fear turning on their taps unsure of the chemicals residing of their water supply.

PRCWA asks everyone in the watershed to be mindful of projects that may influence your wells and supplies whether they are private or municipal. As Ansel Adams once said, "Let us have a splendid legacy for our children... let us turn to them and say 'this you inherit and guard it well, for it is far more precious than money... and once it is destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price.'"

## THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

IF THE WATER SUPPLY FOR 300,000 PEOPLE WERE POISONED BY **TER-RORISTS**, IT WOULD BE A NATIONAL EMERGENCY.

WE WILL ADDRESS THIS CRISIS WITH EVERY RESOURCE AT OUR **DISPOSAL**! THE PURITY OF HOMELAND DRINKING WATER WILL BE PROTECTED AT **ANY COST**!

**24/7**  
NOW PLEASE STAY INSIDE AND DUCT TAPE YOUR FAUCETS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.



FRIGHTENED AMERICANS WOULD EMBRACE WHATEVER NEW SECURITY MEASURES WERE RUSHED INTO LAW.

ANYONE CAUGHT HIKING NEAR A **RESERVOIR** OR PICNICKING ON A **RIVERBANK** WILL BE SUBJECT TO **IMMEDIATE ARREST**!



**I NEVER TRUSTED THOSE TYPES ANYWAY!**

A LOT OF VERY SERIOUS THINKERS WOULD INSIST THAT WE NEEDED TO BOMB SOMEBODY.

HOW ABOUT **IRAN**? THEY'D BE A GOOD TARGET!

SURE, THERE'S NO EVIDENCE LINKING THEM TO THE ATTACK--

--BUT WHO **CARES**? WE JUST NEED TO MAKE A **STATEMENT**!



THE ASSAULT ON CIVIL LIBERTIES WOULD SHIFT INTO OVEDRDRIVE.

THE NSA MUST SCOOP UP EVEN **MORE METADATA**--IN ORDER TO KEEP YOU SAFE **NEXT TIME**!

MAYBE.

ALSO WE SHOULD DRONE SNOWDEN, JUST BECAUSE.



AND OF COURSE CABLE NEWS WOULD BE ON THE TOPIC 24/7.

SO YOU SEE, WATER IS **TWO PARTS** HYDROGEN AND **ONE PART** OXYGEN!

FASCINATING! AND WOULD YOU SAY IT'S ESSENTIAL TO LIFE AS WE **KNOW** IT?

NO QUESTION! WATER IS **VERY, VERY** IMPORTANT!



THERE YOU HAVE IT--THE **SCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE**!

BUT SINCE A **CORPORATION** DID IT, NO BIG DEAL.

EH, STUFF HAPPENS. WHAT CAN YOU DO.

NO POINT IN CRYING OVER SPILLED 4-METHYL-CYCLOHEXANE METHANOL, THAT'S WHAT **I ALWAYS** SAY!



www.thismodernworld.com...twitter.com/tomtomorrow

# DEP Enforcement

The Department of Environmental Protection had two noteworthy items on its website in regards to recent enforcement actions. PRCWA had been made aware of excessive amount of tree cutting taking place last spring in the Crane Pond WMA. Wildlife officials were alerted and as a result the following action was taken:

**8/1/13: MassDEP entered into a Consent Order with a \$29,500 Penalty involving the town of Groveland for Wetland Protection Act violations at J. B. Little Road, in Groveland. A complaint to the Environmental Strike Force Hotline resulted in an investigation and observed that trees within a bordering vegetative wetland (BVW) were cut, chipped brush was deposited in the BVW, potholes were filled within the buffer zone, and the priority habitat area for the Blandings Turtle (a 'threatened' species) and the Blue-spotted Salamander (a species of 'special concern') were altered. Approximately 500 square feet of BVW were altered. Today's Order requires submittal of a plan for full restoration of BVW including the loss of tree canopy for approval. Officials with the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage Program and its Northeast District office assisted in the enforcement conference. The town will pay \$4,500 with the remaining \$25,000 suspended.**



The Parker River Clean Water Association was formed in 1993 as neighbors were concerned about the impact of a large development in Byfield abutting the Parker River and the possible harmful effects the project and possible others like it would have on the watershed. The plan called for six wetland crossings and required substantial mitigation. So we were surprised to see DEP take action on long overdue non-compliance to the state wetland regulations.

**10/25/13: MassDEP entered into a Consent Order with a \$55,800 Penalty regarding Fatherland Farms subdivision for Wetlands violations off of Central Street in Newbury. Specifically, the subdivision (represented by Warren E. Manter) is responsible for not responding to numerous MassDEP attempts to solicit a request for a certificate of compliance from Manter for a project (built under MassDEP file #50-393). MassDEP issued a notice of noncompliance on 8/30/12 requiring that a certificate request with all supporting documentation to be submitted within 60 days. When the submittal was made, some required information was not included. However, the information submitted did document significant violations, including undersized bordering vegetated wetland replication areas, bordering land subject to flooding compensatory storage areas, and, stormwater control features. Subsequent information supplied to MassDEP and an inspection of the property revealed additional non conformance with the approved plans. As a result, today's Order requires detailed reports on the existing replication areas documenting success, including replacement of wildlife habitat, and plan(s) to provide the necessary remaining compensatory storage, stormwater control and appropriate replication with long-term monitoring. The document also includes a paid penalty of \$15,000 plus \$40,800 suspended upon full compliance, by 10/31/19.**

DEP encourages Massachusetts residents to call their hotline if you notice an unlawful environmental act. They can be reached confidentially at 1-888-846-5283 or email [ESF.Hotline@state.ma.us](mailto:ESF.Hotline@state.ma.us).

## From the President

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) and its agencies are in the final stages of implementing water withdrawal policies and regulations for all major watersheds in the Commonwealth. The results may as well sound the death knell for the Parker River and the many smaller coastal watershed communities that depend on a limited seasonal amount of river and groundwater withdrawals.

While acknowledging that rivers like the Parker River frequently dry up during the summer months, EEOEA has determined the Parker River can safely yield **six times** more than is currently being withdrawn. Agencies calculated this amount by including areas in the basin not suitable for withdrawals, including the Great Marsh, Plum Island Sound and part of the Atlantic Ocean. Ironically EOOEA calls this program the Sustainable Water Management Initiative (SWMI).

Environmental Advocates were told by State officials there was to be no attempt at adjusting safe yield determinations for future impacts, like climate change, which predicts more prolonged summer drought periods in our region. Long-time Ipswich River Watershed Association executive director, Kerry Mackin tried to point out the folly of the new calculations, but it was to no avail. I was reminded during the discussions of the lyrics from the Doobie Brothers song, “what a fool believes....no wise man has the power to reason away.”

In one of the final meetings that PRCWA attended this past fall, a DEP official listened to our complaints and lamented, “It looks like YOU will be needing another water source.” I replied, “Like the Ipswich River?” The joke being that the Ipswich River has earned the status of being called, “One of America’s Most Endangered Rivers” and the poster child for low-flow impacted rivers.

DEP is assuring coastal communities that new streamflow criteria and regulations will offset any future impacts, but the regulations are inundated with lawyerly language such as, “to the extent feasible.” Credits for extra withdrawals may be allowed by fixing a culvert or repairing a fish ladder, which, as laudable as they might be, won’t help the fish if the river dries up. The emphasis on YOU during the talks left us feeling that the watershed communities were on their own to deal with the future degradation of the river ecosystems throughout the State. It will be up to the individual communities to implement more stringent water conservation plans to deal with growth.

The State’s high “safe” yield determinations wrongly imply that efforts to promote water conservation are not needed. The 20-year withdrawal permits will set back efforts to achieve environmental sustainability by at least a generation. SWMI surely will give us an uncertain future outlook.