



Blackstone River Monitor

Spring 2006

Volume 6, Issue 1

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The Blackstone River Watershed Association (BRWA) was founded in 1976 and is dedicated to restoring, enhancing and preserving the Blackstone River system and its watershed.

Newsletter of the Blackstone River Watershed Association

From the President...

By Jim Plasse

As the new BRWA president, I would like to thank Lynne Welsh for all her hard work as BRWA president for the past two years. Under Lynne's leadership, the BRWA has become a major force in the goal to protect the Blackstone River and its watershed, and to improve the overall quality of life for the people in the Blackstone Valley. In the past year we have joined with other watershed and environmental groups in the Valley to form the Blackstone River Coalition. This coalition will not only allow the BRWA to act locally to protect the watershed in southern Worcester County, but will allow us and other groups in the coalition to address issues affecting the entire Blackstone River Watershed in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

I will continue working to promote the Blackstone River Watershed as a

recreational and natural resource, and work with the other member groups of the Blackstone River Coalition to make the waters of the Blackstone River and its tributaries, fishable and swimmable.

This month's newsletter highlights the third year of water quality monitoring and the formation of Stream Teams, a program to recruit local residents to become activists in the protection of streams and tributaries in their area, ensuring public access to the River for boating and fishing, and finally, the 30th Annual Canoe and Kayak Race.

This race was started by the BRWA in 1976 to bring public attention to the then severely polluted Blackstone River. The Race has been instrumental in getting public support to clean up and protect the River and the watershed. In the near future, the BRWA plans to become more involved in the control of invasive species plants that are choking some of the Valley's waterways. One of my priorities
(continued next page)

30th Annual Canoe Race – May 13, 2006

Mark your calendar!!!

Saturday, May 13, 2006, is the BRWA 30th Annual Canoe and Kayak race. We're celebrating this one in a big way!

We changed our race to two starting lines and one finish line. Everyone will finish at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge where the party will be held. For the racing class, we have a 12-mile event beginning in South Grafton on Rt. 122, Main Street, across from the old Fisherville Mill.

The recreational class will start their 9-mile adventure on Sutton Street in Northbridge behind Polyfoam Corporation.

Both events earn NECKRA points. We will have other recreational events after the race this year such as the "challenge line" and many other 'fun' challenges. There will be music, family activities, food including vegetarian items, and much, much more.

Would you like to get involved? We are looking for volunteers to help with parking, registration, timing, pre-race river cleanup (April 15– see the event calendar), marking of the race route, and more. Do you need more information? Would you like to race? Send an email to Rosemary Longo at roseisarose@hotmail.com or call her at (508) 839-9548. As we get closer to race day you'll find more information on our website too, www.thebrwa.org.

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River Access Update

New Portage Path at Riverdale Mills Dam in Northbridge

Riverdale Mills has constructed a new portage path for boaters on the East side of the Blackstone River. Due to safety and liability concerns, Riverdale Mills requests that all boaters use this new path instead of portaging their boats through the factory's shipping and receiving docks on the West side of the river. When paddling down stream, all canoeists and kayakers should land their boats on the left side of the river just before the bridge at the dam and follow the new portage path.

The new Riverdale Mills Portage Path accumulated a lot of debris and received some damage during the flood this past October. The BRWA plans to do a clean up of the portage path prior to the Annual Canoe Race. If you can help, Please contact Jim Plasse at james.plasse@earthlink.net or (508) 883-6149.

MA DCR to improve four access sites.

Massachusetts DCR plans to renovate and upgrade four river access sites on state land, this summer. Plans are in the works to construct improvements to the river access sites at the Blackstone Gorge in Blackstone, the Millville Lock in Millville, East Hartford Avenue in Uxbridge, and Plummer's Landing in Northbridge. These locations used by canoeists and Kayakers have suffered from erosion due to their growing popularity. Plans include soil stability work, signage and in some cases parking areas. The Blackstone Gorge Renovation will also include some new landscaping and a new railing at the viewing area.

Earth Day 2006 Clean-up

The BRWA is joining the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce in its Earth Day Clean-up. The event takes place rain or shine on Saturday, April 22, 2006. The clean-up is from 9:00 am-12:00 pm and will take place at two locations along the Blackstone Valley Bikeway: 1) Tri-Centennial Park 2) Sutton & Millbury section of the Blackstone Valley Bikeway at Cross Road and Route 122A. A free lunch will be served at the Millbury Senior Center. For more information and directions visit the BRWA web site www.thebrwa.org.

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is working more closely with local towns and conservation commissions in the Blackstone Valley to promote items of mutual concern, such as the management of storm water to mitigate flooding in the wet season and water shortages in the dry season.

I actively seek your support in attaining these goals and urge you to also take advantage of this valuable natural resource in our "back yard" by boating on the River, and walking or bicycling along the Blackstone River or one of its tributaries.

Help Wanted: Energetic BRWA members with creative and innovative fund-raising ideas to develop and plan fund-raising events in order to fund and expand the BRWA's environmental programs. If interested please contact Maggie Plasse at: maggie.plasse@earthlink.net or call the BRWA office at (508) 278-5200.

Water Quality Monitoring Volunteers Making A Difference

The Blackstone River Coalition (BRC) Watershed-wide Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program has become a major force in improving water quality in the Blackstone River. Federal and state laws have done a lot in the last 30 years to turn the waters of the Blackstone River and its watershed from one of the most polluted in the country into the resource that it is today. Our understaffed government agencies are indebted to the 80 volunteers who are helping to monitor the health of the Blackstone River Watershed. The efforts of these volunteers are providing much needed data to public officials.

There are still many things that can be done to further improve water quality. The volunteer testing results presented at the March 4 Summit showed high levels of nutrients in the Blackstone River and its tributaries. Most nutrients come from detergents discharged into our waterways from municipal wastewater treatment plants and fertilizers. Technology exists to reduce these levels and with hard evidence from the volunteers, policy makers will have justification to implement these new technologies.

Testing on the West River by the BRC, in partnership with the Army Corps of Engineers and Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP), showed elevated levels of *E. coli* bacteria. These high bacteria levels have resulted in the closure of several public beaches on the West River. The Army Corps of Engineers is using this information to eliminate the sources of the contamination. The West River is also a cold-water fishery. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MA DFW) is focusing on protecting cold-water fisheries in the state. Low levels of dissolved oxygen were measured in some sections of the West River. Low levels of dissolved oxygen in the water can have a serious impact on fish survival. Volunteers also discovered that several smaller streams had little or no water flowing during the dry summer months. This information will be submitted to MA DFW for their information.

These test data have also shown high levels of turbidity, or sediment in the water, during wet weather. This information will be passed along to local cities and towns for their use in improving their storm water management practices. According to the Watershed-wide Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator, Tammy Gilpatrick, "A comprehensive report based on three years of volunteer monitoring will

be written this fall. This report will be submitted to the cities and towns in the Blackstone River Watershed and will provide specific recommendations to the towns."

You can make a difference! Volunteers are still needed for this year's Water Quality Monitoring Program. Positions for both Field and Laboratory volunteers are open. Water Quality Monitoring is conducted on the second Saturday of each month between April and November. Free training classes will be held from 10:00 am until noon:

- Saturday March 18 and April 6, at Mass Audubon Broad Meadow Brook Wildlife Sanctuary
414 Massasoit Rd., Worcester, and
- Saturday March 25 at River Bend Farm State Park Visitor Center
278 Oak Street, Uxbridge.

For more information, please contact Tammy Gilpatrick at brcoalition@yahoo.com or (508) 278-2080.

Stormwater Conference a Success!

More than 90 local decision makers and advocates attended the BRC's conference entitled "Better Stormwater Management: Mitigating Flood Impacts in the Blackstone River Valley", which took place on January 26 at the beautiful Blackstone Public Library. Eager to understand how to reduce stormwater volume and its impacts, participants learned how Open Space Residential Design (OSRD)/Conservation Development and Low Impact Development (LID) strategies can reduce impervious surfaces, infiltrate rainwater, and protect vegetated areas, and also how to implement these concepts in their communities. The Conference proceedings were recorded, and are available on DVD for \$15.00.

To provide more in-depth information, the BRC is sponsoring a follow-up two-hour workshop featuring Andrea Cooper of EOEPA and Rich Claytor of Horsley Whitten Group, March 23, 9:30 – 11:30 am in Grafton. Andrea and Rich will provide much more detail about OSRD and LID, and how they can help communities better manage stormwater. All local decision makers and advocates are invited to attend, whether or not they were at the January conference.

To register or order DVD, please contact Donna Williams at (508) 753-6087 or dwilliams@massaudubon.org.

The BRWA is a member of the Blackstone River Coalition. The Conference and follow-up workshop are part of the Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River by 2015.

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Membership Form - MAKING THE BLACKSTONE VALLEY A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE

√ Yes, I would like to join the BRWA in making the Blackstone Valley a better place to live by becoming a member today. Send to: 271 Oak St., Uxbridge, MA 01569-1250.

Name:	<input type="checkbox"/> New Member	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal
Address:		
Phone:	\$10	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual
Email:	\$25	<input type="checkbox"/> Family
I am interested in helping with:	\$100	<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor
<input type="checkbox"/> Water Quality Monitoring	Please check	<input type="checkbox"/> Stream Steward
<input type="checkbox"/> River Bank Clean up	<input type="checkbox"/> Canoe Race	<input type="checkbox"/> River Steward
<input type="checkbox"/> Invasive Species	<input type="checkbox"/> Stream Team	<input type="checkbox"/> Watershed Steward
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Trout Pin - Fishable/Swimmable 2015 Campaign
	\$1,000	
	\$2,500	
	\$5,000	
	\$15.00	

Please send only electronic Newsletters and updates

Schedule of 2006 BRWA spring programs and events

Visit www.thebrwa.org for more information and directions to the following events

March

- 21 - 7:00 pm - Board of Directors Meeting - River Bend Farm Visitor Center, 287 Oak St., Uxbridge
- 23 - 9:30 – 11:30 am - BRC Better Storm Water Management Workshop - Brigham Hill Community Barn, 37 Wheeler Rd., N. Grafton

April

- 5 - 6:30 pm - Stream Team Introductory Meeting - Northbridge Town Hall, Northbridge
- 15 - 9:00 am - Riverdale portage site cleanup
- 18 - 7:00 pm - Conservation Options for BV Landowners - Brigham Hill Community Barn, 37 Wheeler Rd., N. Grafton (joint Mass Audubon, BRWA, Grafton Land Trust)
- 22 - Earth Day Clean Up (joint BVCC and BRWA event)

May

- 3 - 6:30 pm - Stream Team Survey Training - River Bend Farm Visitor Center, 287 Oak St., Uxbridge
- 6 - 9:00 am - Stream Team Survey (location TBD)
- 13 - 30th BRWA Canoe Race
- 16 - 7:00 pm - Board of Directors Meeting - River Bend Farm Visitor Center, 287 Oak St., Uxbridge

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