



# Blackstone River Monitor

Summer 2008

Volume 8, Issue 3

Newsletter of the Blackstone River Watershed Association

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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.

## From the President...

Throughout this spring and summer over 100 BRWA members and volunteers have been busy helping with the Stream Team, Water Quality Monitoring, Canoe/Kayak Race, cleanups and other activities. This is a record number of volunteers. Thanks to all of you! We could not have these programs without you!

Under our partnerships with UniBank and Mass Riverways, Stream Team volunteers distributed over 500 Homeowner Guides to families and businesses abutting the Mumford, West and Mill Rivers. Volunteers also conducted several Earth Day cleanups in the Watershed.

The Annual Canoe and Kayak Race took place without a hitch thanks to

the chairperson, Rosemary Longo, and her 25 dedicated volunteers.

I appreciate your continued support of BRWA. Your ideas, input and support are essential to the continued growth and success of this organization. I encourage all of you to get involved in BRWA activities. Visit our web site: <http://www.thebrwa.org> for information on how to get involved. Only you can make the *Blackstone Clean by 2015*.

Your BRWA membership helps to fund our web site and this newsletter. If you are not a member, please, consider joining the BRWA.

Jim Plasse

## Interesting Canoe and Kayak Race Facts!

Here are some fun facts about this year's Canoe and Kayak race!

Total boats	54
Total registrants	82
Members who raced	2
Racers from NY	1
Racers from NH	1
Racers from CT	5
Racers from RI	1
Racers from MA	77
BRWA Member	1

Racers from the Blackstone Valley (mid-section) 33

Douglas	1
Grafton	3
Hopedale	2
Mendon	1
Millbury	1
Northbridge	9
Sutton	1
Upton	2
Uxbridge	9
Webster	1
Worcester	3

**Officers**

**President**

Jim Plasse, Blackstone

**Vice President**

Dona Neely, Hopedale

**Treasurer**

Maggie Plasse, Blackstone

**Secretary**

Steve MacIndoe, Upton

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Michele B. Decoteau, Millbury

Tammy Gilpatrick, Uxbridge

Rosemary Longo, S. Grafton

Andrew Myers, Whitinsville

Phil Neeland, Whitinsville

John Pelczarski, Sutton

Shirley Smith, Mendon

Michelle Walsh, Mendon

**Watershed Program**

Jim Plasse, Blackstone

**Environmental Outreach Coordinator**

Michelle Walsh

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Michele B. Decoteau

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**Blackstone Gorge Renovations and River Access Site Completed**

by Jim Plasse

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) completed the renovation of the Blackstone Gorge Overlook and River Access Site. The eroding dirt pathway to the River was replaced with pervious paving blocks. A new and safer railing at the overlook, as well as a wheelchair accessible pathway was also constructed.



The Gorge is part of the Blackstone River and Canal State Park and is the last remaining “wild” section of the Blackstone River. The BRWA, in cooperation with the John H. Chaffee Blackstone River Valley Heritage Corridor, which funded most of the effort, has managed the design and permitting of this project with its design contractor Heritage Design Group of Whitinsville. Several other public river access sites have been constructed or are being planned along the Blackstone River in both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The Uxbridge Conservation Commission approved permitting for the planned access site at the Route Blackstone River Bridge in South Uxbridge on July 21, 2008.



## Buffers as a Dieting Aid for Aquatic Weeds

by Shirley Smith

Many of our rivers, streams, and lakes are grossly over-fertilized by nutrients, particularly nitrates and phosphates. These nutrients cause aquatic plants to grow like crazy. The excess growth impedes water flow and lowers oxygen levels. Each year, in the United States, \$100 million are spent to have noxious weeds killed by chemical or other methods.

Many homes that border our waterways have lawns that go right to the edge of the water. If these homes were to put in a buffer zone, it would go a long way toward keeping these nutrients from washing into rivers and lakes.

### What is a buffer?

- A buffer is a strip of natural vegetation that separates the water from the lawn.

### What purposes does a buffer serve?

- A buffer acts as a natural filter system. It traps nutrients from lawn fertilizers and pet waste and allows them to soak into the ground.
- A buffer helps stop erosion of your water front property. Turf grasses have shallow root systems. Native plants have deep root systems that resist erosion and stabilize the shoreline.
- A buffer discourages Canada geese. Geese love feeding on short grass and their one to one and a half pounds of droppings per bird add to the waterway's nutrient load.
- A buffer Improves wild life habitat
- A buffer beautifies your yard

### How wide does the buffer have to be?

- The wider, the better, but a 6-foot wide buffer is better than no buffer

at all.

### What should be planted in a buffer?

- Native plants are best. A list of native plants and where to purchase them can be found at:

[www.mass.gov/envir/mwrc/pdf/More\\_Than\\_Just\\_Yard.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/envir/mwrc/pdf/More_Than_Just_Yard.pdf)

### Where can I find more information on how to build a buffer zone?

- An excellent source is a publication by the Berkshire Regional Planning Committee. You can find it at:

[www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org)

It is time to stop feeding aquatic weeds. It is time to put aquatic weeds on a diet.



Whorled Aster



Lillie-of-the-Valley



Phlox Divaricata

## BRWA Expands Its Outreach Initiatives Record Number of Volunteers Involved

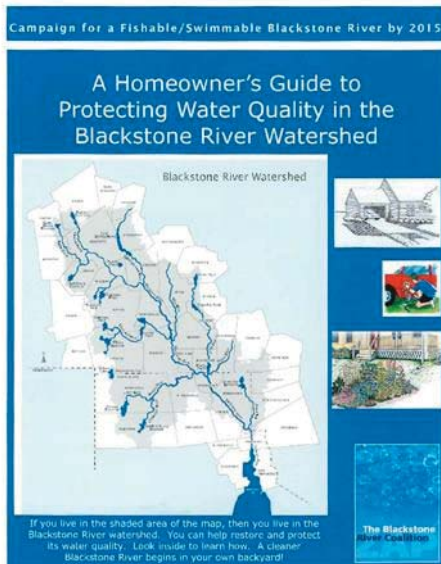
by Michelle Walsh, BRWA Outreach Coordinator

In 2006 and 2007, the BRWA, with the assistance of Mass Riverways and Unibank, conducted shoreline surveys on three tributaries of the Blackstone River – the Mumford, West, and Mill Rivers. Due to the success of these shoreline surveys, Mass Riverways awarded the BRWA an additional grant to further protect, promote, and restore the Rivers.

To reach our goals, the scope of work included educating municipal leaders, homeowners, and business owners on best practices for “river-friendly” behavior. The communities involved were Blackstone, Douglas, Hopedale, Mendon, Millville, Northbridge, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, and Whitinsville.

Part of the scope included distribution of educational materials to residents along each of these Rivers. BRWA distributed packets of materials that were designed and compiled by the Blackstone River Coalition (BRC) to inform residents about conditions of local waterways; educate them on the threats of stormwater runoff and suggest ways to minimize the impacts of their outdoor routines; and encourage their involvement with the Association. The packets were hand delivered to homes along each of the Rivers within the listed communities.

### The BRC’s “A Homeowners Guide to Protecting Water Quality in the Blackstone River Watershed” includes several fact sheets:



- Greening your Lawn and Garden
- Cleaner Car Care
- Poop Pickup
- Clean Dishes and Clean Streams
- Rooftop Runoff – Harvesting Rainwater
- H2W – Household Hazardous Waste
- Homeowners – UNPAVE”; and
- Life on the Edge of a Waterway.

In addition to the Guide, the packet includes:

- Do and don'ts for protecting water quality
- Report card of water quality testing results
- BRWA brochure, membership application, and
- Letter from the BRWA explaining our objective to engage members of the community in the protection of our riverways.

To kick off the distribution of the guides, volunteers met at River Bend Farm Visitor Center for a brief orientation of the materials and the delivery checklist provided by the BRWA. The checklist included targeted addresses; additional space to note small to mid-sized businesses and horse farms located along the Rivers; and any observations of concern. A total of 44 volunteers distributed 553 guides.



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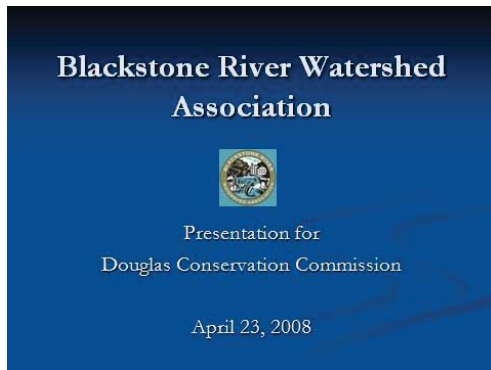
Volunteers also reached out to businesses located along the Rivers to educate them on the impacts that stormwater runoff has on water quality. These companies are being encouraged to adopt the applicable “10 Good Housekeeping Practices” that the Blackstone River Coalition’s “In Business for the Blackstone” program promotes to eliminate the risk of contaminated runoff.

**“In Business for the Blackstone” 10 Good Housekeeping Practices include:**

1. Clean and maintain storm drains and catch basins regularly.
2. Keep parking lot and loading area clean.
3. Design lot features that infiltrate, filter, or detain runoff.
4. Use environmentally-sensitive landscaping practices.
5. Ensure dumpsters remain closed and leak-proof.
6. Move stored materials indoors or keep properly covered.
7. Wash vehicles and equipment responsibly.
8. Conduct routine maintenance on vehicles to prevent leaks.
9. Make a spill response plan and clean-up kit accessible.
10. Train employees on good housekeeping practices.



Twelve small businesses were identified as potential targets for the program. An introduction letter, a copy of the water quality monitoring report card, and an “In Business for the Blackstone” tri-fold were sent to four companies whose facility is immediately adjacent to one of the Rivers and there are plans to reach out to the remaining eight.



The second part of the scope included meeting with each community’s Conservation Commission (ConCom) to raise their level of awareness around watershed issues specific to their town. A customized PowerPoint presentation included a brief introduction to the BRWA; an overview of current BRWA activities; water quality monitoring data; cold-water fishery data; shoreline survey findings; and current BRWA outreach initiatives. Presenting information to each ConCom has allowed the BRWA to further establish collaboration between the communities and our outreach goals and increased our influence in watershed-related issues within these

communities.

BRWA is pleased with the outcome of this initiative and are proud of the outreach it was able to accomplish, thanks to the support of Riverways and their grant award. The greatest benefits of the activities described are the enhanced presence that the organization now has throughout the watershed and the new relationships that will support greater successes with future projects. The BRWA was able to significantly strengthen its volunteer base with new and more dedicated individuals. In total, this group donated more than 200 hours to support the outreach activities. This growth will help expand the organization’s sphere of influence in future endeavors

BRWA would like to thank the following volunteers who helped us reach our goals!  
Matthew Brady, Linda Brown, Marylynn Dube, Kaylie Iacovelli

*Continued*

**Blackstone River Watershed Association Members**

Bill Dausey, Ronnie Fischer, Tammy Gilpatrick, Shelley McGonagle, Mitchell McGonagle, Joel Morgenstern, Phil Neeland, Dona Neely, Joan Newton, Jim Plasse, Maggie Plasse, Mike Pouliot, Shirley Smith, Charlie Sweet, Alex Thompson, Michelle Walsh



**Blackstone-Millville Regional High School**

Teacher – Tim Johnson

Students – Kristie Baldelli, Dana Byron, Angel M. Cancano, Meghan Crawford, Lauren Curry, Rosalind Helrit, Norman Lachapello, Jason Landry, Mary Millette, Nick Panu, Brittany Paulnus, Shana Petriello, Robert Rival, Jessica Thibault

**Sutton Senior Center**

Members

**Troop 7 Uxbridge, MA**

Scoutmaster Allen Randolph

Kris MacNeill, Shawn MacNeill, Dan

Nordquist, Sean Schofield, and Alex Treide  
Parents: Phil Treide and Tracy MacNeill

**Troop 1122 Uxbridge, MA**

Thomas Bullock, Brian Dipasquale, John Piotrowski, Brandon Walker

We look forward to building on this momentum and have formed an “Outreach and Education” subcommittee to help define our plans for the future.

For an in-depth review of 2008 outreach accomplishments, please visit our website at [www.thebrwa.org](http://www.thebrwa.org) or call us at (508) 278-5200 for further information.



Troop 131 in Sutton partnered with BRWA on June 8, 2008 and cleaned a 1.5 mile section along the Mumford River

## Building Your Own Rain Garden

by Jim Plasse

After reading the Rooftop Runoff section of the *Homeowners Guide to Protecting Water Quality in The Blackstone River Watershed*, I decided that it might be a good idea to build a rain garden instead of using that ugly piece of PVC pipe in the front of my house. The pipe was a quick fix to direct rainwater from the roof onto the lawn and into the ground, instead of letting it run down the driveway into the street and into the brook near my house.



The Rain Garden was simple and inexpensive to build. Since I already had a flowerbed in the front, I simply had to dig a trench in front of the flowerbed down to the sand and gravel level. I put in some crushed stone and ran some flexible perforated four-inch PVC from the downspout. I covered it all with more crushed stone and then with topsoil. The whole operation took me only a couple of hours and cost me less than fifty dollars.





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## Why Join BRWA?

The Blackstone River Watershed Association (BRWA) is dedicated to enhancing and preserving the Blackstone River system and its watershed. To support this commitment, the BRWA monitors conditions, identifies areas of concern, and engages local citizens in the protection and enjoyment of our natural resources. This is accomplished through a variety of activities to which the organization is committed to continue for the long term. They include:

- **WATER QUALITY MONITORING** – BRWA participates in the Blackstone River Coalition’s Watershed-wide Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program. Almost 30 volunteers monitor 33 sites in the mid-reach section of the Blackstone River.
- **STREAM TEAMS** – BRWA established Stream Teams made up of volunteer River advocates. The volunteers conduct shoreline surveys, develop action plans, and work on resolving problem areas.
- **RIVER CLEAN-UPS** – BRWA regularly schedules riverbank clean-ups.
- **EDUCATIONAL FORUMS** – BRWA provides public workshops to increase public understanding and community stewardship of the ecological resources of the Blackstone River watershed.
- **NEWSLETTER** – BRWA publishes three newsletters per year in the spring, summer and fall.
- **MEETINGS** – BRWA holds monthly board meetings on the second Thursday of every month from 7:00-9:00PM at River Bend Farm Visitor Center. Visit our website for directions to River Bend Farm. Meetings are open to the public.

The BRWA is a volunteer organization. We rely on grants, donations and membership dues to support our programs. Donations to BRWA are tax deductible. You can now join by credit card from our website.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZipCode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please send only email newsletters and notices.

\$ 10.00-24.99 Friend

\$ 100.00-999.00 Guardian

\$ 25.00-49.99 Keeper

\$ 1000.00 Benefactor

\$ 50.00-99.99 Protector

\$ 5000.00+ Steward