

WPWA  
Executive Director Report  
3/15/12

**Project Updates**

**Shannock**

**Lower Shannock Falls Project**

The 3 weirs built below the former dam site are not functioning at an optimal level for fish passage. A repair strategy has been developed, has received RIDEM permit approval, but due to high river flows has been delayed until Summer 2012. The cost to manage the high water is more costly than intruding on the Town's public park due to be completed in May 2012. The minor park disturbance has already been verbally approved by RIDEM and the Town of Richmond. A free standing boulder in the center channel that is presenting an obstruction for paddlers will be removed as part of the repair. Contract for Engineer's oversight of the repair was authorized by A. Desbonnet on 9-15-11.

On Tuesday 10-18-11 the Town of Richmond's Council President endorsed the long term easement between the Town and RIDEM. This easement places ownership of the weirs in RIDEM's hands and allows their agents and assigns permanent access across the Town's property for the purpose of maintenance and repair.

**Horseshoe Falls Project**

The construction phase of this project is on hold for the winter, is only \$7K over the projected budget (but well below the \$100K contingency) and only slightly behind schedule despite two early change orders and weather. 100% of the concrete pouring has been completed. The new eelway design has been tested at the USGS lab and has been found to be passing eels at or above the level of traditional eelways. This task is now over budget by appx \$40K, but well within the overall project contingency.

**Kenyon Mill Dam Project**

NOAA project partners have notified by C. Fox that an Executive Order to expend all ARRA funds by 9-30-13 has forced their decision to construct a full elevation rock ramp that preserves the existing Kenyon impoundment in 2012. A wetland permit application is now under consideration by RIDEM, is currently in public comment, and permit approval is expected in April 2012. Partners are scheduled to meet on March 16<sup>th</sup> for final design approval. To be immediately followed by solicitation of cost proposals from the 5 pre-qualified construction contractors. Prior to bid solicitation, WPWA will be provided an amended opinion of construction cost to help guide further fundraising efforts. Costs will be further refined through the bidding process.

In early March, WPWA was awarded \$50K in CRMC state level funding that could serve as a match for additional federal funds. \$30K in additional funds from Save the Bay's residual 2011 Restore America's Estuaries funds are expected to be formally transferred to this project in April. C. Fox is currently negotiating with NRCS and the RI Conservation Committee to utilize a portion of its \$200K in Emergency Watershed Protection funding for debris removal on the Pawcatuck.

Community level cost cutting measures continue to be negotiated by WPWA. Long and short term access and maintenance easements are under development and are expected to be complete and executed prior to the start of construction.

**White Rock Dam** A chance meeting occurred on Feb. 14<sup>th</sup> between C. Fox and Jack Wilson (manager) and Paul Bergendahl (finance exec) of Griswold Textile Inc. I briefly explained the nature of WPWA's interest in the dam with both men. I noted that there is preliminary interest by the two states, the federal gvt and others to remove the White Rock Dam. We agreed that at this early stage there is no apparent direct benefit to Griswold to remove the dam but that both WPWA and Griswold will continue to investigate what, if any, benefit there could be to Mill that would be used as a selling point to the

Corporation's board. The two did indicate that the results of a hydropower engineering study performed in the early 1980's resulted in abandonment of any hydro pursuits by the dam owner. Subsequent to this meeting C. Fox learned of planned Feasibility Study for flood mitigation on the Lower Pawcatuck by the Army Corps of Engineers via a draft report obtained from RI TNC. Contained within was a loose recommendation that the study investigate the benefits of removing the White Rock Dam as a mitigation measure. If completed in a timely fashion, this ACoE study could eliminate the need for WPWA to undertake a costly study phase. A PDF copy of the full ACoE report is available upon request.

**Campus Renovation Project** The project is largely completed, including new public bathroom, signs, and landscaping. An invoice was submitted to RIDEM on Jan. 5 of this year and has since been paid in full. In the spring we will complete small details on the landscaping. Kiosk improvements and upgrades are in the design process with final changes expected in late winter.

**FEMA/USGS Mapping & Mitigation in the Watershed** Risk MAP is a new FEMA program that helps communities identify, assess, and reduce their flood risk. By combining quality engineering with updated flood hazard data, FEMA provides accurate and easy-to-use information to enhance local mitigation plans, improve community outreach, and increase local awareness to flood hazards. C. Fox was invited to attend the project kickoff meeting that sought front end input from the stakeholders. WPWA provided input and advocated for the mapping component of the overall project to include the upper Pawcatuck as part of its post 2010 Flood floodplain map revision effort. FEMA made a soft commitment to do so which could result in a cost savings of \$30K to the Shannock Fish Passage Project. For more information contact C. Fox direct.

**Water Quality Monitoring** No current monitoring projects are ongoing aside from our annual monitoring WQM locations throughout the watershed.

**Kayaking Programs** Staff is working to set the schedule of events for Summer 2012

**Hiking Programs** D. Aube has begun a monthly hiking series where participants will walk through the watershed as they "Explore the WPWA Hiking Guide". With the arrival of the new year, the walks will change slightly to focus on birding. In addition, Roger Masse, a PhD student at URI, is co-leading a series of birding hikes that provide participants with information on bird watching on the trails of local management areas and bird sanctuaries. In total there will be seven of these events from January to May.

**Browning Mill Pond in Exeter** The Trail Advisory Committee has granted us a one year extension on this project. We will continue to look for a volunteer to complete this project as the original Eagle Scout candidate has since declined to participate.

**Blowdown Clearing** In late 2011, the Trail Advisory Committee granted WPWA \$500 to purchase a 13 foot canoe with trolling motor from one of our volunteers to assist in blowdown removal. We have since refined the grant request to include an additional \$2,500 to support the cost of a private contractor to perform tree removal on the upper Wood River along with other sites in the watershed. This grant modification was recently approved and contractor negotiations are ongoing.

### **Public Outreach, Education & Access**

**Events** The board member sponsored WPWA Lecture Series continues with a talk on Rhode Island's geologic history told through the igneous rocks of the area. Another is planned for later in March focusing on the Kenney Azalea Garden. The series will continue in May with a final presentation on the geological history RI's coast to be given by state geologist Jon Boothroyd at WPWA's Annual Meeting.

**Writing and Community Service Student** The final paper from the student was not what we anticipated and we will likely not be posting it on our website. However, a new crop of students has been engaged under the direction of D. Poyer and D. Ionata and we are hopeful that the products of this phase will be useful.

**CCRI Community Service Work Day** WPWA applied for and was selected by CCRI to be a recipient of their of their state-wide community service day on March 27, 2012. A group of students will come to the WPWA campus to rake, plant and mulch new plant beds, along with other yard cleanup projects. They will also clean out the kayaks and install new foot pegs and handles in order to get them ready for the summer programs. Earth Care Farms will donate 1 cubic yard of compost (\$60 value) and give WPWA a 20% discount on any other material. Fox and Poyer will determine what other resources we need to complete the plantings, stabilize the bank and reseed the lawn area.

**Envirothon** D. Poyer will continue as the Aquatics chair and judge for the 2012 RI Envirothon. She also gave a presentation on storm water issues at the workshop held on Feb. 18, 2012.

**Project Wet** D. Poyer continues to attempt to arrange coordinator training with the Project Wet team. Due to circumstances on the Project Wet side she has been unable to arrange training earlier than mid May, 2012. She will also be attending training at the Project Wet Conference in late May, which will be held this year in Bridgewater, MA.

**RI Blueways Alliance** *No new developments.*

**Website** The Shop Page was recently modified to allow for automatic calculation of RI sales tax which reduces the burden of time for the staff to perform that after the sale has occurred. The page now complies with ALL the current sales tax regulations including assessing a tax on shipping costs.

**Newsletter** The Fall 2011 issue went out to members near the end of November. WPWA is currently accepting submissions from the board, members, associates, and the public at large for the Winter 2012 issue, due to be released in early April. Please send your contributions to: [danielle@wpwa.org](mailto:danielle@wpwa.org)

**Merchandise** *No new developments*

**Constant Contact/Social Media** *No new developments*

**Land Acquisition** *No new developments*

**Presentations & Conferences** D. Poyer will give two presentations at the Land and Water Summit on March 10th. She will also be conducting a workshop at REI in Cranston in March. C. Fox will co-present "Working Rivers: Balancing Restoration and Preservation" at the 2012 Statewide Historic Preservation Conference. For more info visit [http://www.preservation.ri.gov/conference/12overview.php?utm\\_source=February+2012&utm\\_campaign=conf+feb+2012&utm\\_medium=email](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/conference/12overview.php?utm_source=February+2012&utm_campaign=conf+feb+2012&utm_medium=email)

**Operation Military Kids (OMK)** D. Poyer will apply for a grant from REI to cover the expenses to repeat this meaningful program in 2012. Though adequate funding has already been secured from the Lattner Family Foundation.

## **Stormwater Outreach Committee** *No new developments*

**Statewide Freshwater Wetland Restoration Strategy** DEM is moving ahead with the development of a coordinated Freshwater Wetland Restoration Strategy. They are targeting the end of September to have a draft strategy available for review. The advisory group information and support materials are posted on the web @ <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/benviron/water/wetlands/rsdev.htm>. WPWA will continue to be a key player in this process.

**Statewide River Restoration Strategy Team** WPWA is represented on this team that is coordinated by Narragansett Bay Estuary Program and Save the Bay under the umbrella of the RI Habitat Restoration Strategy Team (RICRMC) with the intent of shaping future statewide river restoration policies and priorities. The purpose is to create a coordinated statewide effort toward restoring RI's rivers with an emphasis on dam removals. The group is in the process of compiling a white paper with support from an NBEP intern that will detail past, present and future riverine restoration activities statewide. C. Fox serves as the Team's WPWA contributor.

**Watershed Counts** D Poyer and WPWA volunteer E. Torello have attended meetings to develop indicators for fresh water quality. The subcommittee presented their work at a workshop on Jan. 26. The final product will be presented on Earth Day in April at the State House. WPWA received the first payment of \$3,500 in Nov., 2011. The next payment will be \$2,500 on approximately June 30, 2012. All funds go toward supporting D. Poyer's time invested in this project.

**Water Trail Mapping** The RI Blueways Alliance (Blueways) has received a grant from the RIF to develop maps of river trails for 10 Watershed Counsels in RI. The grant will pay for a graphics artist to create 2 maps for each watershed. The watershed groups must provide the text and pictures for the maps. An example of a map can be seen at: <http://www.exploreri.org/documents/UpperNemasketMapGuide.pdf>. The same designer has been hired to do the Blueways mapping project. D. Poyer has selected the two routes on the Wood River. She is working on providing the designer with the defined river segments, key land marks, caution areas, text, and photos. Once completed, the maps will be made available as pdf files on the Blueways website, [www.exploreri.org](http://www.exploreri.org) and WPWA website. Visitors to these sites would be able to download the maps for free. WPWA will own the files and can update or change them.

Fox and Poyer decided to take advantage of this mapping project because many people are using the internet almost exclusively to get maps and information about paddling routes. These maps will likely not cut down on River Guide sales any more than the internet use already does. The maps will contain information about WPWA and should generate more interest in the Association.

## **Pawcatuck Estuary Water Quality Issues** *No new developments*

**Press Articles** Several articles on WPWA's Winter Fly Tying Program and Fly Rod Building have been published in the Wood River Press and Westerly Sun in early 2012.

## **Partnerships**

**Save the Lakes** C. Fox attended a recent STL meeting that featured RIDEM Dir. Coit as guest speaker. This statewide group has evolved over recent years and is gaining credibility with the addition of Linda Green and Bob Nero as board members. The group appears to be moving toward a more science and watershed based approach toward their "restoration" efforts. WPWA enrolled for a free one year membership in an effort to learn more about the group, monitor their activities and passively support their efforts.

**Wild & Scenic** Dir. Sullivan from TNC will be meeting with policy makers in Washington DC. He plans to discuss the potential for the bill getting passed this year. He will communicate any findings to D. Poyer later this month.

**Southern New England Paddle Group /Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association** Jim Cole has recommended WPWA for a \$250 RICKA grant to purchase new foot pegs for our kayaks.

**RI Environmental Education Association** D. Poyer is serving on the RIEEA website committee. This site will include a searchable database of all environmental organizations in the state.

**URI NEMO** WPWA continues to collaborate with this URI Coop Ext. project through the inclusion of content in our quarterly newsletter.

**Narragansett Bay Estuary Program** *No new developments*

**Save the Bay** WPWA is working to reprogram appx \$30K in unspent Restore America's Estuaries money granted to STB to WPWA's Kenyon Mill Dam Fish Restoration Project. This redirection of funds should be approved and contractually settled by April.

**The Nature Conservancy** TNC has purchased a 76-acre property in the watershed on the CT line, in West Greenwich, near Tillinghast Pond. It includes a short stretch of the Falls River. Very wet, and barely developable, but contains mature floodplain forest. TNC had been negotiating with the land owner for nearly 15 years.

**RIDEM** Recently acquired 85 acres on the west side of the Wood River upstream of our campus surrounding Frying Pan Pond. They intend to improve public access there. C. Fox has had preliminary talks with RIDEM regarding the possibility of WPWA administering the access improvements with funds from RIDEM.

**HopArts** *No new developments*

### **Routine Business**

**Champlin Capital Revolving Fund** *No new developments*

**WPWA Employee Handbook** This legally binding handbook is new for WPWA in 2012 and is board approved and in production. Once received, all WPWA employees will be required to sign the handbook annually. The company Paychex will continue to update the manual annually to ensure WPWA remains compliant with current all labor laws and standard human resource practices.

**Federally Mandated Audit** Our 2011 Audit is underway.

**Membership** WPWA's Annual Appeal letter went out to members at the end of November 2011. WPWA has received over \$10,000 from the year-end gifts made by over 100 of the 900+ active and inactive WPWA members who were solicited.

**Office Watershed Map** We're making slow but steady progress on this volunteer effort by Ed Poyer with support from Dr. August's GIS lab at URI. The working draft is hanging in WPWA's conference room for inspection and comment.

### **Watershed Concerns**

**Pawcatuck Hurricane Prevention Barrier** This levee encompasses the mill complex on the CT side of the lower Pawcatuck River. The barrier was built decades ago by the Army Corps with maintenance and ownership transferred to the Town of Stonington at time of completion. In a 2011 Corps inspection the growth of mature trees on the levee raised concern over long term levee stability and the Town was instructed to remove them in accordance with the Corps maintenance manual. The Town initiated the tree removal in February. A small contingency of Westerly residents requested WPWA and Save the Bay intervene. Both groups did so in an amicable fashion and subsequently met with the Town DPW director and reps from the Corps at a site meeting for which the complainants were allowed to attend. At that meeting it was determined that more trees must be removed to satisfy the Corps. All parties now understand the need for the removal and consider the matter closed.

**Brushy Brook** *No known significant progress to report.*

**Renewable Resources Inc. (Potter Hill) Hydro Project** *No known significant progress to report.*

**Loves Truck Stop and Country Stores** *No known significant progress to report*