



Survivor

This ice-coated tree, hanging to the rocks in the Potholes in Shelburne Falls, has become a favorite of river-watchers. The tree, according to an article in the West County News by Kathleen O'Rourke, is a water birch over 20 years old. It is about five feet high and seems nearly indestructible.

Photo: T.Merrill

Annual DRWA Forum

This year's forum "Moving Ahead in the Watershed: Planning To Take Action" will follow up on last year's focus on open space protection. Two major players will report on major projects: The Franklin Regional Council of Governments' Planning Department's watershed-wide open space plan and Gomez and Sullivan's watershed assessment and action plans.

You may have been part of some of those meetings. Now we want to focus on the specific areas of trails, vernal pools, local agricultural economic support, and landscape-protective zoning. Plan to be there!

When: April 24th from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm.

Where: Mohawk Trail Regional High School.

Registration fee: \$10, \$5 for DRWA members.

Spring is the Time to Hit Mahican Mohawk Trail

Spring will come and the snow will go away. Then it will be the time to hike the Mahican-Mohawk Trail while you still can see through the trees to the Deerfield River. That portion of the Mahican-Mohawk Trail (M-M Trail) most-hiked is between Route 2 in Shelburne, just east of the State Police Barracks, and Hoosac Road in Deerfield. The Deerfield River Watershed Association (DRWA) is the steward for these eight miles of mostly rough foot-trail running parallel to the river with some spectacular streams tumbling down rocks of the steep river banks to the main river.

Starting on the western end of the trail on Route 2 in Shelburne, there is a pull-off for leaving cars at that trail head. The trail heads toward the river though tall Red Pine and other planted trees left over from the Franklin Forestry in the 1930s. Some of this part of the trail is on the old Indian trail which the settlers later used as their road. At Wilcox Hollow, the trail meets the river just below the outflow of the Gardner's Falls Dam. The trail continues along the bank for a while, giving some beautiful views down the pond for the next dam, the # 2 Dam of US Gen. Although the trail is following the river

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down stream, the trail itself makes many ups and downs as it finds its way along the steep banks. Early Spring hikers will be rewarded with many wildflowers in this stretch of the trail.

After about four and a half miles of woodland delights, the trail comes out onto the Boston and Maine Railroad tracks. These tracks carry heavy freight trains, and hikers should stay away from the tracks but follow the road next to the tracks to Bardwell Ferry Road and the highway bridge across the Deerfield River. This bridge is a lenticular truss bridge (because it looks like the lens of an eye) and was featured in a movie recently.

After crossing the bridge, hikers should follow the road up the hill until the high tension lines cross the road, at which point is a M-M Trail sign on the left, pointing over the bank. The trail here picks up the long ago abandoned New Haven Railroad right of way, which used to connect New York and Shelburne Falls. The walking is easy along the old railroad bed, with one detour to avoid a spectacular washout. Finally you arrive at the old Conway Station site on the New Haven Line and where the trolley used to come down from Conway's industrial center to meet the railroad. There is a dirt road from the Bardwell Ferry/ Shelburne Road, which comes to the station site allowing cars to pick up and drop hikers here.

At this point the New Haven Railroad used to cross the South River on the highest steel truss bridge in New England. The bridge was 550-feet long and 175 to 200 feet above the water. All that is left of the bridge now are the impressive stone abutments at the higher levels and the four stone piers in the river bottom. To be able to see this impressive stone work is another reason to hike this area before the leaves are on the trees.

The trail goes down the steep banks to the South River but at this writing, Spring of 2004, there is no bridge across the South River. Adventuresome souls may walk across, using three steel cables strung between two of the piers.

In low water, it is sometimes possible to hop between stones in the river or to wade across. This property is owned by USGen, and Conservation Restrictions have been given the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation. In cooperation with these organizations the DRWA is seeking grants to build a foot bridge between the piers in the bottom of the river. We all hope that this will be accomplished by the end of the Summer of '04.

Assuming you were able to cross the South River, follow the trail up the steep bank to the old railroad right of way again. Here hikers have a choice of just following the level roadbed the two miles to Hoosac Road (be sure to see the impressive stone work as the right of way crosses stream valleys) or taking three woodland trail loops toward the Deerfield River. The trail could not be made as one continuous woodland trail because of the severe

steepness of the incoming streams.

We have hopes of sometime connecting the Hoosac Road end of the trail with a trail through farmland along the river to Deerfield then up to connect with the Pocumtuck Ridge Trail which connects South Deerfield and Greenfield.

The trail does not stay open by itself but needs volunteers to help with clearing blowdowns and constructing bog bridges over wet spots. There will also be opportunity to help with access trails to the South River Bridge.

Hikers interested in helping with these projects should contact Polly Bartlett at (413)625-6628. DRWA also has a new trail boss, Jim Vieira from Ashfield, who is looking forward to working with and coordinating volunteers.

Polly Bartlett

Coverts Project to Focus On Deerfield Basin Communities

For the last 14 years, the Coverts Project, organized by the UMass - Amherst Dept. of Natural Resources Conservation and funded by Mass Wildlife, has trained over 300 community opinion leaders in conservation and forest stewardship in a 3-day intensive workshop. In return for this all-expense-paid educational program, including room & board, reference materials, and an educational program with over 15 speakers and field trips, participants agree to return to their respective communities and serve as advocates or spokespersons for forest stewardship. Coverts Cooperators have been dedicated landowners, Conserva-

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Public Meeting

Concerning the

Deerfield River Watershed Assessment Plan

March 31, 2004

6:00 – 8:00 PM

Greenfield Community College

Main Campus Auditorium, 1 College Drive

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), Gomez and Sullivan Engineers, and the Deerfield River Watershed Team have developed a comprehensive assessment report for the Deerfield River Watershed. Please come to hear about the watershed and the assessment report, and voice your opinion.

The next step will be to create a Watershed Action Plan (WAP) based on the information gathered from this assessment and from a series of workshops and public meetings. The WAP will outline priority actions or projects that could be adopted by government bodies and businesses, as well as citizen groups for the purpose of protecting and improving the environmental health of the watershed. Priority actions will not be limited to projects best suited for agency implementation, but will identify potential actions which could be taken by other stakeholders in the watershed.

If you live in one of the following towns, YOU could be part of this process:

Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Heath, Monroe, Rowe, Shelburne, Florida, Hawley, Greenfield, Leyden, Ashfield, Conway, Savoy, Deerfield, Bernardston, North Adams, Adams, Plainfield, and Goshen.

Sponsored by:

**Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs,
Gomez and Sullivan Engineers, PC,
the Deerfield River Watershed Team**

Please complete survey on back of page

Deerfield River Watershed Action Plan Survey

A watershed is a drainage area in which all water flows toward a central basin such as lake, river, or stream. Mountain ridges sometimes act as defining boundaries for watersheds. Not only does a watershed drain, but it also captures precipitation, filters and stores water, and determines its release. A watershed divides the landscape into a hydrologically defined area. The Deerfield River, with its drainage area of approximately 665 square miles, is one of the coldest and cleanest rivers in Massachusetts. Most of its headwaters are located in the Green Mountains of southern Vermont. The Deerfield River flows approximately 70 miles before draining into the Connecticut River in Greenfield, Massachusetts. The watershed includes more than 149 streams, 21 lakes and ponds, and 20 municipalities with a population of approximately 35,000 people.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) along with Gomez and Sullivan Engineers and the Deerfield River Watershed Team is interested in hearing about your land and water-related issues within the Deerfield River Watershed in order to assist with the development of the Deerfield River Watershed Action Plan (WAP). The WAP will outline priority actions or projects that could be adopted by government bodies, businesses, as well as citizen groups for the purpose of protecting and improving the environmental health of the watershed.

Priority actions will not be limited to projects best suited for agency implementation, but will identify potential actions which could be taken by other stakeholders in the watershed. Your involvement would be greatly appreciated in order to identify and shape these priority actions.

Please complete the survey by Friday, April 9th Also, feel free to send an e-mail with the answers to the questions to bkrumrine@gomezandsullivan.com. For questions, please call 603-529-4400. Thank you for your time and dedication.

1. Within which subwatershed do you reside?

Deerfield Mainstem, North Branch East Branch West Branch
North River Pelham River Green River
Mill Brook Cold River Chickley River Clesson Brook
I don't know

2. What do you feel are the most valued attributes (esthetic, recreational, cultural, or other) in your subwatershed?

a. _____
b. _____

3. What do you feel are the most important environmental issues in your subwatershed (little river basin, as identified above) that you would like to see resolved?

a. _____
b. _____

4. What do you feel are the most important environmental issues in the entire Deerfield River Watershed that you would like to see resolved?

a. _____
b. _____

**Mail survey to to Gomez and Sullivan Engineers,
Attn: Beth Krumrine, 55 North Stark Highway, Weare, NH 03281.**

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tion Commission members, or leaders in local land trusts or watershed groups. They have spread the word about forest stewardship through local newspaper stories, woods walks, local access cable television, one-on-one discussions with landowners, and other means.

This year, Coverts is specifically focusing on communities in the Deerfield River basin. The program will begin on: Thursday evening May 5, and continue the next day at the Harvard Forest in Petersham.. The program will continue again for the day on Saturday, May 15, and Saturday May 22 at a convenient location to be selected in the Deerfield River area. Program topics include: forest ecology, wildlife biology, growing and producing wood products, biodiversity and rare species, land protection and management strategies, and communication skills. Participants are required to attend all parts of the program. The Coverts Program is not designed as a workshop series with partial or optional participation.

In return for this all-expense paid opportunity, participants must agree to return and serve their communities as spokespersons or advocates for forest stewardship in their communities. Space in the program is limited to 25, and an approved application is required. Applications and other information are available online:

<http://forest.fnr.umass.edu/coverts.htm>.

The application deadline is April 9.

David Kittredge, Extension Forester:

413 545-2943 (dbk@forwild.umass.edu).

Water Monitoring Program Gears up for '04 Season

We are in the planning stages for the 2004 water quality monitoring season. Final sampling dates haven't been firmed up, but we will probably monitor pH/alkalinity the third weekend in April, and switch to bacteria for 6 weeks in the summer (June through August). We are thinking of changing some sampling sites for bacteria, to monitor some other popular swimming areas in the watershed.

At this time, we would like to hear from anybody who can be a volunteer monitor this season. If you have suggestions for sampling sites, let us know as well. Contact Françoise Walk at 413-774-7025 or mf.walk@verizon.net.

Curious Naturalists to Meet in Buckland at Red Gate Farm

Curious Naturalists is a hands-on class that invites kids of all ages and their families to investigate the woods, fields, pond and stream at Red Gate Farm on Saturdays 9am-12pm. Each session includes hiking, observation and journal writing. Topics of exploration include Trees, Birds, Pond and Stream, Sensory Observation, Animal Tracks and Writing About Nature. A month-long series for children, beginning April 24th, 2004, will span four Saturdays and will encourage a growing understanding and relationship with the natural world. Each session will cover a different theme and will include keeping a nature journal. Red Gate Farm is a non-profit educational farm located in Buckland, with 60 acres of gardens, farm animals, woodlands and water. For more information or to register for one Saturday or for the Curious Naturalist Spring Series, call (413) 625-9432.

Become a DRWA Member!

Name

Street.....

City.....State.....Zip.....

E-Mail.....

Individual \$15, Family/Business \$25

Contributing \$50, Sustaining \$100, Patron \$500

Clip and send to DRWA Box 13

Shelburne Falls, MA 01370

Interested in Land Use and Open Space?

Check out the web page dedicated to these issues on DRWA's web site:

WWW.deerfieldriver.org/landuse.html

Content and suggestions for our web pages are welcome.

Contact Françoise Walk at mf.walk@verizon.net

With your suggestions.

Celebrate RiverFest in June

This year's RiverFest will be Saturday, June 5 from 9 am. to 4 pm. in Shelburne Falls. The theme this year is "The River Called Us", a look at our history and also our present.

A RiverFest committee has been working on plans since September and has commitments from the local schools to provide educational material.

RiverFest highlights include games, quiet raft rides on the river, street music, mimes, the Frog and Flower parade as well as tag and book sales, store promotions and vendors. Plan to attend this annual

Celebration of the River. DRWA will have a booth.

DON'T MISS THE DRWA FORUM

APRIL 24, 8:30 AM TO NOON

MOHAWK HIGH SCHOOL
RT 112
BUCKLAND

DEERFIELD RIVER CURRENT

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Editors Ted Merrill, Françoise Walk

The Deerfield River Watershed Association is a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation, protection and enhancement of the Deerfield River and its tributaries in the interest of its adjacent communities. Its activities include water quality monitoring, educational programs, administration of volunteer programs and participation in regulatory matters.

Officers:

Gisela Walker, *President*

Françoise Walk, *Vice President*

Carrie Banks, *Secretary*;

Board Members:

Polly Bartlett, Peter Buell, Robert May,

Karl Meyer, Ted Merrill

www.deerfieldriver.org

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