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Deerfield River Watershed Association, Inc.

Winter/Spring 2003



**Christine Duerring** (at far right) conducted regular meetings of the Deerfield Watershed team for the past 3 years. Here, the team met at the PG&E National Energy Group visitor center for a first hand look at operations at Dam #5.

## State Abolishes Watershed Teams

Environmental agency to substitute “watershed approach” in state offices in lieu of interagency teams.

We are sorry to report that the Romney administration has eliminated the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative, a very successful program of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA). In the words of EOEA’s spokeswoman Kathleen Cahill, as quoted in the Greenfield Recorder, “It no longer made sense ...for there to be a single watershed initiative in a single office, [but] because the model had been shown to be so successful, it made more sense to distribute that bottom-up philosophy about decision making back through all the agencies.”

The Watershed Initiative placed team leaders in all major wa-

### The Team that was... The Deerfield Watershed Team in 2002:

- Dept of Environmental Protection
- Dept of Environmental Management
- Division of Food and Agriculture
- Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
- Office of Technical Assistance
- Division of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement
- Greenfield Water Dept.
- US Natural Resources Conservation Service
- PG&E National Energy Group
- Trout Unlimited
- DRWA
- Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- CRWC
- Jonas Kron, Attorney And others

tersheds including the Deerfield, who led watershed teams made up of representatives from state and federal agencies, as well as local government and local citizen groups. The team reviewed issues and problems in the watershed and allocated funds to address those issues. In the Deerfield, some examples of team-initiated projects included helping farmers fence livestock out of streams, funding the development of open space plans in understaffed rural towns, surveying landfills to determine potential health risks, and funding a wetlands circuit rider to help local conservation commissions. Those are only a few of the projects that the Initiative has sponsored in the last five years.

The Initiative also helped the DRWA directly by awarding us several grants to hire staff for a couple of years and sponsor three successful public forums. It also provided funding for our wetland monitoring project and expanded water quality monitoring project.

From the DRWA’s perspective, the Governor’s move misses the essential point of the Watershed Initiative: to provide coor-

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dination and guidance for the myriad federal, state, local and volunteer groups active in watershed interests and issues. The team-leader function of coordinating the agencies (see box) was the most important key to the success of the “watershed approach.”

The demise of the Watershed Initiative is sure to hurt the DRWA in many ways, but the worst consequence is the departure of team leader Chris Duerring, who is returning to the Dept of Environmental Protection in Worcester. Chris is incredibly knowledgeable, diplomatic and hard-working, and helped DRWA in countless ways to protect and restore our beautiful watershed. Over the past 5 years she has become a trusted friend to those of us involved with the Deerfield. She will be missed, but we hope she will find ways in her new position to visit the watershed and fit in some level of valuable assistance.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs may well be able to establish a “Watershed Approach” to the subsidiary state agencies under its immediate control, but it will not be able to do the same with federal, local and volunteer organizations. The coordination between agencies, which has worked well for the last few years is now up for grabs. Eliminating the team leader office will simply make everything more complicated and more difficult wherever multiple interests are concerned.

At this point, there is not even a firm plan to maintain the inter-group communications links that were established by the team leader and Watershed Initiative. However, several of the Team members, minus some state agency personnel, plan to continue to meet several times a year. The next meeting will be at 10am May 7 at the NRCS conference room in Greenfield. Check [www.deerfieldriver.org](http://www.deerfieldriver.org) for updates.

### ***From the Board:***

**The future is going to be tough!**

**The loss of the Watershed Team dumps a big responsibility on the DRWA. The Association is again virtually alone in having an interest in all aspects of the watershed. Also, it will lose the help and guidance of the Team, which often alerted the DRWA to projects and funding opportunities.**

**To stay effective, we'll need more members and more volunteers. We've always operated on a shoestring and very efficiently. We will continue to do so.**

**BUT WE WILL NEED A LOT OF HELP!**

## **Watershed Gardens Plans Opening in April**

Polly French's dedicated effort to propagate good plants to benefit the DRWA —The Watershed Gardens — will open a bit early this year in April to present early blooming bulbs and wildflowers. As in previous years, she will set out new plants for sale as the season progresses. All funds the Watershed Garden collects beyond basic expenses go to the DRWA, and Polly's garden has been one of the most stable sources of income for the Association for many years.

The Garden is small and operates largely on a self serve basis. You'll find it at 122 State St. on the Buckland side of Shelburne Falls between Rt. 2 and the Neighbors store on the river side of the street. Despite its limited size, the selection is great and the prices are reasonable - most plants are 2 for \$5.00. None are dug from the wild (a strict no-no among wildflower fanciers).

There will be a few (very few so come early) Trilliums this year. They are one of the most beautiful native flowers, but for propagators they are one of the most frustrating plants to grow, requiring eight years to develop from seed to flower. Because of the difficulty in growing them, there are only a few available for sale each year, and they are more expensive than most of Polly's plants (but less than the competition). You should know that whenever you see inexpensive trillium - or any Lady's Slippers for that matter - they are almost certainly dug from the wild and, tempting as they look, so don't buy them.

If you are lucky and catch Polly working in her garden you may get a quick lesson in wildflower conservation and cultivation. Otherwise, serve yourself, and if you'd like, wander down toward the river in back.

Polly is looking for some volunteer help with propagating, potting and labeling. No experience is necessary, but plan to give two hours or so a week. She is also seeking a paid person to help with the lawn and hauling heavier things.

Call Polly French at 413-625- 9765.



**Trillium**



**Ladyslipper protected—do not pick or transplant!**

## Bear River Stream Crossings Survey

On October 20, 2002, four DRWA volunteers led by Christina Maginnis of UMass Extension conducted a stream crossing survey in the Bear River watershed, as part of a pilot project looking at documenting those crossings statewide. The issue is that when roads cross streams, it often creates a barrier to wildlife movement up and down the stream.

The problem is most often culverts: They can be too large for average stream flow, resulting in water depth in the culvert too shallow for fish to swim through. Conversely they can be too small for the stream, creating flow contraction which also prevents fish from swimming through. Or they are perched at their outlet (see photo), preventing fish from going upstream. Some wildlife such as amphibians and small mammals can also be blocked from going upstream/downstream if the culvert does not span some bank area.



**Culvert, with lip, impedes fish passage in a tributary under Baptist Corner Rd.**

Our job was to visit all 29 road/stream crossings in the Bear River watershed, measuring the length and diameter of the culverts, filling out data sheets with the problems encountered. We saw all the problems mentioned above, and many more. There were 8 bridges, which usually did not create a barrier to fish and wildlife. Out of the 21 culverts, in my opinion 20 presented a barrier to wildlife, and 19 to fish.

What's next? UMass Extension plans to use the results of the pilot surveys to design improved data sheets and training for future volunteer surveys. The ultimate goal is to compile a statewide database from which decision-makers can decide which stream crossings should be improved or replaced.

This project was funded by Mass. Watershed Initiative through Riverways.

*Françoise Walk*

## Call for Water Quality Monitors

April 26 will be the first collection day of our Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program's 13th season. Training/recertification will take place April 12<sup>th</sup> so save the date if you plan to (re)join our work force this year. Training takes about 2 hours, and we will need you to collect samples on 7 Sundays between April 26 and August 23. Time commitment for sampling is about 1-1 1/2 hours, depending on how far you live from the site. We will have substitutes in case you can't help on a certain date. If you would like to help out this year, please contact our coordinator Marie (Marjo) Iken at 413-369-4902 or [vdiken@crocker.com](mailto:vdiken@crocker.com). Note: both new and returning volunteers need to contact Marjo. If you have questions about the program, contact Françoise Walk at 413-774-7025 or [mf.walk@verizon.net](mailto:mf.walk@verizon.net). The 2003 schedule, as well as the 2002 Water Quality Monitoring Program Final Report are now available on our web page: [www.deerfieldriver.org/waterquality.html](http://www.deerfieldriver.org/waterquality.html)

## *Japanese Knotweed Survey is On*

The Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has awarded the DRWA a contract to conduct a survey for Japanese knotweed (a non-native, invasive plant) along the Deerfield River's tributaries. Because of the State's budget crisis, the project was cut from a 3-year to a one-year project.

Japanese knotweed is a perennial plant that tolerates a wide range of soil conditions and moisture regimes. It has a bamboo-like stalk, bears white or pink fall flowers and can grow to 6 ft. tall or more. It is very difficult to control or eradicate once it is established and is found in almost all habitats, from your backyard to islands in the Deerfield River.

If you are interested in helping to survey streams and rivers in the watershed for Japanese knotweed, please call or email Pat Serrentino 413-772-0520; and [pserr@crocker.com](mailto:pserr@crocker.com). She will be starting the project at the end of March, and surveys will be completed by early June.

## Give a Friend a Membership in the DRWA

Name .....

Street.....

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

E-Mail.....

**Annual membership:**

**Individual \$15, Family/Business \$25**

**Contributing \$50, Sustaining \$100,**

**Patron \$500**

**Join! Contribute! Renew!**

## SCHEDULE OF SPRING EVENTS

Activities are free and open to the public. Hikers should register with the leaders before the trips.

Sat. May 3 1:00 PM

**Hike: Wild flowers in the Catamount State Forest.** To reach the starting point take Adamsville Road from Rt 112 in Griswoldville, Colrain, to Lively Road then quick left onto East Catamount road (steep and dirt). Follow it to the end where there is parking on the left.  
Leader: Muriel Russell 624-3311

Sat/Sun May 10/11

**Deerfield River Clean Up**  
Details to be announced

Sun. May 18 1:00--4:00 PM

**Hike: Spring Flowers on the Mahican-Mohawk Trail.** Meet at the trail head just east of the Shelburne Police Barracks. This is a rough trail and good walking shoes are advised.  
Leader: Polly Bartlett 625-6628

Sat. May 24 1:00--3:00 PM

**Hike: Goodnow Hill** with views down on Shelburne Falls and the Mohawk Trail. Spring wild flowers will be at their height. In Buckland, take Bray Road to Stone Road to Goodnow Road. Park at end.  
Leader: Peter Buell 625-9529

Sat. May 31

**Deerfield RiverFest**, Shelburne Falls, featuring environmental stories, games, exhibits music and the Annual Frog and Flower Parade.

Sat. May 31

**Hike: Southeast Loop in the Catamounts** to explore vernal pools, invasive plants and more. Bring water and unscented bug dope. Meet at the junction of Rt 112 and Charlemont Road in Colrain 1 1/2 miles north of Shelburne Falls.  
Leader: Muriel Russell 624-3311

Sat. June 21

**Hike: Negus Ridge** above the Deerfield River to see mountain laurel in bloom and spectacular views. Most of the climbing will be done by car but options exist for coming down. Meet at Shunpike Park on Rt 2 West of Charlemont center.  
Leader: Polly Bartlett 625-6628  
Check our web site for further details.

Polly Bartlett



Ice on the Potholes Dam . The spring melt will be spectacular.

## DEERFIELD RIVER CURRENT

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The Deerfield River Watershed Association is a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation, protection and care of the Deerfield River and its tributaries in the interests 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, Richards Steinbock

**[www.deerfieldriver.org](http://www.deerfieldriver.org)**

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