

Support the Environment Bill!

The Massachusetts Legislature is about to vote on the Environment Bond. The bill has passed out of one committee, but we still need citizens to contact their legislators and let them know they want to see the bill passed. This crucial legislation will provide continued funding for many of the state's most important environmental programs. It would authorize \$650 million in capital funds for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for the next five years, including support for the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative which has been extremely beneficial to the Deerfield River Watershed.

DRWA has joined the Coalition for the Environment Bond and we are asking all our members to contact their state legislators and ask for support of the Environment Bond, Section 2F of H. 4213. More information on the web site:

http://www.massaudubon.org/News_&_Action/news.html#env_bond

Call for Water Quality Monitors

Our Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program will begin its 12th season this coming April. Thanks to a Mass. Environmental Trust grant, we will buy a new incubator and have hired a coordinator this season. It is time to inventory our work force and plan our training sessions. If you would like to help out this year, please contact our coordinator Matt Dodge at 413-695-3198 or mdodge75@juno.com. Note: both new and returning volunteers need to contact Matt. If you have questions about the program, contact Françoise Walk at 413-774-7025 or mf.walk@verizon.net. The 2001 Water Quality Monitoring Program Final Report is now available on our web site: www.deerfieldriver.org/waterquality.html

From the Headwaters

A Deep View of the River

The short and powerful Deerfield River represents an ideal microcosm for examining the ways our society views its natural resources and its level of responsibility for exploiting or enhancing them. In order, then, to understand the Deerfield a little better, I have spent much of the past year exploring the tributaries, the falls, the steep banks, the flat stretches.

I located the headwaters, which spill out of a beaver pond, and found the nearby beds where moose sleep in deep grass. I tracked coyote and mink and one sluggish bear and spent time with the beaver that summered in the Gardners Falls canal. The layer of mud between high and low waters was often tough to slide through, but I liked watching the dive of mergansers and the grope of caddis fly larvae. I learned about dryways and radio nuclides and the aqueduct that snakes below Searsburg, and about the different ways people sense that an unannounced surge is arriving.

At night I listened to loons and great horned owls, the crack and groan of winter ice, and the whistle of the train made louder by the river. Figuring out the weight of water came harder, how 3000 cubic feet per second can bend a canoe or force a trapped child to flatten with the current, or how the violent churn of 19,000 cfs looks as it boils over the Shelburne Falls dam. I have seen or read about the accidental spills (latex, sulfuric acid, home heating oil), as well as about those done intentionally, including enough rotenone, back in 1959, to kill all the fish south of the Vermont state line. What I haven't yet figured out, however, is how the river -- a dynamic and inhabited and naturally occurring ecosystem -- could become such a manipulated commodity. I'm still looking for that point in our history when we turned our backs to its flow and faced elsewhere, an attitude I witnessed most keenly on the Connecticut, when I canoed its length twenty-

DRWA Reminds PG&E to Deliver Flow Data

As a key participant in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's relicensing of hydroelectric facilities on the Deerfield River, the DRWA has the ongoing obligation to monitor compliance with the terms of the licensing agreement. Since PG&E NEG took over the dams and generating facilities from New England Power Co., it has apparently overlooked its annual obligation to supply data on water flow to participants in the licensing agreement.

In a letter to PG&E, DRWA has asked the company to provide some of the missing data to the DRWA and other signatories by the middle of May. A company spokesman told a DRWA board member that the data was delayed as a result of data processing conversion. With all PG&E's corporate problems in California, some confusion may be understandable, but PG&E NEG is separate from the utility, and must meet its contractual reporting deadlines.

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five years ago. We saw few people, passed the backsides of towns, and hurried past factories that spewed out colors and foams and left fish floating belly-up in their effluents. Fortunately, that river is now so clean that today's bank dwellers are turning their homes toward the view. The Deerfield, too, is startlingly clear, though I can't quite envision its future well-being, the desires seem so different between the various interest groups. Turning away is no longer an answer, though I'm sorry about the fishermen who quit coming here, believing the unpredictable releases make the fishing too dangerous.

I am keen to know what happens next, however, and what we will each do to protect the sharing of this resource. On a mild winter day, as I walked by the river, past thin plates of ice and pussywillows that came way too early, I remembered a moment in my past when I knew my relationship with water would never be the same. I had spent four days in jail, refusing food or water, until my release on the fifth morning at 2 AM. On my way out, a guard offered me a drink, her kindness and the cool liquid filling my cells at the same time.

Afterward, almost rehydrated and on the back of a friend's motorcycle, everything in that moist night seemed connected by the necessity and pleasure of water -- the deer in the headlight, my eyes tearing in the wind, the frogs' exaggerated leaps as they hurried across the road. I like to think we're bound to the Deerfield in that same fluid and close-woven way.

Catherine Reid

Catherine Reid, a regular water-monitoring volunteer, is currently at work on a book about the Deerfield. She welcomes ideas and comments at catbreid@crocker.com.

Try a Woodland Garden

You don't need a woods to have a woodland garden - just rich, somewhat acid, moist soil which gets some sun in the springtime, but very little midday or afternoon sun in the summer. A single tree, a row of trees, or a north or east-facing wall will do.

Many spring wildflowers bloom early, some can even pop out of the snow in March. They come early to catch the sunlight before the leaves on the trees come out. Some woodland flowers such as Virginia bluebells, spring beauty and various anemones will bloom and then go dormant. Since very little will be blooming in the summer, it is important to choose some plants for interesting, season-lasting leaf height and texture. This might include

ferns, Solomon's seals, merrybells, jack-in-the-pulpits for height at the deeper-shaded back of the bed, trilliums, bloodroot, ginger, wild oats for the middle, and a good ground cover.

My favorite ground cover is foamflower, which has a delightful flower and leaves that spread nicely throughout. On the sunnier edges, I plant later-blooming plants, not considered "woodland", such as sundrops, daisies, rudbeckias and asters. Shady edges could also use non-native small hostas and annuals.

A woodland garden under trees is easy to care for if you remember one cardinal rule: the trees are going to get most of the moisture and nutrients. I feed my gardens with liquid fertilizer in the spring and just after the majority of plants have flowered. Under evergreens I also use a little limestone. I water when needed.

Wildflowers tend to be pretty tough and tolerant of inattention. Since they are under trees, they don't get the masses of weedy neighbors that you will find in a summer perennial bed. If your woodland garden is against a wall, you may find that some plants do better than others depending on how much of the lime from the wall foundation is leaching into the soil and how fertile the soil is.

Wildflowers should never be taken from the wild, and you should try to avoid buying them from mail-order houses unless you are positive they have not been wild-dug. Reliable sources with large selections include Garden-in-the-woods in Framingham and Blanchettes in Carlisle. Andrews in South Amherst and Baystate in Whately carry some favorites. And seed is always a good option.

Visitors are welcome at any time to my small gardens at 122

The DRWA's Website Grows and Grows

If you haven't visited our web site lately you'll be impressed with all the additions. Not only can you find out the latest about our association and our events such as the hikes, but you can learn about recreation in the watershed, wildlife, water quality, how to become a watershed-wise resident and visitor, even facts and figures for a student's homework assignment!

So get surfing and go to :

www.deerfieldriver.org

State St. in Shelburne Falls (on the Buckland side of the river just upstream from Neighbor's Citgo store). The gardens are managed primarily as nurseries for plants that are sold as a fundraiser for the DRWA. There are usually reference books available in my foyer (unlocked), and if I am out and about you can pick my brain. The best of the woodland plants are blooming from late March to early May, though I have some perennials for the summer and fall as well.

Text and illustrations by **Polly French**

The DRWA recognized long-time member and supporter Polly French as River Person of the Year in 2001. Her nature drawings, paintings and collages are popular with collectors.

Planning in the Watershed: Open Space Protection

The Deerfield Watershed Team, which includes representatives from the DRWA, has made support for open space protection planning in the watershed a high priority. Over the last two years the Watershed Team has obtained funds through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Watershed Initiative to help towns prepare or update their Open Space and Recreation Plans. Recently, Dodson and Associates of Ashfield was awarded a contract to assist the towns of Buckland, Shelburne, Conway, Ashfield, and Hawley in the development of open space plans.

Dodson uses a Greenway Planning Model that coordinates three kinds of open space types: Natural resources such as water supplies and wildlife habitat; cultural resources such as scenic and historical sites; and recreational resources. The project will also initiate the formation of a watershed-wide open space plan that will bring these communities together to discuss regional open space planning issues that cross town boundaries.

A similar project to provide individual open space plans for the towns of Charlemont, Colrain, and Leyden as well as to expand the regional watershed-wide open space plan was funded by EOEPA through the Watershed Team for this year. Finally, the Team has requested funding assistance for next year to prepare open space plans for the remaining four communities in the watershed that do not yet have an individual open space plan (Savoy, Florida, Monroe, and Rowe) and to complete the watershed-wide regional open space plan.

In this way, all of the communities encompassing the Deerfield watershed will be better prepared to make well-planned decisions about open space protection on a community as well as a regional scale. Towns with up-to-date open space and recreation plans will also be eligible to apply for grants from the Division of Conservation Services for funding to help them purchase land for open space protection.

The preparation of open space plans requires considerable input from town residents, and this planning process can promote an interest in the watershed as well. Local knowledge provides the base of information on important natural resources, recreation areas, and beautiful views that should be protected.

Landfill Assessment Study Begins

The Environmental Consulting firm of Fuss & O'Neill has just begun a study to assess environmental risk posed by recent and historic landfills in the Deerfield River Watershed. The project was requested by the Deerfield Watershed Team and is being funded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Watershed Initiative. The project will identify and map the recent and historic landfills in the Deerfield watershed in Massachusetts, document current status of the landfills and identify nearby natural resources, conduct field reconnaissance and screening level sampling on the most sensitive sites, and develop recommendations to manage the landfills to protect water quality and environmental resources.

For more information on these projects and how to get involved with your town's open space planning committee please contact Chris Duerring, Deerfield River Watershed Team Leader at (413) 773-7899.

Winter Hike to McLeod Pond in the Catamounts

Eleven hikers enjoyed a beautiful afternoon hike on Sunday, January 20. Although someone before us had tried cross country skis, we were very happy to be on foot on the three to four inches of fresh snow, since we could see rocks protruding. Snow still clung to the trees making the hike that much more fun. We started at South Catamount Road which climbs somewhat steeply at first, then levels out to easier going. This is an old road and snowmobile trail and is beautiful any time of year as it passes an old barn foundation and sheer ledges before reaching the pond in about a mile.

We approached the pond through a grove of white pine trees at the south end of McLeod Pond. A few ice fishermen were working their tilts on this end of the pond but the snow over the rest of the pond was completely fresh and unbroken **Continued from p 3** before us as we "walked on water" to explore the biggest of the islands.

After sharing snacks, one family returned the way we came, while the rest of us continued to the north end of the pond which is about three quarters of a mile in total length. It is fun to be able to explore the islands and shoreline because it is hard to get a boat into the pond in Summer. A two and a half mile hike on other trails and "roads" made a loop and got us back to our cars before dark.

Anyone wishing to participate or lead a Winter hike, ski, or snowshoe, may contact the Hiking Coordinator, Polly Bartlett, at 625-6628.

Letter from the President

The DRWA has four new Board members: Carrie Banks, ex-student intern; Cynthia Caporaso, willing to take on our treasury; Karl Meyer, environmental educator and Robert May. I want to introduce them to you singly over time so you get a sense of the kind of people who run the DRWA.

First, Robert May: For thirty years as Director of the Counseling and Mental Health Service at Amherst College, he has lived in Montague, a short walk from the Connecticut River. An avid fly fisherman and canoeist, he's a great fan of rivers, particularly the upper Deerfield. As a water quality monitor he found the DRWA an active group working to protect the river, and now has joined the board.

Gisela Walker

HIKE AND BIKE YOUR WATERSHED

Events sponsored by the Deerfield River Watershed Association are free and open to the public but reservations with the leaders are requested. Some trips have limited enrollment and some have need for special skills. Good walking shoes are advised for hikers and helmets are required for bikers.

Sun. May 12 Bike from Colrain to Jacksonville and return
8- AM 1 PM at moderate pace with stops along North River. Start: Colrain Center School, Rt. 112
 Contact: Karl Meyer 624-3047

Sat. May 18 Explore vernal pools in the Catamount State
11 AM - 2 PM Forest. Bring lunch, unscented bug dope, etc.
 Meet at Rt. 112 at Charlemont Rd., Colrain
 Contact: Muriel Russell 624-3311

Fri.- Mon. June 1 to 3 Biodiversity Days
 Events to be scheduled

Sat. June 1 Southeast loop Catamount Forest. Ponds,
10 AM - 3 PM plants etc. Bring lunch, bug dope and water.
 Meet at Rt. 112 at Charlemont Rd., Colrain
 Contact: Muriel Russell 624-3311

Sat. June 15 Negus Ridge for Laurel blooming. Most of
9 AM - 12 N climb by car with option of scrambling
 down. Meet at Shunpike Park, Rt. 2.
 Charlemont
 Contact: Polly Bartlett 625-6628

Trips later in the year - details to be announced.

July Hike to Tannery Falls Pat Serrentino 772-0520

Aug. Canoe/Swim Sherman Reservoir Ted Merrill 625-9765

Sept. Hike to Dunbar Brook

Sun. Oct 6 Visit to Davis Mine, Rowe

Mon. Oct 14 Bike from Marlboro, Vt. along the Green River to Greenfield

Contact: Francoise Walk 774-7025

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 affecting the river.

Officers:

Gisela Walker, *President*

Marie-Francoise Walk, *Vice President*

Pat Serrentino, *Secretary*; Cynthia Caporaso, *Treasurer*

Board Members:

Carrie Banks, Polly Bartlett, Robert May,

Karl Meyer, Ted Merrill,

Bob Ramirez, Richards Steinbock

Annual membership:

Individual \$15, Family/Business \$25

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

Join! Contribute! Renew!

Deerfield River Watershed Assoc., Inc.

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