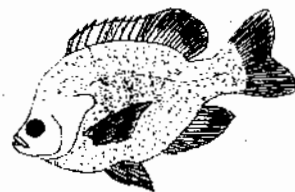


Issue 15, March 2005

Maureen Whelan & Robin Wildman, Acting Chairs
Sue Fisher, Treasurer
Ginny Leslie, Newsletter Editor



Join us for our Annual Meeting on Thursday, March 31 – All Welcome!

Annual Meeting will feature RI Rivers Council's Meg Kerr

Meg Kerr of the RI Rivers Council will be the guest speaker at the SRHCC's annual meeting on Thursday, March 31 at 7 p.m. at the Peace Dale Library. Meg's enthusiasm for and knowledge of Rhode Island's rivers are nothing short of remarkable, and we're very fortunate to have her share them with us. We'll go on a tour of the watersheds around the state; you'll be surprised at the scenic beauty, history and diversity of Rhode Island's river resources. Meg will also give an update on what other watershed councils are doing.

And of course, we'll let you know about our progress in the past year in the Saugatucket watershed as well as our exciting, ambitious plans for the coming year. Find out how you can get involved! We'll also hold elections of officers, and you can pay your dues for 2005. Come on out for an informative evening with your watershed neighbors. Free!

SRHCC Awarded Two Grants

The Coalition is pleased to announce receipt of grants from the Rhode Island Foundation and the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program (NBEP). The Rhode Island Foundation grant of \$16,000 will provide funding for the Coalition's executive director and the NBEP grant, a Narragansett Bay Watershed Action Grant (or BayWAG) will provide \$2,500 from the Environmental Protection Agency for the organization's Point Judith Pond Resident Education Program.

This will be the second year that the SRHCC has received funding from the Rhode Island Foundation for its part-time executive director. "We're very pleased to have been awarded a second year of funding from The Rhode Island Foundation," said Maureen Whelan, co-chairperson of the Coalition. "The grant program is highly competitive, so we see it as a real vote of confidence in the progress we have made over the past year."

The Bay Watershed Action Grant (or BayWAG) program is aimed at increasing public understanding of and participation in solving environmental problems. It also seeks to build capacity for environmental organizations. *(continued on page 3)*

Life on the River

A Continuing Series of Resident Interviews

Alexandra Broches has been involved with the HERA Gallery for about 30 years

Q: How long have you lived/worked on the Saugatucket River?

I moved to Hazard Street in 1968 and since 1973 I've lived on Pond Street. I've been involved with the HERA Gallery almost since its beginning in 1974. I now am working at RI College's Bannister Gallery.

Q: What are your memories of the river?

My daughter (who is 30) recently told me that although she pretty much grew up right in town, she was never really aware of the river as a child. People didn't notice it and they certainly did not value it.

Q: What do you do on/near the river?

I think an in-town location on the river is great for an arts cooperative. We are delighted with the foot traffic that the footbridge and the bike path have started to bring. The spur from the bike path will better connect it with the bridge.

Q: What do you like best about the river?

How it has drawn people's interest and, with the bike path and new River Walkway, has increased activity in the downtown area.

Q: What part of the river do you enjoy the most? Why?

Actually I am most attentive to the lower part of the river near Silver Lake. As I ride to work each day, I notice the water level (which tends to get pretty low because it's a tidal area) and also watch for birds and wildlife. I used to see a great blue heron there, but since the brush near the old Boy Scout camp was taken down, I have not seen it. Snowy egrets and swans like that part of the river, too.

Q: Do you have concerns or questions about the river?

How to make it accessible without changing it.

Q: If you could change one thing about the river, what would it be?

It would be great if that metal fence could be taken down behind our area of Main Street and the river. I think it might be a liability problem, though. That would really make the river accessible. Besides that, though, if the Main Street merchants could open up the back of their buildings to the river, it would be wonderful. The parking lot needs a lot of work but there is a lot of potential.

Q: What do you hear people say about the river?
It would be great to connect the new outfitter's store with river activities. The Saugatucket is more visible now to everyone.

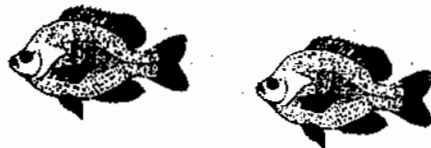
Q: What wildlife have you seen on the river?

Mallards and occasionally a cormorant and a hawk. Everyone likes the turtles who sun themselves on rocks under the bridge. I once saw a gull swoop through and carry off a turtle for a meal.

Q: What is your best "river story"?

HERA organized a show in 1999 called "Saugatucket River Celebration: Artists Respond to the River and its Environs" and it was just lovely. There was a fund raiser and a panel discussion; we had outdoor murals of the river and its creatures done by students at Wakefield School. The plans for the River Walkway were unveiled at that event.

HERA Cooperative Gallery is located at 327 Main Street in Wakefield. Hours are Wednesday through Friday, 1 to 5 and Saturday, 10 to 4.



River Walkway Work to continue

We were disappointed last fall when work on the River Walkway in Wakefield came to a halt because of problems with the pilings that were driven into the river bed. The engineers have worked out an acceptable solution, and work will begin again as soon as the weather improves.

Mark Your Calendars!

Time to get out and get active in your watershed! Call 782-0149 to help out at any of these events.

Thursday, March 31: SRHCC Annual Meeting. Get the details in the story on page 1

Saturday, April 23: Earth Day Clean-up. Meet at 10 a.m. in the parking lot behind All That Matters in Wakefield. Wear old clothes; bring gloves and garden tools if you have them. Call the office if you know of a place that needs a clean-up.

Friday, May 6: GFWC Women's Club of South County presents a dinner and live and silent auctions at the Narragansett Inn. \$40 per person. Contact Louise Smith at 783-2454. Funds raised will benefit area agencies, including the SRHCC.

SRHCC Awarded Grants (from page 1)

The SRHCC's education/membership program will reach residents in the Point Judith Pond watershed in South Kingstown and Narragansett. Point Judith Pond, into which the Saugatucket River flows, has serious pollution problems and most of the pond is closed to shellfishing. The grant will help pay for printing of materials for a "Pond Lover's Kit" – a guide to show people how they can improve water quality in the pond. Topics will include water use, fertilizer and pesticide use, septic system care and maintenance, pet waste, and vegetative buffers. Maps showing the Saugatucket River and its relationship to the Pond will be included, as well as membership information to encourage kit recipients to join the Coalition.

Many people who live near Point Judith Pond are unaware that the Saugatucket River flows into their pond. We hope that once they understand the connection, they'll be more concerned with what goes on upstream, and will support our advocacy efforts on behalf of the River and its watershed.

The Coalition will recruit volunteers to assist with the distribution of the kits to approximately 2,500 households in the Point Judith Pond watershed. We will also seek additional financial support from area businesses. The kits are scheduled to be delivered in the late spring and during the summer. If you or your organization would like to help with distribution, call the River office at 782-0149.

South Kingstown to Improve Two Riverside Parks in Wakefield

Saugatucket Park on High Street and the small scenic overlook park at the Wakefield dam will undergo see major improvements by 2006.

Saugatucket Park, which was designed in the early 20th century by the renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead, will receive new fencing, lighting, walkways and an entrance gate. These improvements will reflect features from the original Olmstead plans for the park

The "pocket park" next to the dam at the corner of High and Main Streets will be upgraded with benches, lighting, landscaping and ramps.

Be a good watershed citizen

Starting in this issue, we'll provide you with information on what you can do to help improve water quality in the River. The Saugatucket has no wastewater treatment plants and no manufacturing facilities that dump waste into the river; our pollution comes from the land in the watershed, including automotive chemicals from roads, fertilizers and pesticides from lawns and gardens, contamination from septic systems, and litter.



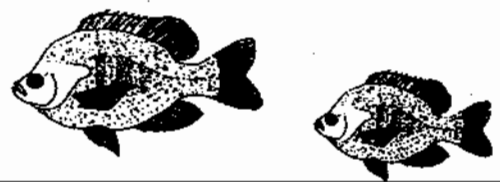
It's easy to make jokes about this subject, but the truth is, **pet waste** is a significant source of pollution to our rivers, streams and ponds. Pet wastes contain fecal coliform bacteria, which can cause sickness, and also nitrogen and phosphorus, nutrients that make plants grow. When water plants grow too much and then decompose, they use oxygen needed by fish and other water animals.

You're holding the leash!! To help the River,

Scoop poop and put it into the toilet or trash!

Direct your dog to a grassy area away from storm drains and the River.

Do you have a neighbor whose pet waste stays where it shouldn't? For a free copy of a pamphlet about pet waste, call the River office at 782-0149.



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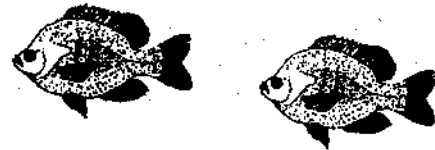
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