NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Preserving the Narrow River and the Watershed

Fall/Winter 2005

ARMY CORPS STUDYING THE NARROW RIVER ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION BEING CONSIDERED

The keynote speaker at the Narrow River Preservation Association's (NRPA's) 2005 Annual Meeting on October 4th was Mr. Larry Oliver, Team Leader of the Environmental Project Section, New England District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. His talk was titled "U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Ecological Restoration in Rhode Island and the Narrow River Project." The Environmental Project Section manages all of the Corps' ecological restoration projects in New England, and Larry is the project manager for the Narrow River Restoration Project.

Federal law authorizes the Corps to undertake major projects within U.S. waterways in order to restore aspects of natural ecosystems or fish and wildlife habitats. The law also requires that 35% of any project costs are to be covered by a state partner; in Rhode Island that partner is the Coastal Resources Management Council. Two habitat restoration projects in Rhode Island have already been completed—in Galilee Marsh and Lonsdale Marsh. Four others are pres-



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New England District

ently under construction: Ninigret Pond (Charlestown), Cross Mills Pond (South Kingstown), Town Pond (Portsmouth), and Allins Cove (Barrington). Several others are in the early phases.

There are five phases of an ecological restoration project: preliminary scoping, feasibility study, design, construction, and long-term monitoring. The Corps kicked off the Narrow River Restoration Project feasibility study in March 2005. The two-year study should be completed in about March 2007. At least one year will then be necessary for developing the project's designs and specifications, and the Narrow River Project is one of the more complex that the Corps is undertaking, so the earliest that construction could start would likely be in 2009.

A major part of the feasibility study is to compare past conditions and present conditions, so that there can be a realistic restoration target for the future. Corps researchers have been comparing recent aerial photos of the Watershed, especially Pettaquamscutt Cove and the area between Middle Bridge and Sprague Bridge, to photos taken in 1939. They are still searching for earlier photos, from before the 1938 hurricane. Since 1939, there have been substantial changes in the surrounding Watershed, with extensive farmland being replaced by residential development and forests. Below Middle Bridge, there has been a significant reduction in habitat diversity within the River, with a replacement of salt marshes and complex stream networks by extensive sand shoals.

An additional component of the feasi-(Continued on page 6)

MUMFORD WATERSHED COASTAL CLEANUP

On Saturday, September 24th, a group of seven volunteers from the URI Graduate School of Oceanography (GSO) and NRPA cleaned up part of the Mumford Brook Watershed area, located between the rotary in Narragansett and Mumford Road. The Brook enters the Narrow River at the southern end of Pettaquamscutt Cove.

A fellow GSO graduate student, Marek Kirs, and I identified several polluted areas while surveying and sampling the Watershed for water quality purposes. So we organized a cleanup effort with the cooperation of Eugenia Marks from the Audubon Society of RI, who led the Rhode Island Coastal Cleanup, and Annette DeSilva from the NRPA Board.

Our efforts focused on a campground/



Elizabeth Kusel (GSO), Ken McShane (NRPA), Annette DeSilva (NRPA), and Heather Saffert (GSO) with some of the bags of trash collected near Mumford Brook during the Coastal Cleanup in October (photo by Marek Kirs).

party site near the old rail line along the South Kingstown/Narragansett boundary and the old railway bridge under Rte 1. The bridge is evidently a hot spot for graffiti, with frequent activity. The surrounding area was littered with spray paint cans and painting supplies left behind over many years. We removed eight and a half large bags full of *(Continued on page 6)*

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE President's Cove: **Endowment Plan** pg. 2 Storm-water Management pg. 3 Poetry by Richard Travisano pg. 3 Adopt a Cemetery pg. 3 Membership: Thank You! pgs. 4-5 Friend of the River Award pg. 5 Thanks River Monitors pg. 6 History: Old St. Paul's Church pg. 7 A Note of Appreciation pg. 7 Writers Wanted pg. 8 Become a Member (Form) pg. 8

The President's Cove

I am very pleased to announce the formation of the John Elder Dick/Narrow River Endowment Contribution Plan. The Endowment was established in 2004 with money bequeathed to NRPA in the will of John Elder Dick, a retired English teacher who lived on Narrow River. He was a long-time NRPA member, former member of our Board of Directors, and author of the articles in *Narrow River Notes* on the history of the River and the surrounding area. The Endow-

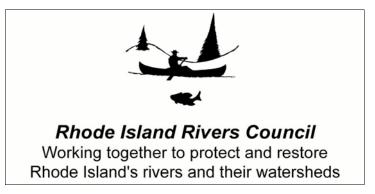
ment is invested as growth fund and is managed by The Rhode Island Foundation (TRIF). Income from the endowment is distributed to NRPA on an annual basis, and we plan to use the funds judiciously to partially support and strengthen our Water, Land, and Education programs.

The intent of our new Contribution Plan is to establish ways for our members and friends to donate to the Endowment. Donors will know that their money is being set aside inside the Endowment, where it will work in perpetuity to support NRPA's work to improve the conditions of the environment in the Pettaquamscutt Watershed. Details about the procedure for donating to the Endowment Contribution Plan will be announced in the near future, and will be available by calling our office at 783-6277 or emailing us at nrpa@netsense.net.

Like any other non-profit, NRPA relies on donations from dedicated members and supporters to pay for our operations. Making a contribution towards an Endowment Fund means that your contribution will continue working and generating a share of the Endowment's income forever. Rather than your dollar supporting just a dollar's worth of work this year—water-quality sampling, legal fees to oppose another river-front development, college scholarships, field trip supplies for an AWEsome teacher, etc.—it will support a nickel's worth year after year after year, hopefully for as long as the River and Watershed survive.

Readers of this newsletter know our past successes, so I won't take up a lot of space listing them again. Senator Jack Reed called me the other day from his Washington office and personally thanked NRPA for the work that we have accomplished. He noted that the current Army Corp of Engineers study of Narrow River (see article on page 1), which he helped get the funding for in the Congress, could only have happened because of the past efforts of NRPA. I reminded him that our work has all been done by our volunteers, and that the funds for our involvement have come from donations from friends of Narrow River. It was very gratifying to me and to the rest of our Board to get a personal thank-you from Senator Reed, but you—our members, friends, volunteers, and donors—deserve it, too.

If you have not yet sent in your membership dues for the 2005-2006 year, please do so now, while it's fresh in your mind (and in time to include the deduction on your 2005 tax return). And, if you are interested in the contributing to the John Elder Dick/Narrow River Endowment, please contact me. John's true generosity has made it possible for everyone to make a long-lasting contribution to protecting the River and Watershed. —*Richard B. Grant*



NRPA is proud to be a member of the Rhode Island Rivers Council.



MISSION STATEMENT

The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) works to preserve, protect, and restore the natural environment and the quality of life of all communities within the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River Estuary and Watershed.

www.narrowriver.org

NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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Narrow River Notes

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6239

NRPA is part of the United Way Workplace Campaign. This is our donor option number.

If you plan to make a United Way donation, please consider designating a portion of your gift to NRPA.

STORM-WATER MANANGEMENT PHASE II

This fall the Town of Narragansett started working on a new addition to the on-going storm-water management program in the Narrow River Watershed. Phase II of the federal Clean Water Act expands water pollution controls from large cities and sewage treatment plants to smaller areas, like the Narrow River. The objective is to reduce the levels of bacteria entering the River in run-off from the neighborhoods along the River.

Up to now, reducing bacterial pollution in storm water has been focused on constructing substantial filtration facilities, such as the existing detention ponds in Canonchet Farms and on Circuit Drive, or the one under construction underneath the parking lot at Mettatuxet Beach. Such projects take up a lot of space and money, and there is a short supply of both. Further reductions in pollution will need to take place upstream, at the source. Source reduction methods are of two types. One is to reduce the amount of bacteria and nutrients available for rain water to wash down the hill by properly cleaning up pet waste and not over-using lawn fertilizers-long the subjects of NRPA's educational message. The second method now being

considered is to find ways to let more rain water infiltrate into the ground instead of flowing quickly down toward the River.

In September, the Town's Engineering Department mailed a letter and questionnaire to Watershed residents. The first part of the questionnaire asked for background information about drainage, lot conditions, pets, and lawn care practices. The second part focused on how much residents might be willing to do in order to increase storm water infiltration. Under consideration are such things as:

1) replacing paved driveways with more permeable surfaces such as crushed stone or turf pavers;

2) re-directing downspouts into dry-wells;

3) modifying landscaping to incorporate low areas where rain water can collect ("rain gardens").

The survey results are expected to be made public in the spring. The Town is also considering applying for grant funds that could be made available for residents who are willing to make modifications to their properties to reduce pollution reaching the River.

-Robert D. Kenney

NARROW RIVER POETRY

Narrow River / Morning Mist

At sunrise, a summer morning hangs fog, dense, white, wet, on the river, so there's no other side.

I row towards the middle, and *my* side melts away.

The fog waxes, closes in, eats sound, stops sight.

Caught, I peer into the mist, catch it on my hands and face, breathe its salt dampness.

It's around me, on me, in me, and suddenly all there is is a wooden skiff, a circle of gray water, and impenetrable white mist.

-Richard Travisano

CONSIDER ADOPTING A CEMETERY

Narragansett has 29 documented cemeteries, five of which have been moved to South Kingstown or North Kingstown. Eight have not yet been found. Luckily, some are cared for by volunteers, and Narragansett Parks and Recreation Dept. staffers are trying to help out on a "time available" basis. The bottom line is that there are still six historical cemeteries in the town that are in need of occasional care.

• *William Knowles Cemetery:* 500 feet north of Green Meadow Drive between #17 and #20, at pole #3379, but can be reached more easily from Point Judith Road just north of Sand Hill Cove Road, at pole #800/162 (300 feet east). Burials from 1815 to 1873, including Knowles and Hazard.

• *Druids Dream Cemetery:* 40 feet west of Gibson Avenue, at pole #1675, opposite Kendall Court. There are eight 4-

foot urns in a circle. The land once belonged to Rowland Hazard.

• *Congdon-Perkins Lot:* just north of South Pier Road near Blossom Way. Burials from 1831 to 1905, including names from some of the original "Planters"—Tucker, Tillinghast, Congdon, Perkins, Hull, Carder, and Sisson.

• *Lucky Star Cemetery:* Point Judith Road at the entrance to Salt Pond Shopping Center. Burials from 1824 to 1917, including Kenyon and Southwick (Captain Remington Southwick).

• *Franklin-Gardiner Cemetery:* South Ferry Road opposite South Ferry Church, on the URI Bay Campus. Burials from 1761 to 1876, including Gardiner, Simpson, Slocum. Rumor has it they are related to Benjamin Franklin. There are another 20 stones outside the stone wall, covered in leaves and briers, including Revolutionary War veteran Capt. James Gardiner.

• *Stanton Lot:* South Ferry Road, behind the South Ferry Church, 800 feet north of pole #231, on the URI Bay Campus. Burials from 1834 to 1879.

If you should happen to have one of those listed below in your neighborhood or near where you work, please think about volunteering to spruce it up once or twice a year. Most of the "residents" of these cemeteries were the original inhabitants of Narragansett, known as the "Planters" They farmed here and built houses, stores, railroads, shipping piers, So now let's honor them by etc. "adopting-a-spot" near you. Or just pick a name of a pioneer you would like to honor. If you would like to volunteer to adopt one of these sites, contact me at eviewhee@verizon.net or 789-3503.

— Evelyn Wheeler

TO ALL WHO RESPONDED TO OUR MEMBERSHIP APPEAL:

\$5000 and up Hazard Foundation

\$1000 – \$4999 Henry Spencer

\$500 – \$999 Michael Joukowsky

\$200 – \$499 H & R Block of South Kingstown Mr. & Mrs. Albert Vanderbilt

\$100 - \$199Theodore Ashford **Belmont Fruits** Charles Bluto **Richard Carolan** Ronald Denelle **Eleanor Earle** Mr. & Mrs. J. Michael Falvey **Bob** Fetzer **Douglas** Gray Charles & Donna Hazard Pauline Heminway Robert Humphrey Mr. Sterling Hollinshea Ivison Mr. & Mrs. Norman Kalen Kenyon, Day & McLeod Wendy Larson Mr. & Mrs. Richard Limbird William & Lisa Lupino Ann Magee Marc One Coin Company, Inc. Mr. & Mrs. Frank Mauran IV Edmund Mauro, Jr. Jan O'Kelley & Richard McCorkle Henry Meyer, Jr. Narragansett Rubbish Removal P J's Pizza **RB** Grant & Associates Anne Sammis South County Tourism Christopher Tompkins Dr. Richard Travisano Scott & Donna Turner Pamela Urciuoli Wakefield Liquors Whale Rock Land Company

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THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

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2005 FRIEND OF THE RIVER AWARD



Veronica Berounsky being presented with the 2005 W.E.R. LaFarge Memorial "Friend of the River" Award by NRPA Board President Richard Grant at the Annual Meeting in October (photo by Robert Kenney).

Saturday, October 15, 2005

Dear Fellow Board Members,

I just want to say "Thank You" to you all for honoring me with the W.E.R. LaFarge Friend of the River Award. The award means a lot to me. I started on the Board while W.E.R. was still on the Board, and he set such a good example of how to care about the River, and how to be a true friend of the River. As I said at the Annual Meeting, I had hope that SOME day I would earn that award, and I am honored that you think I have. I plan to continue working on the education programs-there are always new people to be introduced to the River.

Also—I was completely surprised by the award. You all did a great job keeping that secret!

> Thanks again, Veronica

ARMY CORPS STUDY



A relatively recent aerial view of the lower Narrow River and Pettaquamscutt Cove, showing the extensive sand flats. Middle Bridge is in the upper right, and Sprague Bridge is in the lower right.

(Continued from page 1)

bility study will be to more clearly define what is presently happening in the River. What caused the changes since 1939? What are the various sources of nutrients and their relative levels? How much sand is being carried into the River through the mouth on each incoming tide? How serious are problems like the erosion of marsh edges? Are there different issues in the upper River and Ponds?

After the study generates a better idea of what past conditions in the River were, the goals and objectives of the project can be refined. A series of alternative measures that could be undertaken to restore aspects of the River's habitats will be designed, described, and evaluated. Potential alternatives might include dredging to deepen the main channel, moving the main channel further away from the marsh edge, dredging at the mouth to increase tidal range, re-building marshes with dredged sediments, construction of sedimentation basins, armoring the marsh edges to reduce erosion, planting new marsh or eelgrass beds, removal of Phragmites, etc. Such things as control of boat speeds are local issues that are outside of Corps responsibilities, but could be included as part of the recommendations.

The completed feasibility study will be made available for review and comment by all concerned parties, including Watershed residents, before any final decisions about construction are made. —*Robert D. Kenney*

THANK YOU, RIVER MONITORS

NRPA extends our sincerest thanks to the 2005 Narrow River volunteer River-Watch Monitors. Their many hours spent sampling and monitoring the River's waters is greatly appreciated. Without the assistance of these volunteers, the River Watch program would not be possible. Through their monitoring efforts, we have been provided with a greater knowledge of the health of the River.

This year's volunteers included: Veronica Berounsky, Bette Carey, Jennifer Carey, Deedee & Alison Chatham, Sue Davis, Patricia Federico, Earnest & Nancy Flewwellin, Dave Hamel, Debbie Kaprielian and sons, Marc Lamson, Dorothy & Dudley Mann, Barry Marta-



sian, Ken McShane , Judith Paolucci, Rosemarie Pomarico, Harriet Powell, Harry and Sarah Quan, Robert Schelleng, Laura Sisson, Sandra Skaradowski, Barbara & Bruce Smith, Sue Van Ness, Julie West, and Sarah Wheaton.

Thank you very much!

— Annette DeSilva

MUMFORD WATERSHED CLEANUP

(Continued from page 1)

aerosol cans, empty paint cans, and four closed paint cans. We also filled two bags of aluminum cans, one bag of plastic and glass bottles, and four or five bags of general garbage (a lot of painting-related supplies: caps of cans, rollers, and roller trays, plus old tarps and pieces of tents near the camp site).

Unfortunately, more cleanup work is still needed in the area. Hopefully, this will happen as part of the spring Narrow River Earth Day Cleanup (to volunteer, call the NRPA office at 401-783-6277 or email us at nrpa@netsense.net). There are several tires and other debris located in the northern portion of Mumford Pond. We also saw a grocery cart near the Brook at Mumford Road and another off Rte 108 on the north side near a storm drain. In addition, there were two other campsites: one is farther into the woods and north of the telephone line on the South Kingstown side, the other is near the railway bridge down by Crying Bog Brook.

We are concerned that paintingrelated chemicals were contaminating and may continue to pollute the Watershed if the graffiti continues. The campsites also represent a potential public safety issue. So I sent out letters informing public town officials of these



Heather Saffert with two young helpers (Marek's sons) and their truckload of trash (photo by Marek Kirs).

concerns, as well as the ongoing microbial water quality problems in the Mumford Brook Watershed. I received replies that police would try to monitor this area more frequently as well as expressions of gratitude for our efforts and hope that the next phase of the bike path, which is planned to go through the area, would help reduce some of the problems.

Water Quality Problems and Solutions—The URI Graduate School of Oceanography will be hosting a program of talks by a few speakers on waterquality issues affecting the Narrow River and Narragansett Beaches. The program is tentatively planned for January 17th at 7:00–9:00 pm at the Bay Campus. Watch for more detailed announcements in the local papers or on the NRPA web site (www.narrowriver.org).

- Heather Saffert

A LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY OLD ST. PAUL'S, THE GLEBE, AND NARROW RIVER

In 1707, a small group of Church of England parishioners under the direction of the Rev. Christopher Bridge built "Old Saint Paul's Church" on the "Dark Corner" of the Country Road (now Shermantown Road). It is now the oldest Episcopal edifice east of the Mississippi. During the Rev. Bridge's tenure, Queen Anne presented the church with communion silver.

On April 28, 1721, the Rev. James MacSparran began a 37-year tenure as St. Paul's rector. The Wardens of the Church ordered the repair and refurbishment of the church. One significant alteration was the enlargement of the reading desk to accommodate the 300-pound Rev. MacSparran.

Rev. MacSparran started as a Congregational minister in Bristol, Rhode Island. Returning to England, he became an ordained priest of the Church of England and was transferred to St. Paul's in Narragansett. Here he met and later married Hannah Gardiner on May 22, 1722, in Trinity Church, Newport. She was the daughter of a wealthy parishioner, William Gardiner, who owned a fertile 500acre farm south of South Ferry. The couple initially settled in what is now Usquepaugh on 150 acres given to them by Hannah's father.

Since this location was too far from the church, the Reverend purchased 80 acres with a house on Lower Road (now Walmsley Lane) between the Pettaquamscutt (Narrow) River and the Country Road. The house was named "The Glebe," an old English term for farm. The structure was enlarged and featured lilac-terraced gardens, flagstone walks, and beautiful views of the Narrow River. To the north and west, the steep slopes (roughly where the lookout tower is) sheltered it from winter winds. Later the hill became known as "MacSparran Hill" (although many people today mistakenly call it "Tower Hill," which is actually at the top of Torrey Road—*Ed.*).

The Rev. MacSparran toiled unceasingly in his extensive parish. Its boundaries were from Narragansett Bay on the east to the Connecticut border on the west, the Atlantic Ocean on the south, and the Pawtuxet River on the north. In addition, he ran his farm, catechized his slaves, preached to and converted Indians, and tended to the many needs of his widespread flock.

His long and faithful ministry to rich and poor, free and slave, earned him the title of the "Apostle to the Narragansett Country." He often rode 60 miles in a day, over rough and stony trails, performing his duties. Baptisms were held summer and winter in the Narragansett climate, which had a person "either frying or freezing" according to Rev. MacSparran. The baptisms occurred near The Glebe in the Narrow River, or at other times near Pettaquamscutt Cove. He even baptized Gilbert Stuart, our great portrait painter.

Rev. MacSparran and Hannah loved entertaining at The Glebe. Comments were that "hospitality snowed on one" in their home. They enjoyed a fruitful marriage, though not blessed by children. He adored her and wrote that she was the main comfort of his life. While on a trip to London in 1755, Hannah contracted smallpox, and she died on June 24. She was buried in Broadway Chapel, London, England. The light went out of the Reverend's life. He returned to Rhode Island and tried to resume his duties, but his health was failing. On December 5, 1757, he died at his beloved Glebe. He was buried under St. Paul's communion table.

His will left the Glebe for the support of the "right reverend Diocesan" to minister, provided that a new minister came within seven years of MacSparran's death. The Rev. Fayerweather came, and stayed until the Revolution, when dissension occurred due to his refusal to omit the prayers for the King and the royal family. St. Paul's was closed, and during the Revolution was used as a barracks for soldiers. Hard times followed as the big South County plantations were split up.

In 1799 a decision was made to move the church to Wickford. It was moved a year later, with the structure likely dismantled and reassembled, but some say it was moved on a sled drawn by oxen over the ice-slicked roads.

Today, the church is beautifully restored. Its unusual features include a wine-glass pulpit and an altar placed on the east side. The enlarged reading desk survives, as does the Queen Anne communion silver. The original beams made from the virgin timber that forested the area are still intact. The Rev. MacSparran would rejoice in his church, where he labored faithfully on the shores of the Narrow River.

— John Elder Dick

[Editor's note: This is the fifth in our series of "re-runs" of articles on local history published in Narrow River Notes by the late John Elder Dick, who passed away in November 2003. It originally appeared in the Summer 1997 issue, labeled as the sixth in the series. The article labeled "fifth," in the Fall 1996 is-sue, was entitled "The Dollar Bill and Narrow River, Part II." Perhaps my collection of back issues is incomplete, but there doesn't seem to be a Part I. Can any of our members find an old newsletter with the missing Part I? If so, please contact me at: drbobk@cox.net or 783-4369. -Robert D. Kenney]

APPRECIATION

Tuesday, October 4, 2005

Dear Veronica and members of NRPA,

Several teachers from Jamestown attended the AWEsome course offered last Spring. Every aspect of the class was interesting, hands on, practical, and fun. We learned so much from our instructors, guest speakers, and each other. We walked away with lesson plans, practical information, and a complete curriculum to share with our students and colleagues alike.

Thank you so much for offering the AWEsome course to teachers who do not live in the Watershed area. Many of us teach aspects of the curriculum already and use the Narrow River for recreation and fun.

Keep up the good work.

Sincere thanks, Sandra Reynolds Nick Alfred Jamestown School

WANTED: A FEW GOOD WRITERS

Help me to make *Narrow River Notes* your newsletter. Do you have a short poem with a river or environmental theme? How about an article on local history, like the John Elder Dick pieces that we've been re-printing? Have you taken a good photograph in the Watershed? Do you have a question about



anything in the Watershed that one of our Board members might answer? Or do you just have an opinion you'd like to express? I promise to consider any and all submissions. We publish three issues per year—spring, summer, and fall/winter—with the respective deadlines in the first week or so of February, June, and October. Send submissions or questions to me at drbobk@cox.net.

-Robert D. Kenney, Editor

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Benefactor	\$500 or more	Family \$50	Student \$10
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