


NARROW RIVER NOTES

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

Fall/Winter 2009

Sustainable Landscaping Presentation at 39th NRPA Annual Meeting

Kate Venturini, manager of the Coastal Landscape Program at the Kathleen M. Mallon Outreach Center, URI College of the Environment and Life Sciences, inspired the audience at the 39th NRPA Annual Meeting on October 6th with a talk entitled “Ecological River Landscaping.” She challenged listeners to rethink what they do with their landscaping for the benefit of everyone—themselves, their neighbors, and the River.

One of the major concerns for the Narrow River or any other water body is that storm water runs directly into the River. This runoff occurs when rain and snowmelt flows over the ground, driveways, roads, and other impervious surfaces and is dumped directly into the waterway where neighbors fish, boat, and swim. It is not diverted into the sewer systems and taken to wastewater sites. In most neighborhoods the storm drains are nothing more than straight pipes directly to the River. Diverting the storm water before pesticides, herbicides, sediments, and dog and goose poop enter the River is a benefit for all.

Using ecologically friendly landscaping has several benefits. It conserves natu-

ral resources such as water, provides wildlife habitat, and increases the value of your property. Venturini suggested reducing the size of the lawn and planting native species, which require less water and supply food for wildlife.

A site assessment can be done by the homeowner to begin this eco-friendly process:

- have the soil analyzed. UMass-Amherst offers a low-cost evaluation at soiltest@psis.umass.edu;
- determine sun and wind location and exposure;
- inventory existing vegetation, looking for plants to stay and invasive plants to be removed;
- buy plants that are appropriate for Plant Hardiness Zones 6 and 7;
- observe the yard to determine how much of the surface is pervious and impervious. Set a goal of creating more soft surfaces where water soaks into the lawn, planting beds, and trees;
- review the topography of the site looking for sources of runoff and where the water travels.

When designing a landscape for wild-

life habitats be sure to incorporate layers of trees, shrubs, herbaceous plants, and groundcover. Select plants for their food value to birds and other animals. Site ornamental plantings closer to dwellings and wild gardens along the perimeter of the property.

In addition, landowners need to be thoughtful about designing for control of stormwater runoff. Venturini suggested:

- limit impervious surfaces;
- use permeable paving surfaces;
- direct runoff into vegetated areas;
- minimize lawn area;
- install a rain barrel;
- build a rain garden

There are many resources to help owners of homes and businesses in the Narrow River Watershed. Venturini listed several websites that can be very helpful when planning a sustainable landscape project, beginning with the URI Coastal Landscape Program home page—http://www.uri.edu/cels/ceoc/ceoc_programs_clp.html. For more information, contact Kate Venturini at kate@uri.edu or (401) 874-4096.

—Rosemary C. Smith



This model rain garden is located in front of the North Kingstown Town Hall, at the corner of Boston Neck Road and Reynolds Street in Wickford. For more information about construction, plant lists, etc., and lots more pictures, visit <http://www.uri.edu/ce/healthylandscapes/NKTownhall.html>

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The President's Cove

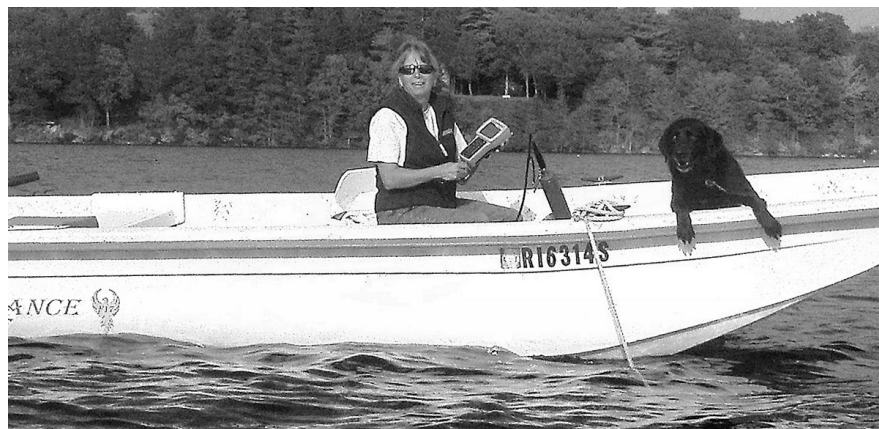
There is an ancient Chinese saying—"May you live in interesting times"—which could be either a blessing or a curse. The only problem is that that it is neither ancient nor Chinese; it was actually made up by a British writer in a 1950 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*. It still works, though. To say the least, 2009 has been an "interesting" economic year. Every non-profit organization in Rhode Island and nationwide is feeling the brunt of the sagging economy. Needless to say NRPA is in that same situation. Our membership is down—both in numbers and in contribution levels. It is very understandable. We don't have to like it, but we do understand it.

Let me tell you what we are doing to combat the membership decline and its effects on our budget. First of all we are looking hard at our expenses. We are committed to continuing our work to preserve Narrow River and its Watershed, so we are trying our best not to change or reduce any of our important programs. But we need to be very careful in our approach to each situation, and to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. For example, we have decided not to offer the AWESome teacher-training program this spring. This is a hands-on, graduate-level course on watershed ecology offered through URI, where we train and equip teachers to present the Active Watershed Education (AWESome) curriculum to future generations of students. It has been most successful in the past when we can cover the teachers' costs through budget or grant funds.

Our fund-raising efforts are being broadened to strengthen the base of our outreach programs. One example of this is a mailing to all of the companies in the Quonset Industrial Park. Belonging to the Rhode Island Rivers Council also has been a big help. But our largest area for income has always been from membership dues and donations. I also want to remind you that our United Way workplace donation number is 6239 in case you want to use that method to make a donation.

Thank you to everyone who has become a member or renewed a membership in 2009. If you haven't renewed yet—there's still time. Thank you also to those who have made a special contribution or who volunteered for one of our events. Every contribution, no matter how small, makes a difference.

—Richard B. Grant
President, NRPA



River Watch volunteer Veronica Berounsky and her research assistant collecting samples in Narrow River. (photo by John McNamara).

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 with the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River Estuary and Watershed.

www.narrowriver.org

NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

Mail: P.O. Box 8, Saunderstown, RI 02874
Phone/Fax: (401) 783-NARR
E-mail: nrpa@narrowriver.org
www.narrowriver.org

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Editor

Robert Kenney

Board of Directors

Richard Grant, President
Ken McShane, Treasurer
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Veronica Berounsky
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Chris Tompkins
Richard Travisano

Staff

Jeremy Doak, Program Coordinator

Submissions & Correspondance to
NRPA.Notes@verizon.net

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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.

Friends of Canonchet Farm Complete Cleanup

Volunteers Remove More Than 40 Tons of Asphalt

On Saturday, October 31st, volunteers completed a clean-up of the Beech Grove and an additional area adjacent to Little Neck Pond at Canonchet Farm in Narragansett. Over the course of four work days, 58 volunteers organized by the Friends of Canonchet Farm used shovels and wheelbarrows to remove more than 40 tons of asphalt from around the beech trees and an area between the Anne Hoxsie Lane parking lot and wetlands. The asphalt, which was recycled road paving material, had been improperly spread, leading to concerns that it could dam-

age the roots of the trees or impact the nearby wetlands.

The project was a joint effort on the part of the Friends of Canonchet Farm and the Town of Narragansett to respond to a Coastal Resource Management Council complaint about the use of recycled asphalt to grade portions of this town-owned land.

The volunteer labor enabled removal of the asphalt without the use of heavy machinery, which would have caused further damage to these

environmentally sensitive areas. While some volunteers used picks, rakes, and shovels to load the asphalt into wheelbarrows, other crew members wheeled the debris to a safe area where town employees used a front-end loader and a dump truck to haul the asphalt from the property. The Friends of Canonchet Farm volunteers, who logged more than 325 hours of service over the four work days, were offered refreshments and t-shirts for their efforts.

—David Smith
Friends of Canonchet Farm



Some of the 58 volunteers who removed asphalt from the Anne Hoxsie Lane parking area at Canonchet Farm in Narragansett mark the completion of a cleanup effort organized by the Friends of Canonchet Farm. (photo by Rosemary Smith)

Thank You River Watch Volunteers!

NRPA extends a big thank-you to the 2009 Narrow River volunteer monitors. Twenty-nine people contributed their time and efforts this year to sample the River waters and make measurements. Their assistance and dedication is greatly appreciated.

This year's volunteers included: Dave Adelman, Veronica Berounsky, Bette Carey, Jennifer Carey, Deedee Chatham, Alison Chatham, Will Cumer, Patrick Day, Paul Demty, Earnest Flewwellin, Nancy Flewwellin, Debbie Kaprielian, Ken Kaprielian, Jeff Kaprielian, Marc Lamson, Dorothy Mann, Dudley Mann, John McNamara, Judith Paolucci, Dana Sarubbi, Carol Sarubbi, Robert Schelleng, Laura Sisson, Sandra Skaradowski, Rosemary Smith, Sue Van Ness, and Austin Viera. Additionally, a special thank-you goes out to Rahat Sharif for volunteering her time to measure the salinity levels of all Narrow River samples collected this year.

The volunteer efforts of the Narrow River monitors continue to make this program a success. Thank you very much!

—Annette DeSilva



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WRITERS WANTED

Help me to make *Narrow River Notes* your newsletter. Do you have a short poem with a river or environmental theme you'd like us to print? How about an article on local history, like the John Elder Dick pieces that we've re-printed? 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 at the beginning of March, July, and November. Send submissions or questions to me at NRPA.Notes@verizon.net.

—Robert D. Kenney, editor

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