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# NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Preserving the Narrow River Watershed Since 1970 / January 2017

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## Salt Marsh Resiliency and Dredging Project has commenced on Narrow River

Work has been ongoing since December 1st along the Narrow River as part of the salt marsh restoration and elevation pilot project, intended to combat drowning and increase the lifespan and resilience of the marsh to future sea level rise and other stressors. Contractor Patriot Marine has been dredging near Sedge Island under the supervision of the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Coastal Resources Management Council.

Crews are using a restoration method called thin layer deposition to place dredged material on the surface of the marsh to raise the elevation so that plants can thrive. Material is dredged from select locations to create depths where eelgrass can grow, creating an important habitat.

The dredged materials are then dispersed on the adjacent marsh surface to slightly increase the marsh's elevation, primarily in areas where the vegetation has died off or become stressed from prolonged flooding. These areas will be replanted with marsh grasses.

From Narrow River Kayaks south to Sedge Island, the dredge footprint creates an approximately 65-foot wide channel in the river. Sand from the river is being used to elevate the marshes on the eastern side and on Sedge Island.

The photograph below (taken December 13, 2016) showing an astronomically high tide, gives a good sense of what the project is trying to accomplish. The entire marsh is under water with the exception of

the mound of material being pumped onto the marsh. While the marsh should be underwater during "spring" (new and full moon) tides, the majority of the marsh is being flooded too frequently. The mound of material will be graded with low ground pressure equipment to raise the marsh plain. Increasing marsh elevation will also benefit the Saltmarsh Sparrow, a species of concern, which nests in the marsh grass.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service will likely be seeking volunteers to help with planting salt marsh grass plugs early in the spring as part of the restoration efforts. NRPA plans to be at the forefront of this effort.

*Visit [narrowriver.org](http://narrowriver.org) for more information and photographs.*



photo by Craig Wood

## President's Cove

I want to thank you for your donation to the recent NRPA 2016-17 membership drive campaign that began on September 1, 2016.

The August mailing for the membership drive was sent to every resident in the Narrow River Watershed. In all, 3,300 residents and friends received the Summer 2016 issue of *Narrow River Notes* and a membership invitation. I want to thank everyone who donated via the membership form for their contribution. And of course I want to thank all of the volunteers who donate their time.

Without your membership funds and volunteer work, NRPA would not be able to perform water testing at 14 sites, grant awards at school science fairs and award college scholarships, to name only a few of the programs your donation supports.

Many of us were saddened by the removal of the little red shack on Sedge Island in November. Although no one disputes that it had become a hazard, the shack was a unique local landmark enjoyed for generations.

In our article on pages 8-9 of this issue of *Narrow River Notes*, we have included some of the wonderful photos and memories of the shack that people shared on NRPA's Facebook page and in interviews.

NRPA is working with US Fish and Wildlife Service to design and install an interpretive/educational panel overlooking Sedge Island. As we develop this panel, we welcome your photographs, artwork, stories and creative writing regarding the shack. Email us anytime at [nrpa@narrowriver.org](mailto:nrpa@narrowriver.org) or share to the NRPA Facebook page.



Richard Grant  
NRPA President

### 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](http://www.narrowriver.org)

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NRPA is part of the United Way  
Workplace Campaign.

Our donor option number is  
6239

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



NRPA is participating in  
the 2017 Rhode Island  
State Employees Charitable  
Appeal (SECA).  
Our fund number is 6239.

## Rhode Island Rivers Council



## 2016 Friend of the River Award to David Smith

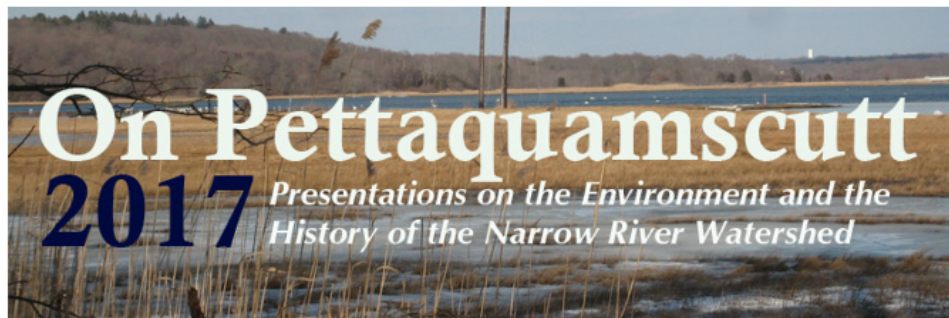


Richard Grant, NRPA President, presented David Smith with the 2016 W.E.R. La Farge Memorial Friend of the River Award at the 46th NRPA Annual Meeting on October 4th.

David was given this award for his outstanding service as the NRPA Program Coordinator from 2011 to 2016 and for his active participation in many initiatives and events concerning Narrow River and its watershed.

David and his wife Rosemary have been River Watch Volunteers for many years, are active with Friends of Canonchet Farm, coordinate the *On Pettaquamscutt* winter speaker series, and are devoted to expanding the South County Bike Path.

In very many ways, David is the embodiment of the NRPA mission statement: to preserve, protect, and restore the natural environment and the quality of life for all communities within the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River Estuary and Watershed.



## Season Six of On Pettaquamscutt Winter Speaker Series

NRPA, Friends of Canonchet Farm, South County Museum and Maury Loontjens Memorial Library, with support from Trio Restaurant, are once again sponsoring *On Pettaquamscutt: Presentations on the Environment and the History of the Narrow River Watershed*.

As with *On Pettaquamscutt's* first five, very successful seasons, the presentations are on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:00 at the library, 35 Kingstown Road, Narragansett. After each talk, you are invited to continue the conversation next door at Trio Restaurant, 15 Kingstown Road. Here's the lineup for Season Six:

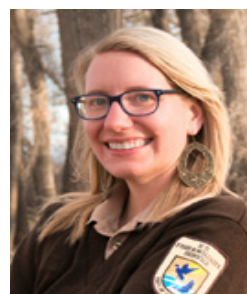
Sunday, January 29, 2017

Sponsor: NRPA

Jennifer White and

Craig Swanson

"Improving the Health of the Narrow River Estuary"



Dr. Jennifer White



Dr. Craig Swanson



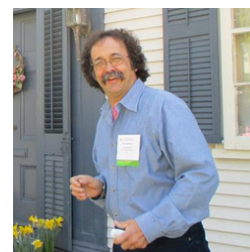
Dr. Nancy Karraker

Sunday, February 26, 2017

Sponsor: Friends of Canonchet Farm

Nancy Karraker

"Amphibians and Reptiles in the Narrow River Watershed"



Tim Cranston

Sunday, March 26, 2017

Sponsor: South County Museum

Tim Cranston

"Industry along the Pettaquamscutt"

The series is free and open to the public.

However, you are asked to register in advance for each presentation as space is limited. Online registration for each event is available on [narrowriver.org](http://narrowriver.org) and the other sponsors' websites.

## NRPA Board Welcomes Nathan Vinhateiro

Narrow River Preservation Association welcomed Nathan Vinhateiro to its Board of Directors in September.

Nate is a resident of South Kingstown, who first came to experience the Narrow River through his wife, Amanda, who grew up in the Mettatuxet neighborhood. He and his family regularly enjoy swimming outings, fishing, and beach trips on the Narrow River.

Nate has a background in coastal and marine geology and holds a PhD from URI's Graduate School of Oceanography, where he worked closely with the late NRPA Board Member Jon Boothroyd. As a coastal scientist at Applied Science Associates (ASA) in South Kingstown, Nate's work focuses on coastal process modeling, shoreline change analysis, and management of coastal data with geographic information systems (GIS). He is a senior fellow of URI's Coastal Institute and an adjunct faculty member in the department of Natural Resources Science at URI.



## Art on the River

The Fourth Annual Art on the River day took place on August 6th at Middlebridge. This was one of a series of monthly educational programs and family activities that NRPA and Narrow River Land Trust (NRLT) organized in conjunction with the Town of Narragansett Parks and Recreation Department at the town property in summer 2016. NRPA and NRLT share common interests to preserve, protect, and restore the environment and the quality of life for all communities within the Narrow River Estuary and its watershed. The Middlebridge property is central in the watershed, has easy access to shallow water, and has panoramic views so it serves well as an educational and activities center and a starting point for events that increase awareness

of the fascinating cultural and natural history of Narrow River.

Benefiting from a beautiful summer day, Richard Grant and Sarah Gaines, NRPA Board Members and artists themselves, joined with Sheldon Pratt of NRLT to host the event. Children gathered to make fish prints on paper and t-shirts. A local plein air painting group enjoyed the lovely views and access to the river. Members of the public of all ages were welcomed to make their own artistic interpretation of the watershed with materials provided by NRPA.

The event provided a nice opportunity to encourage the public to contemplate the lovely resource we benefit from daily and reflect their observations through various art forms.

# Pettaquamscutt People: University of Rhode Island Women's Rowing Team and Head Coach Shelagh Donohoe

By Alison Kates

With a warm smile and friendly greeting, Head Coach Shelagh Donohoe welcomes me at the Middlebridge dock on a chilly November morning as the URI Women's Rowing Team is finishing practice. It's fun to watch the student athletes row to the platform, lift the boat out of the water and walk it to an area for rinsing before storing it until tomorrow. Each boat (shell) is carried by all of the rowers who fit inside and directions are coordinated by the coxswain. The students smile and seem to know exactly what they are doing.

The URI Rowing Team's 50 members, Novice and Varsity, practice at the Middlebridge site each morning from 5:45 to 8:00. They row on Narrow River in the Fall and Spring, and train indoors during the winter months. They consistently achieve one of the highest combined GPAs of all URI sports teams.

The Rowing team takes community service and local stewardship very seriously. They spent a Sunday last November improving trails at Canonchet Farm.

The same day that the team was doing the heavy lifting at

Canonchet Farm, the finishing touches were put on their new boathouse, which the team affectionately calls "the structure". A sturdy steel frame covered in strong polyethylene will provide the team's shells with protection from the weather over the winter months. A strip of clear polyethylene along the highest point on the roof lets light into the vast space. Designed to blend with the area, the structure is set back from the waterfront just past the parking area, out of the sightline of the scenic riverfront.

Also designed to complement and not compromise the natural



## *URI Rowing, continued*

area, the boat dock, installed in Spring 2016, was specifically designed and installed so as to not disturb the eelgrass and other life along the river's edge.

The team uses one of the cottages on the Middlebridge property, for storage, bathroom facilities and electric service.

Lily Herberger, originally from California, walked on to the rowing team as a Freshman at URI and quickly fell in love with Rhode Island, the University and Narrow River. She rowed for four years while earning her Bachelor's Degree, and now that she is working toward her Master's Degree in Environmental Science, she's working as an assistant coach.

Shelagh has been coaching at URI for 10 years. Her accomplishments as an athlete include winning a silver medal at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992. As a coach, she has guided many teams to victory, most recently the US Paralympic Team to silver at the Rio de Janeiro Olympics this summer.

Shelagh has high hopes for the future. She envisions working with the town and interested partners to offer a rowing program to high school students and the general public. Shelagh loves the fact that NRPA, the Town of Narragansett and the team all have the same goal: protecting Narrow River and helping people enjoy it.

*For full story and more photos, go to [narrowriver.org](http://narrowriver.org).*

## **NRPA River Watch Volunteers are Needed**

The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) is looking for volunteers to join its River Watch program. Volunteering to be a water quality monitor is a great way to learn more about the water quality of the Narrow River, and at the same time provide a much-needed service to NRPA. No previous experience in water quality monitoring is required. All new volunteers receive training from the University of Rhode Island's Watershed Watch (URIWW) personnel. Manuals and all necessary monitoring equipment are provided.

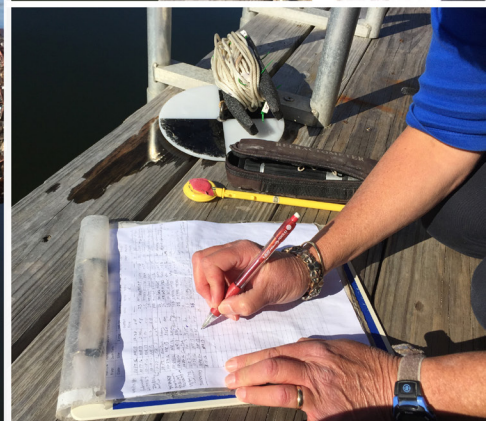
The monitoring season runs from May until October. The program consists of biweekly measurements of temperature, algae concentration, salinity, water clarity, and dissolved oxygen. Each volunteer is as-

signed one of 14 locations for monitoring. Some locations can be monitored from shore while other locations require a boat or canoe for monitoring.

A field training session is required. New volunteers learn how to collect samples and conduct the various tests used by URIWW to assess the water quality. Working in small groups with the equipment and supplies, volunteers get to perform the skills until they are fully comfortable. The field training will be offered in the spring (dates TBA).

Additional information about the monitoring program along with an on-line form for new volunteers is available at:

<http://web.uri.edu/watershed-watch/getting-involved-becoming-a-citizen-scientist/>



## Update on the South County Bike Path

A little more than a mile remains to complete the William C. O'Neill South County Bike Path from the Kingston Station to the Narragansett Town Beach, and funding is now in place to finish the bike path with an entirely off-street route through Canonchet Farm. Construction of the path was begun in 2000 using the easement of the former Narragansett Railroad through the Great Swamp, Peace Dale and Wakefield, and with the completion of Phase 3 in 2011, to Mumford Road near the Narragansett Elementary School.

Applications submitted by the Friends of the South County Bike Path and the Town of Narragansett have resulted in budgeting for the final segment of the bike path in the state's 2017-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with funding beginning this year for design and construction of the final segment of the path using an "off-road route through Canonchet Farm." However, the project is phased over the next six years with funding in the out years less certain.

The Green Economy Bond approved by the voters in November 2016 represents a second funding source that may accelerate completion of the path. The R.I. Department of Environmental Management is now reviewing proposals for completing and connecting bikeways around the state including the South County Bike Path.

## What Lives in the River - September 2016

What Lives in the River, held in concert with Gansett Days on September 17th, was enjoyed by many. It was a beautiful day and we welcomed the largest ever number of participants for this event. NRPA Board Members and volunteers helped with seining, taking sediment samples and catching wildlife. Participants explored the river, tanks with river

water and critters and even used microscopes to see life invisible to the naked eye.

Crabs, eels, fish, and a huge horseshoe crab camouflaged with seaweed made for a fun and educational morning. Join us **Saturday, June 17, 2017** for our next What Lives in the River event at Middlebridge!



## 2016 Kayak Raffle Winner

Congratulations to Barbara Rezendes, winner of NRPA's 2016 Kayak Raffle. Barbara and her husband, Robert, were in attendance at the Annual Meeting in October when Barbara's name was selected as the winner.

A resident of the Narrow River Watershed, Barbara is very excited to get out on the river in her new kayak this Spring.



## Remembering The Shack on Sedge Island

The little red shack on Sedge Island in the Narrow River has been a beloved Narragansett icon for decades. Visible due west of the Sprague Bridge, the shack has been enjoyed by people fishing, kayaking, boating, bird watching and simply sightseeing. In November, US Fish & Wildlife Service removed the shack, as it had become a hazard. It was razed with demolition equipment already in the area for the Salt Marsh Restoration and Dredging Project.

Sedge Island appears in Land Evidence records in both Narragansett and South Kingstown dating as far back as 1882. The island changed hands several times between the first land evidence record until it was purchased by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in 2004. USF&WS made several repairs to the shack, attempting to keep it in decent and safe condition, but the elements proved too powerful and the shack deteriorated significantly and became dangerous.

Matunuck resident Karl Dillmann remembers many family stories from his grandfather T. William Dixon and mother Peggy Dixon Dillmann, who owned the island from 1927 to 1958.

"The house washed away during the '38 Hurricane, but [my grandfather] found it and towed it back with his skiff. My mother remembers using block and tackle and with the help of her college friends dragging it back to the foundation. She said that her father fastened it down somehow, saying if there were ever again such a storm, [the house] would be blown to pieces before it would wash away again. It actually was a little fancier

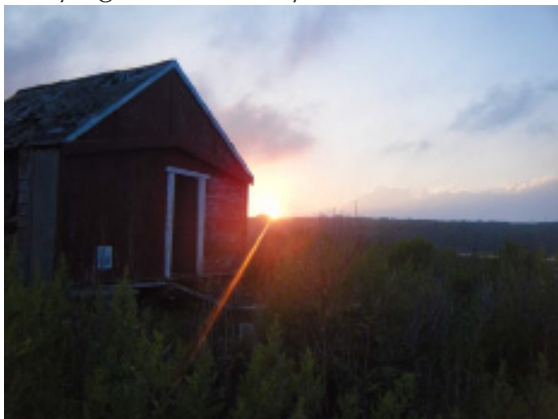


photo courtesy of Andrew McCarthy

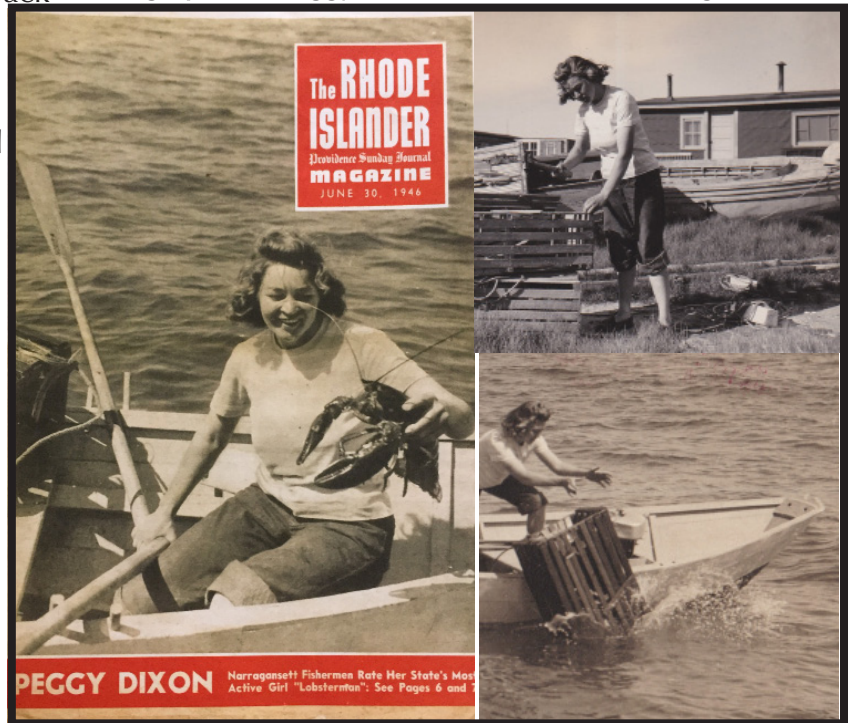


photo courtesy of Brian Proal

back then as the windows and doors were salvaged from the fancy hotels at the Pier after they were torn down.

"My mom's family lived in Peace Dale and they would spend the summer on the island. My grandfather would get in his boat and go ashore, somewhere near where the South County Museum is now. He would walk up a path and cross Post Road... twice a day so that he could feed his cows."

In June of 1946, *The Providence Journal* dedicated their Sunday Magazine (then called *The Rhode Islander*) to an article about Peggy Dixon. Photographs of Peggy (below) show her on Sedge Island,



photos courtesy of The Providence Journal



which she used as the home base for her lobster business.

Karl Dillmann recalls: "My mom was the first woman in RI to get a lobster license. She would row her Amesbury dory out the mouth of Narrow River to tend her pots."

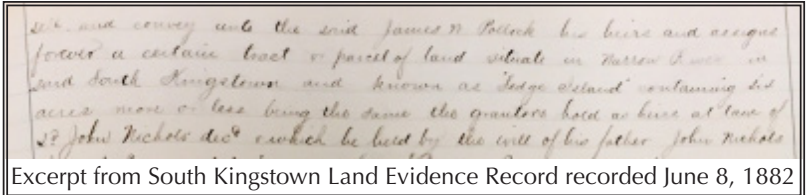
He remembers his mother describing how seagulls created holes in the shack's roof by dropping quahogs onto the black rooftop. Peggy and her father corrected this problem by painting the roof green.

Betty Faella of South Kingstown visited the island several summers as a Girl Scout. Led by Jane Place Andrews, Director of Waterfront Activities, a group of girls would board canoes at the Girl Scout Camp at the head of the Narrow River and row down to Sedge Island. There Peggy Dixon would meet them and they would all spend the night on the floor of the shack. Betty recalls using her toes to feel for shellfish in the sand.

NRPA is collecting memories and images of the shack. If you have stories, photographs or artwork of the shack to share, please submit to the NRPA Facebook page or email to [nrpa@narrowriver.org](mailto:nrpa@narrowriver.org).

NRPA and the US Fish & Wildlife Service are working together to create a physical remembrance of the shack. Plans are under way and with the hope of an installation ceremony this Spring.

Visit [narrowriver.org](http://narrowriver.org) to see more photographs.



...and convey unto the said James W. Pollock his heirs and assigns forever a certain tract or parcel of land situate in Narrow River in said South Kingstown and known as Sedge Island containing six acres more or less being the same the grantors had in lease of J<sup>r</sup> John Nichols dec<sup>d</sup> which he held by the will of his father John Nichols

Excerpt from South Kingstown Land Evidence Record recorded June 8, 1882



photo courtesy of facebook.com/RIMemories



painting property of K. Dillmann, artist unknown



photo courtesy of Rhody Fly Rodders

### ***A Snapshot of Ownership of Sedge Island***

- 1882** Heirs to John H. Nichols, deceased, sell Sedge Island to James W. Pollock of South Kingstown
- 1927** James W. Pollock's descendant Elmer E. Pollock sells Sedge Island to Thomas William Dixon
- 1958** T. William Dixon sells Sedge Island to Freeman and Gertrude Spearin
- 1987** Freeman and Gertrude Spearin sell Sedge Island to Timothy Paul Follett & Sedge Island Partners, LLC.
- 2004** Timothy Paul Follett d/b/a Sedge Island Partners sells Sedge Island for \$120,000 to The United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Sources: Narragansett and South Kingstown Land Evidence Records

## NRPA to Award Four College Scholarships

NRPA will award up to four \$1,000 college scholarships to students graduating this spring from the high schools in the watershed: Narragansett High School, North Kingstown High School, The Prout School and South Kingstown High School.

In June 2016, NRPA awarded NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarships to Hayley Hebert, a graduate of South Kingstown High School, Tyler Kumes a graduate of Prout School, and North Kingstown High School graduate Tracy Kurdziel.

You can download a scholarship application from [narrowriver.org](http://narrowriver.org), or pick one up at the Guidance Department at one of the four high schools in the watershed.

The scholarship applications are judged on:

- Student's environmentally oriented activities in and out of high school
- An original essay on mitigating an environmental problem or issue relevant to Narrow River
- Science teacher's recommendation
- Academic achievement in math and science courses.

Completed applications must be submitted to the student's guidance counselor (not to NRPA) by Monday, April 24, 2017.

Return Service Requested

Saunderstown, RI 02874

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Narrow River Preservation Association

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