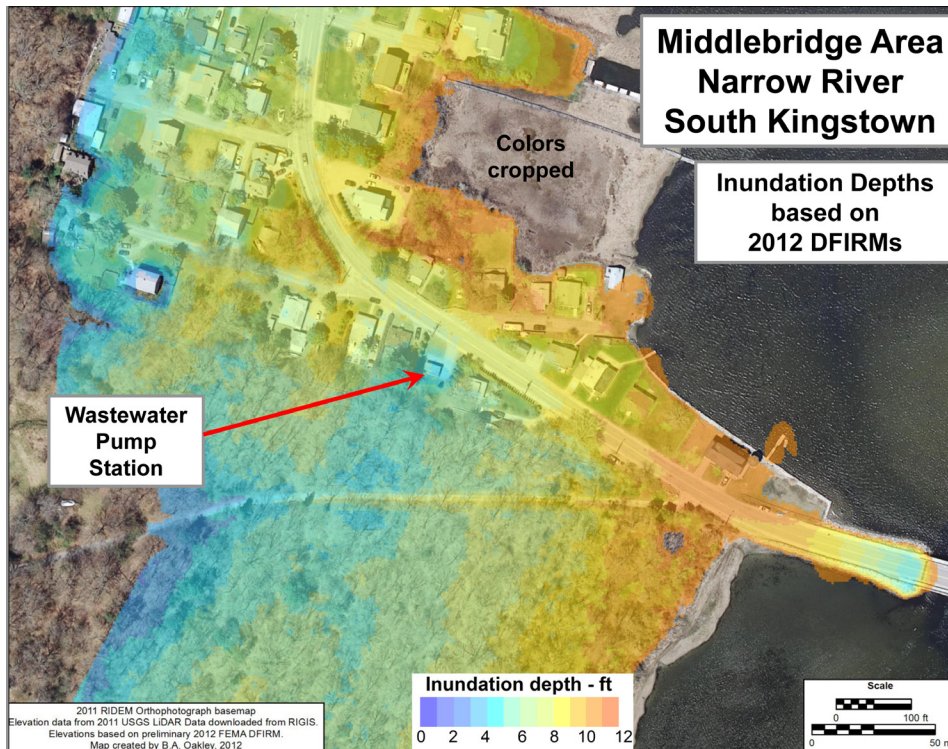


NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Preserving the Narrow River and the Watershed Since 1970 / December 2013

43rd Annual Meeting

On October 3, NRPA began its 43rd year of stewardship of the Narrow River Watershed with a serious look at the impact of coastal storms and sea level rise in the watershed, a review of new educational programs, presentation of the 2013 W.E.R. La Farge Memorial Friend of the River Award and, of course, the drawing for the annual kayak raffle.



A slide from Jon Boothroyd's keynote presentation at the 2013 Annual Meeting shows potential inundation from a major coastal storm according to the new FEMA maps. Here, the water level rises four to six feet to surround the wastewater pump station on Middlebridge Road in South Kingstown. The full presentation is available on www.narrowriver.org.

The Pettaquamscutt Estuary: Climate Change

On October 30, 2012, the surge from Superstorm Sandy inundated the salt marshes and other areas along Narrow River, closed Middlebridge, and prompted many to refer to the event as a 100-year storm. But "Sandy was no 100-year storm. Rhode Island only received a glancing blow." So said coastal

geologist Jon Boothroyd at the 2013 NRPA Annual Meeting on October 3 when he presented *The Pettaquamscutt Estuary: Climate Change*. Jon went on to illustrate how a storm of the magnitude of the Hurricane of 1938 (which was a 100-year storm) would cause far more

(continued on page 3)

Mark Your Calendar

On Pettaquamscutt 2014

Winter speakers series, Sunday afternoons 1:00 to 3:00, Maury Loontjens Memorial Library, Narragansett:

- ◆ January 26, Peggy O'Connor, Director of the Gilbert Stuart Birthplace and Museum, on the painter and the snuff mill
 - ◆ February 23, David Gregg, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, on the 2013 *BioBlitz* at the South County Museum
 - ◆ March 30, photographer Jan Armor, on capturing the beauty of Canonchet Farm
- For more information on the series, visit:

www.OnPettaquamscutt.org

April 14, Deadline for applications for the 2014 NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship (see page 4)

May 10, 27th Narrow River Road Race (see page 5)

June 14, "What Lives in the River?" at Middlebridge

June 28, Narrow River Turn-around Swim

July 12, Pettaquamscutt Paddle, a sunset cruise

August 16, "Art on the River" at Middlebridge

September 20, Land Trust Days event at Middlebridge

President's Cove

Proud to be a Watershed Council

On November 13, the Rhode Island Rivers Council renewed our designation as the **Watershed Council** for Narrow River over the next five years. The appointment, which involved submitting an extensive application earlier this year, is an honor for NRPA that brings with it very important responsibilities. Here is some background:

The R.I. Rivers Council (www.ririvers.org) was created in 1991 by state statute to coordinate efforts to improve and preserve the quality of the state's rivers and other water bodies and to develop plans to increase river use. The General Assembly created the council because "state jurisdiction over rivers, environmentally, culturally and economically, is scattered among state agencies and in some instances, state policies and plans [concerning rivers] are conflicting." The Rivers Council coordinates state policies to protect rivers and watersheds and strengthens local watershed groups as partners in river and watershed protection.

The Rivers Council designates various non-profit groups as the official representatives of their local watersheds before state agencies and municipal boards and commissions. There are currently nine such Watershed Councils, including NRPA and our South County neighbors, the Salt Ponds Coalition and the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association.

Thus, we are advocates for Narrow River and its watershed not only by our mission and organization but also by state statute, and have official standing to speak on development proposals, recreational use of the river and other matters affecting the watershed. It is a responsibility we gladly accept and encourage you to let us know your concerns about the river.

Thank you
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

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NRPA is part of the *United Way Workplace Campaign*.

Our donor option number is
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If you plan to give to United Way, please consider designating a portion of your gift to NRPA.



NRPA is participating in the 2014 Rhode Island State Employees Charitable Appeal (SECA).
Our fund number is **6239**.

Rhode Island Rivers Council



(continued from page 1)

significant flooding. Starting with a primer on the geology of the watershed, Jon used aerial photographs and inundation maps to show the impact of Sandy and earlier storms on the river and the Rhode Island coast. He then discussed how future coastal storms and sea level rise will combine to cause even greater flooding than Sandy.

2013 Brought New Education Initiatives

Board member Sally Sutherland reported on the NRPA education program at the Annual Meeting describing two new initiatives in 2013:

- ◆ Four workshops for educators on watershed science cosponsored with Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association were designed to meet the changing requirements for teacher evaluation and new curricula.
- ◆ Three family-oriented events put on by the Narrow River Land Trust and NRPA this summer at Middlebridge property purchased by the Town of Narragansett in 2012 included "What Lives in the River," "Nature Photography 101" and "Guided Walk at Garrison House Acres." These events were in addition to the ever-popular Pettaquamscutt Paddle, a sunset tour of lower Narrow River sponsored by Narrow River Kayaks and NRPA.

Friends of the River

Writer and poet W.E.R. La Farge was a founding member of NRPA, who remained active until his untimely death from cancer in 1994. Two years later NRPA renamed its annual environmental award in his memory. This year, Rosemary Smith of Narragansett received the W.E.R. La Farge Memorial Friend of the River Award, which recognized her work in "founding and coordinating the *On Pettaquamscutt Winter Speaker Series* and her active participation in many other areas of service to Narrow River and its watershed."



NRPA President Richard Grant presents Rosemary Smith with the 2013 W.E.R. La Farge Memorial Friend of the River Award.

In January, On Pettaquamscutt begins its third season of monthly Sunday afternoon presentations at the library (see page 5).

New Watershed Map

Although not on the agenda, a new 7-foot tall display map of the Narrow River Watershed made its debut at the Annual Meeting, thanks to the good work of Board member Craig Wood. A less than 7-foot version can be downloaded from narrowriver.org/watershed.

Art Festival Purchase Wins Kayak Raffle

Every July, Kathleen O'Brien of Wickford stops by the NRPA table at the Wickford Art Festival and buys three tickets for our annual Kayak Raffle. By the time of the drawing at the 2013 Annual Meeting, her odds of winning the kayak were 1/447.



Kathleen O'Brien with her new kayak

Two days later, when she took delivery of the Old Town Heron XT9, the odds of enjoying the new boat were very good and the chance of her buying tickets at next year's Wickford Art Festival was almost certain.

Life on the River

Mike Fink is a Professor of English at Rhode Island School of Design, who writes often and well about the special place that is Narrow River. In what he calls "a melancholy ode," Mike shares his thoughts about the passage of time and renewal along the river.



As Time Goes By

By Mike Fink

My life's career began along Narrow River – as I paddled and rowed the curving shoreline to the pond behind the Gilbert Stuart birthplace, contemplating my past and my future job options. Each summer from North Kingstown to the dunes at Narragansett Town Beach, I re-live my fifty-five Julys and Augusts here at Narrow River and also discover a fresh perspective on the familiar journeys, on boats, on foot, by bike, even by car.

This past season I had to re-design my ruined garden after the storms of winter, make do without my breakfast coffee at Middlebridge, and with no baby piping plovers to greet at my dawn patrols.

What I found instead was the beauty and poetry of the qua-

hog shells left behind by gulls, and by the powerful tides. Once upon a long time ago, we used to make use of them as ash trays for cigarette butts. Now, instead, I pick up the graceful curving remnants or the oddly square little striped pastel chips and admire the designs of the river's flowing currents and the ocean's urgent energetic responses to the moods of the moon. Somehow, even in death, something divine in nature teaches us that there is a musical harmony and an artistic flair about all forms, shapes, and conditions in life and even beyond.

The healing of the riverbanks damaged both by hurricanes and by mismanagement reminds me that if fate is often both ironic and cruel and if the human influence is mostly destructive and despondent, nevertheless Narrow River is a benign and benevolent blessing! We should recognize with courtesy and awe its essential sacredness.

My house here is very small, and the yard is weedy enough to appeal to butterflies and hummingbirds. I don't do much to pass the precious time, once classes end and until they start in again. All I do is take notes on the elegant sanderlings that surprise me pleasantly as I splash barefoot along the sandy path from the Towers back to those dunes that keep swallows nesting and resting in their diminished banks. No, I am not "Nature Boy," except in words, pictures, books, and idle chit-

chat. I'm too inert to cure the ills of outrageous misfortunes. Yet, the friendly and forgiving and forbearing wrens build their wee worlds on my windowsills. Woodpeckers make their dotty music rattle-tattle on my shingles. Chickadees sing me their little ballads. Catastrophes occur with feral cats, and I grieve uselessly at the tragedies they inflict. I pen this melancholy ode to the poignancy of passing time and the inevitable disappointments – in myself and ourselves – as time goes by.



NRPA to Award Four College Scholarships

In June, NRPA will award four \$1,000 scholarships to seniors graduating from one of the high schools in the watershed towns: Narragansett, North Kingstown and South Kingstown High Schools and The Prout School.

The NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship honors former NRPA Board member Lesa Meng. The awards are funded by the Narrow River Road Race, which Lesa coordinated for many years before her untimely death in 2006, and by generous contributions from her husband Rick Moffitt.

In 2013, NRPA awarded scholarships to South Kingstown graduates **Chintanya Gopu** and **Rachel Moyer**, and Narragansett graduates **Ben Lee** and **Zachary Zuchowski**.

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.

You can download a scholarship application from www.narrowriver.org, or pick one up at the Guidance Department at one of the high schools in the watershed: Narragansett, North Kingstown, Prout and South Kingstown. Completed applications are due Monday, April 14.

On Pettaquamscutt, the Third Season

NRPA, Friends of Canonchet Farm, South County Museum and the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library are once again sponsoring *On Pettaquamscutt: Presentations on the Environment and the History of the Narrow River Watershed*. The presentations are on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:00 at the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library, 35 Kingstown Road, Narragansett. After each talk, you are invited to continue the conversation next door at Trio Restaurant, 15 Kingstown Road. The 2014 lineup includes:

- ◆ January 26: Peggy O'Connor, Director of the Gilbert Stuart

Birthplace and Museum tells us about the painter and the snuff mill where he was born.

- ◆ February 23: David Gregg, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, will tell us about the BioBlitz at the South County Museum last June, what the professional and amateur scientists found in their 24-hour search of Canonchet Farm and Pettaquamscutt Cove, and how they survived the heaviest rainfall of the summer.
- ◆ March 30: Photographer Jan Armor on capturing the beauty of Canonchet Farm.

The series is free and open to the public. However, you are asked to register in advance for each presentation as space is limited. To reserve a seat at one or more presentations, visit:

www.OnPettaquamscutt.org
or call 401-783-5344.

27th Narrow River Road Race Set for May 10

Online registration is now open for 27th running (and walking) of the Narrow River Road Race on Saturday, May 10, 2014.

The race, which raises funds for NRPA's river monitoring program and educational initiatives, features a 10K run that starts at Narragansett Beach and makes a round trip to Treaty Rock Park in South Kingstown, and a 5K run and a 5K walk that start at the park and finish at the beach. In 2013, the race drew 220 runners and walkers from all over New England.

To sign up, visit:

www.narrowriver.org/roadrace

There, you can click a button to register online at Active.com or, if you prefer to register by mail, download a 2014 Narrow River Road Race application.

Ban Still in Effect



A sign recently posted on Walmsley Lane in North Kingstown reminds us that, despite improvements in water quality in sections of the river, the ban on shellfishing is still in effect for the entire length of Narrow River and that individuals caught harvesting shellfish are subject to prosecution.

NRPA is working with the R.I. Department of Environmental Management to improve the water quality in Narrow River and identify areas where levels of coliform bacteria are sufficiently below the threshold to allow shell fishing. It should be noted that the river is safe for fishing and other recreational uses.



The mouth of Narrow River at Narragansett Beach photographed by John McNamara on September 14, 2013

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