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# NARROW RIVER NOTES

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Narrow River Preservation Association: Preserving the Narrow River and the Watershed / Winter 2012-2013

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## 42nd Annual Meeting Features Report on Water Quality

The Narrow River Preservation Association held its 42nd Annual Meeting on October 4 at the Coastal Institute Auditorium on the URI Narragansett Bay Campus. The meeting featured an overview of 20 years of river-monitoring data and an update on the Town of Narragansett's purchase of the Eddy property at Middlebridge for open space and recreational use.

The meeting was also an opportunity to recognize two individuals, Annette DeSilva and Dick White, for their commitment and service in protecting the watershed.

### Friend of the River



Annette DeSilva was awarded the 2012 W.E.R. LaFarge Memorial *Friend of the River* Award, recognizing her many contributions to preservation of the Narrow River Watershed, including

management of NRPA's River Watch water-quality monitoring program since the program's inception in 1992.

### Environmental Award



Dick White (*above right with Richard Grant*) received the Environmental Appreciation Award for his initiative and unassuming commitment to a cleaner environment. When he saw the results of a 2007 Earth Day clean-up along Middlebridge Road in South Kingstown, Dick decided to keep the road litter-free and has picked up trash along the road almost every day of the last five years.

Dr. Bob O'Neill of the Narragansett Land Conservancy Trust discussed the Town of Narragansett's purchase of the Eddy

*(Continued inside on page 3)*

### Mark Your Calendar

◆ *Watershed Workshops for Educators*, a new series offered by Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association and NRPA (page 6):

1/12, "Growing Up Wild"

2/23, "Watershed Science"

3/23, "Waters, Wetlands and Water Quality"

4/27, "Project Wet"

◆ *On Pettaquamscutt, Presentations on the Environment and the History of the Narrow River Watershed* (page 4):

1/27, Jon Boothroyd: "Climate Change, Coastal Geologic Hazards and Sea-Level Rise: Some Rhode Island Strategies"

2/24, Hope Leeson: "Rhody Plant Initiative"

3/24, Frank Heppner: "Short Line and Electric Railroads of Rhode Island"

◆ 5/11, Twenty-sixth Narrow River Road Race (page 7)

◆ 6/22, Eighth Narrow River Turnaround Swim (page 7)

◆ 7/20, Pettaquamscutt Paddle (save this date)

For more listings, go to [www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org) and click **Calendar**.

## President's Cove

Every so often we get an unexpected, but necessary, reminder of the special beauty of the Narrow River Watershed, and our responsibility to protect this unique environment.



URI Women's Rowing Coach Shelagh Donohoe captured one such reminder when she photographed a bald eagle flying over the river on New Year's Day.

The job of NRPA is to make sure there are also **scheduled** reminders of how we should care for the river and the quality of life of all communities in the watershed, as described in this issue of *Narrow River Notes*.

These include the new series of teacher workshops offered by Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association and NRPA, the *On Pettaquamscutt* speaker series we are cosponsoring with Friends of Canonchet Farm and South County Museum, and our college scholarships and science fair awards, which build awareness of the environment and encourage the young to pursue scientific study.

Save the Bay has published a wonderful pamphlet called *Bay Friendly Backyards*, which describes best practices for lawn care and landscaping to reduce the harmful levels of nutrients and bacteria that find their way into Narragansett Bay and the rivers that flow into it. The booklet is available for viewing and download from the Home page of [www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org). You can call it *Eagle Friendly Backyards*.

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.



The NRPA is participating in the 2012 Rhode Island State Employees Charitable Appeal (SECA). Our fund number is **6239**.

## Rhode Island Rivers Council



(**Annual Meeting**, from page 1)  
property, which had closed in September, and stressed the need for NRPA, the Narrow River Land Trust and similar organizations to stay involved in discussions on use and improvements to the property. Julie Sharpe, president of the Narrow River Land Trust, which made an unsuccessful bid for the property, emphasized her organization's commitment to preserving the unique environment of the site.

## Water Quality Trends

The featured presentation was a report on the 20 years of water quality data collected by the Narrow River Watershed Watch program in conjunction with URI Watershed Watch. Using a PowerPoint® slide show, Board members Dr. Veronica Berounsky and Annette DeSilva focused on testing for bacteria, specifically fecal coliforms, and nutrients, using nitrogen measurements as an example, at sites spanning the river to illustrate trends. The high levels of bacteria at Middlebridge generated significant discussion, especially with the purchase of the Eddy property discussed earlier in the evening. The slide show is available for viewing on the Watershed Watch page on the NRPA website ([www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org)).

The meeting also included the Treasurer's Report from Ken McShane and a report on NRPA's educational initiatives by Lynn Wolslegel. In keeping with tradition, the meeting concluded with the drawing for the Kayak Raffle, won by Betty Rogan of Narragansett, who took delivery of the craft the following Sunday (*below*).



## Swimmer, Angler Join NRPA Board

Amy Sexsmith, a realtor who resides in Mettatumet, and Craig Wood, an ecologist who lives in the Edgewater neighborhood, have joined the NRPA Board of Directors. Both have been active in NRPA and bring unique skills to the Board.

Amy is a regular participant in the Narrow River Turnaround Swim, and has participated in the Save the Bay Swim ten times and the Buzzards Bay Swim five times. Earlier this year, Amy organized a clean-



up day in which volunteers picked up litter from various spots along the river, including Sprague Bridge and the DEM boat launch at Pollock Avenue.

Craig is a Senior Ecologist with the Louis Berger Group, working on environmental projects throughout New England. An avid fisherman, Craig is a volunteer water monitor in Narrow River Watershed Watch, testing water in the Lower Pond (NR-4).



## NRPA/Lesa Meng College Scholarships

Since 1993 NRPA has awarded scholarships to seniors graduating from high schools in the three Narrow River Watershed towns as part of its Youth Environmental Education Program.

In 2007, the scholarship was re-named the NRPA/Lesa Meng College Scholarship in honor of a former NRPA Board member who passed away in 2006. Lesa Meng served on the Board for six years and was chair of the Narrow River Road Race Committee during that time. Her husband, Rick Moffitt, and friends provide additional funding for the scholarship, enabling NRPA to increase the scholarship awards to \$1,000 each beginning in 2008. In 2012, NRPA awarded scholarships to three Narragansett High School graduates, **Caitlin Bousquet**, **Elizabeth Castro** and **Annie Hall**, and to South Kingstown High School graduate **Tina Luo**.

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](http://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 Friday, April 5.

## On Pettaquamscutt, the Second Season

NRPA, Friends of Canonchet Farm and South County Museum are once again sponsoring *On Pettaquamscutt: Presentations on the Environment and the History of the Narrow River Watershed*. As with *On Pettaquamscutt's* successful inaugural season, the presentations are on Sunday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:00 at the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library, 35 Kingstown Road, Narragansett. The series is free and open to the public. After each talk, you are invited to continue the conversation next door at Trio Restaurant, 15 Kingstown Road.

The 2013 lineup includes:

### Jon Boothroyd, 1/27

On Sunday, January 27, geologist and NRPA Vice President for Science Dr. Jon Boothroyd discusses "Climate Change, Coastal Geologic Hazards and Sea-Level Rise: Some Rhode Island State-



gies." Jon, who is a URI Research Professor Emeritus and the R.I. State Geologist, will describe what is happening to our coastline and the Narrow River Watershed and what can be done to adapt to the new realities.

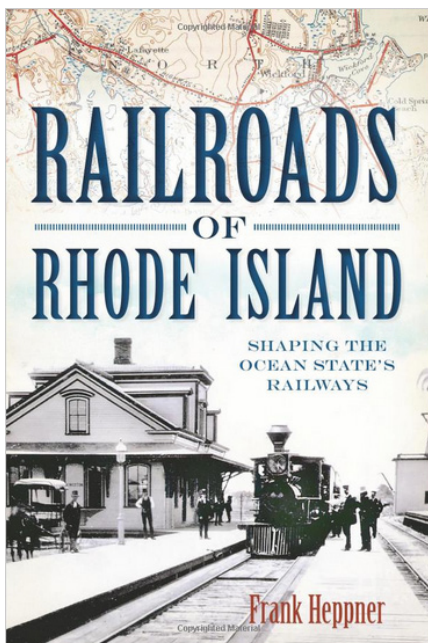
### Hope Leeson, 2/24



On Sunday, February 24, botanist Hope Leeson will discuss "Rhody Plant Initiative," a program that promotes the use of native plants grown from Rhode Island wild stock through seed collection and cuttings. Hope is currently the botanist for the Rhode Island Natural History Survey, with a primary focus on invasive plant inventories and experimental management

techniques. Rhody Native is an initiative to make indigenous plant material available to homeowners and organizations involved in habitat restoration. The program is an opportunity to promote local Rhode Island businesses, educate the public about Rhode Island's native biodiversity, and improve our natural environment.

### Frank Heppner, 3/24



On Sunday, March 24, railroad historian Frank Heppner will present "Short Line and Electric Railroads of Rhode Island," with highlights of the Sea View Line and the Narragansett Pier Railroad.

Heppner is a founding member and Chairman of the Friends of the Kingston Station, and the author of *Railroads of Rhode Island, Shaping the Ocean State's Railways*.

## Overturn "Ahead of Schedule"

Sometime over night between November 6 and 7, the oxygen-starved water at the bottom of the Upper Pond on Narrow River rose toward the surface and mixed with the water above, turning much of the surface water to a milky green color and giving off the *rotten egg* smell of sulfur.

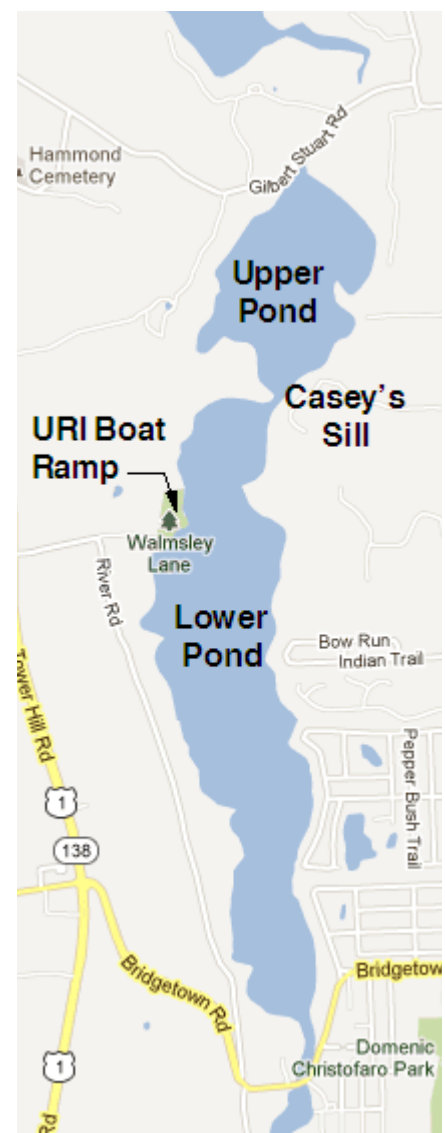
This most recent overturn, or *ventilation*, "was not exactly on schedule," says Veronica Berounsky, who documented the overturn in 2007 and who first observed this one on the morning of the 7th from the URI boat ramp. "This one is odd in that it is usually 15 to 20 years between events. Of course, this was a partial overturn in that the milky green water covered only part of the Upper Pond and it lasted only a few days, as measured by oxygen values."

Veronica attributes the event to three factors: "First, the very high tide with Sandy brought more seawater up the river and over the sill that separates the two ponds. Then, the cold temperatures destabilized the stratification (which was breaking down anyhow). Finally, the wind with the Nor'easter (much stronger and more sustained than with Sandy) was the literal tipping point!"

By the afternoon of the 7th, the milky/pale green water (which results when the hy-

drogen sulfide in the anoxic water reacts with the dissolved oxygen in the overlying waters) was coming out of Upper Pond and flowing down the middle of Lower Pond, but not spreading to either shore.

Visit [www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org) for additional information on the overturn, including testing for oxygen levels before and after the event, and a slideshow describing the 2007 overturn.



Base Image © Google, Inc. 2012

# NRPA Cosponsors New Series of Teacher Workshops

NRPA is teaming with the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association to offer a new series of workshops in 2013 to provide teachers with science content about watersheds and water quality issues along with activities and lessons they can use in their classrooms.



**Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association's Denise Poyer is the lead instructor for the new workshops.**

The workshops, which are free, are based on nationally recognized curricula and include correlations to the new *Next Generation State Standards*. The workshops are designed to stand alone, but the last three will complement each other. Two of the workshops will be held at the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Visitors Center at Kettle Pond in Charlestown. The other two take place on the URI Bay Campus at South Ferry in Narragansett.

Each workshop will award a certificate that can be used for professional development credits. The workshops are partially funded by the Rhode Island Rivers Council.

***Growing Up Wild, Saturday, January 12, Kettle Pond:*** This four-hour workshop uses *Grow Up Wild*, a unique curriculum aimed at children ages 3 to 7. The workshop is designed for a variety of educators, including pre-K to second grade teachers, day care staff, and other non-formal educators who do programs for the age group. Participants will receive the *Grow Up Wild* curriculum guide free through the R.I. DEM's Aquatic Education Resource Program.

***Watershed Science, Saturday, February 23, URI Bay Campus:*** This six-hour workshop is based on the Active Watershed Education (AWEsome) Curriculum and the Watershed Science for Educators course, and covers topics such as watershed geology, geography, soils and hydrology. This course will provide teachers with the science content to understand and teach about watersheds in Rhode Island, and cover selected classroom lessons and activities. The AWEsome curriculum is aimed at middle school students, but teach-

ers from grades 1 to 12 are encouraged to take the workshop.

***Waters, Wetlands and Water Quality, March 23, URI Bay Campus:*** This second six-hour workshop, also based on AWEsome and the Watershed Science for Educators course, explores the ecology of various types of waters and wetlands, the importance of both water bodies and wetlands to society, and human impacts on water quality, with a focus on current water quality issues in R.I., particularly stormwater runoff.

***Project Wet, Saturday, April 27, Kettle Pond:*** This six-hour workshop is based on the *Project Wet Activity and Curriculum Guide 2.0* and the *Wonders of Wetlands*. These guides are packed with over 100 activities that educators can use to help students learn about water and its impact on our lives. Selected activities will reinforce lessons from the two previous workshops. Participants will receive free activity guides through R.I. DEM's Aquatic Education Resource Program.

To register for one or more of the workshops, go to the **Events** page on the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association website ([wpwa.org](http://wpwa.org)), or contact Denise Poyer at [denisep@wpwa.org](mailto:denisep@wpwa.org).

# Registration Now Open for Road Race and Turnaround Swim

Online registration is now open for two NRPA events:

- ◆ **Narrow River Road Race**, which will be run (and walked) on Saturday, May 11
- ◆ **Narrow River Turnaround Swim**, set for Saturday, June 22

To sign up for either or both events, visit [www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org) and select the **Narrow River Road Race** or the **Turnaround Swim** page from the main menu. From the event page, you can click a button to register online via Active.com, or download an application form.

## The 26th Annual Race

This year's Narrow River Road Race is the 26th running of the event. 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 Kings-town, and a 5K run and a 5K walk that start at the park and finish at the beach. In 2012, the race drew 240 runners and walkers from all over New England.

## Swim is Number 8

The Narrow River Turnaround is a one-mile open-water swim that is now in its eighth



*10K runners line up for the start of the 2011 Narrow River Road Race*

year. Swimmers set off from the beach adjacent to the URI Boat Ramp on the Lower Pond, swim around a buoy a half-mile down pond and return to the starting line. This timed event provides some friendly competition for some, while others simply enjoy the open water after a winter of swimming between the lines. Many participants look at the swim as a great way to get ready for the Save the Bay Swim later in the year. Early registration is recommended as the event is limited to 150 participants.

## Sponsors Wanted

Each year the Road Race and the Turnaround Swim offer local area businesses and other sponsors an opportunity

to show their commitment to the environment while associating their brands with a healthy and enjoyable event. For information on becoming a sponsor for either or both events, contact Richard Grant at [nrpa@narrowriver.org](mailto:nrpa@narrowriver.org) or 401 783-6277.

## Science Fair Awards

The NRPA Science Fair Program awards prizes for outstanding exhibits dealing with the environment at high school and middle school fairs in the towns in the watershed. If you know of an upcoming science fair, please contact Lynn Wolslegel at [lwolslegel@gmail.com](mailto:lwolslegel@gmail.com).

# *Life on the River*



*Three deer along the east edge of the Upper Pond as photographed by John McNamara in February 2012*

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