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# NARROW RIVER NOTES

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Narrow River Preservation Association: Protecting, Preserving and Restoring the Narrow River Watershed Since 1970 / December 2023

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## Annual Meeting



At its annual meeting on Oct. 3, Narrow River Preservation Association held elections for their Board of Directors and Officers.

Retiring from the Board were Richard B. Grant, Catalina Martinez, James McGregor and Jason Considine. All four will stay on as members of the NRPA Advisory Board. Grant is leaving after 51 years with NRPA, 25 of those years as president and one year as co-president.

Craig Wood, Paula Santos, Nate Vinhatiero, Kathy Byington, James Vogel, Veronica Berounsky, Sally Sutherland and Chris Hubbard were re-elected to the Board of Directors. NRPA welcomes three newly elected Board members: Andrew Neil, Christine Ariel and Peter Gelhaar.

The Board of Directors then voted on their Officers, as follows:

President - Veronica Berounsky

Vice President - Craig Wood

Treasurer - Kathy Byington

Secretary - Paula Santos

Administration Coordinator Shirley Freitag, and Special Events Coordinator Marianne Chronley, were introduced to the audience. They have been staff members since January 2023.

*Continued on page 7*

## Art on The River



Anne Marie Jackson, 10, of South Kingstown shows the fish print that she made during the "Art on the River" event. Also pictured is her brother, Joseph Jackson, 12, second from left, Hunter Johnson, 9, and his grandmother, Helen Johnson, also of South Kingstown.

NARRAGANSETT, R.I.

The Narrow River Preservation held its "Art on the River" event at the Middlebridge Preserve Saturday, August 12 on the bank of the Narrow River.

Narrow River Preservation volunteer Padma Venkataman and her daughter, Karuna, sat by the Narrow River in their tent displaying the art form of temporary skin decoration known as Mehndi, or "henna."

Karuna learned the art when she was eight years old, and first drew a mango design for her grandmother. The drawings meant for one's hands or feet are done with a paste created with henna.

Those who go to a henna artist are always asked to trust the process and the drawer's vision.

"People may walk in here and say, 'I want this,'" Venkataman said. "But that's not the way you do it. If you go (to a henna artist) you trust the henna artist to do whatever they feel like doing on your hands."

The dye made from herbs can act as a cooling agent for the body — a medicine.

"You do it on the hands and feet, which serves that purpose as well," Venkataman said.

Sticking with a theme for the river flowing beside them, Padma and Karuna drew fish designs for anyone who visited their tent.

*Continued on page 4*

## Presidents' Cove

Dear Friends of Narrow River,

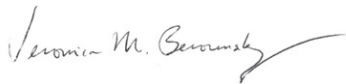
As the seasons change along Narrow River and in the watershed, there have also been some changes to the Board of Directors of Narrow River Preservation Association. After 51 years on the Board of Directors, including 26 years as President and this past year as Co-President with me, Richard B. Grant decided to step down from the NRPA Board of Directors. He will stay on as an Advisory Board member and continue to contribute his valuable expertise, and the whole board is grateful for this.

At the October 3 Annual Meeting, I was voted in as President of the NRPA Board of Directors. Having watched Richard as President while I served as Vice-President for a number of years and one year as Co-President, I am honored to take on this responsibility. I cannot thank Richard enough for the years of mentoring and sound advice he has given to me. His willingness to discuss Narrow River issues, particularly with those who have a viewpoint opposite of his, is a trait I plan to emulate. You can often find me either on the river (sampling in the ponds), next to the river (walking the shore with a camera) or in the river (swimming is my passion) – feel free to say hello and tell me what is on your mind about the river!

On November 8, NRPA was renewed by the Rhode Island Rivers Council for another five-year term as the state-designated watershed council for Narrow River. This designation empowers NRPA to testify before local and state hearings on issues affecting OUR watershed and makes us eligible for state grants through the Rivers Council. NRPA has held this significant designation since 2002. You can find out more at <https://ririvers.org/watershed-councils/>.

Thank you for all YOU do for Narrow River and its watershed.

Take care,



Veronica M. Berounsky, President, NRPA Board of Directors

### 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 Estuary) River and Watershed.

### NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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www.narrowriver.org

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#### Board of Directors

**Veronica M. Berounsky**, President

**Craig Wood**, Vice President

**Paula Santos**, Secretary

**Kathy Byington**, Treasurer

**Chris Hubbard**

**Nate Vinhateiro**

**Sally Sutherland**

**James Vogel**

**Peter Gelhaar**

**Andrew Neil**

**Christine Ariel**

Submissions and correspondence to [nrpa@narrowriver.org](mailto:nrpa@narrowriver.org)

### Join NRPA!

Membership is NRPA's largest source of funding and connects you with all NRPA's activities, events, and advocacy! Our annual membership cycle runs from January 1 through December 31 each calendar year. Renewals or sign-ups received after our membership drive in the fall are considered active from the date received through the end of the following calendar year. If memberships are renewed in the spring, they will be active through the end of that same calendar year. To get the most from your membership, we encourage renewal or sign-ups in the fall or winter or simply schedule recurring annual renewals and donations from your registered PayPal account. Join by sending a check to NRPA, PO Box 8, Saunderstown, RI 02874 or online at [narrowriver.org/join-donate](http://narrowriver.org/join-donate). Thank you!

United Way of  
Rhode Island



You can give back to NRPA through your **United Way workplace campaign**. Simply write in Narrow River Preservation Association on your pledge form or search/write-in and add us via electronic pledging.

Rhode Island  
Rivers Council



Rhode Island Rivers Council has designated NRPA as the official watershed council of the Narrow River and its watershed.

## URI Honors Class Tour of Narrow River



On a sunny late afternoon in early October, a URI Honors class met up with Jason, Veronica, and Shirley for an educational paddle on the Pettaquamscutt River. The honors course, called River Stories, takes an interdisciplinary approach. "One of my goals in creating this course," says URI Professor Heather Johnson, "is to help students to take notice of rivers, to actually see them." Class activities have included walking the Wood River and the Saugatucket River, watching films about the Colorado, the Elwha, and the Saluda, and testing water on the Kingston campus with URI Watershed Watch.

The students loved getting out on the river. Sophie Zeyl shared that "Paddling on the river was so amazing— we could see the things we were learning about in class right in front of us!" She and her sister are both South County residents who were excited to discover the wonders of this local body of water. "The kayaking trip," said Liv Zeyl, "was very peaceful." The guided paddle was a great way for the class to spend time together: the students reported that spending time on the river was a "fun bonding activity that we were able to do with our classmates at the start of our semester."

As the trip came to an end, the group drifted in silence, watching the cormorants perched on branches, drying their wings, as the sky turned to orange and pink behind Gooseberry Island.



## 2024 NRPA-SPONSORED SATURDAY EVENTS

*(RAIN DATE if necessary, will be SUNDAY)*

**April 6**

Navigating the Narrow

**April 27**

Spring River Clean-up

**June 1**

Spring "What Lives in the River"

**June 22**

Turn-around Swim

**August 10**

Art at the River

**Sept. 21**

Fall "What Lives in the River"

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### New Year's Day Pier Plunge Sponsored by the Narragansett Lions Club.

We are excited to announce that all proceeds from this 17th Annual "Pier Plunge" will be donated to the Narrow River Preservation Association. Sign up now, the first 350 to register receive a free (much needed) towel. <https://narragansettlionsclub.org/annual-events/pier-plunge/>



**JOIN  
TODAY!**

# Annual Meeting

Continued from Front Page

Veronica Berounsky and Narrow River Watch Coordinator Annette DeSilva gave a presentation on “32 Years of Volunteer Monitoring” presenting decades of data on water quality in the Narrow River watershed. These records will be posted at [www.narrowriver.org](http://www.narrowriver.org)

NRPA’s Youth Environmental Achievement Award was presented to Jake Pietrzak for his many years of cheerful and capable assistance at events. Bob Facey received the Environmental Appreciation Award. Facey helped set up and maintain NRPA’s popular Osprey Webcam. Each summer, his technical expertise enables thousands of fans to watch an osprey family as they grow.



Rebecca Russell was the big winner of the night. First, she was presented with the 2023 W.E.R. La Farge Memorial “Friend of the River Award”. Russell was NRPA’s Program Coordinator/Director from 2021 to 2023. Her enthusiastic leadership ushered NRPA through

Covid and into 2023 with all programs and initiatives remaining strong. She was also thrilled to strap the Old Town Kayak donated by Narrow River Kayaks onto her car, as winner of the 2023 NRPA Kayak Raffle.

Concluding remarks, touching on NRPA’s partnerships in the Watershed and stewardship of the River were given by newly-elected President Veronica M. Berounsky.

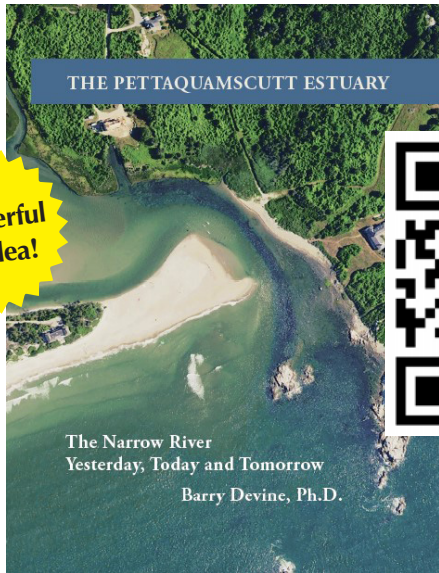
Many thanks to Roch’s Fresh Foods, Belmont Marketplace, and Dave’s Fresh Market for their contributions to the dessert reception. And, of course, Steve’s cookies.

NRPA partners, Friends of Canonchet, Narrow River Land Trust, Narragansett Chamber of Commerce, and Rhode Island Rivers Council greeted visitors with displays and information about their organizations during the reception.



The Narragansett Lions Club presents the 17th Annual Pier Plunge on Monday January 1st at noon at the North Beach Clubhouse, 79 Boston Neck Road, Narragansett, RI. Celebrate the New Year with a plunge at Narragansett Town Beach, get a commemorative towel, enjoy some hot chocolate, then head to Pelly’s for the after party. Proceeds are allocated to the Narrow River Preservation Association. Thank you Lions Club.

# The Pettaquamscutt Estuary Book



Scan QR code for additional details and to order.

***The Pettaquamscutt Estuary: The Narrow River Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*** by Dr. Barry Devine is a book primarily about the river environment through time. Historical documents, articles, eighteen informative maps, accounts and 155 full color photographs portray the river and watershed through time.

The work of many people and organizations over more than fifty years, is meant to educate people, act as a reference and highlight this rare and matchless natural area. The book is intended to teach about the critical link between landscapes and seascapes, emphasizing the importance of the ecosystem, the impact of human beings and our responsibility as global stewards of the Earth.

Read about the geologic origins of the watershed, the history of Casey Farm and Gilbert Stuart Birthplace, conservation efforts by US Fish and Wildlife and Narrow River Land Trust, and learn about bobcats, oysters, osprey and more in the 'Wildlife in the Watershed' features.

Fifteen full color, detailed maps of the watershed each spotlight different facets of the area. From River Zones and Ecological communities to Wetlands and conservation open space, these fascinating maps provide an overview of many of the incredible aspects of the river and its watershed.

All profits from the purchase of the book benefit Narrow River Preservation Association

Barry Devine is a biologist and cartographer who has worked in the Caribbean, Florida and the Northeast. He is the author of the field guide "Island Peak to Coral Reef", about the Virgin Islands and two fictional novels. He was an early member of the Board of Narrow River Preservation Association and organized the first Narrow River Run in 1988.

## Meet Peter Gelhaar



Peter Gelhaar, a new Board member this year, lives with his wife Christa and daughter Blain on South River Drive in Narragansett. They have owned their home along the Narrow River for the last three years. When not on the River, Peter is a lawyer in Boston, where he has practiced for over 40 years. Peter served as a federal prosecutor for 5 years in the 1980s and thereafter established his own firm which has grown to 15 lawyers. He specializes in the defense of companies and individuals charged with white collar criminal and SEC regulatory offenses. Christa is a hairstylist in Boston and Blain is a high school senior on her way to college.

Although a relative newcomer to the Narrow River estuary, Peter knew immediately that it was a very special place. You can often find him sitting on his dock with Christa during the summer months at sunset with their feet in the water. Peter admits that he is still in the "exploratory phase" of his River adventure—whether that takes the form of anchoring quietly in the Upper Pond looking for eagles or finding rocks here and there with his boat propeller. Some of his fondest memories of River life so far have been sharing stories with his neighbors on the river and learning about what makes the River such a wonderful ecological resource.

Peter understands such gems like the Narrow River do not stay gems unless they are well supported and meticulously cared for, and that explains his desire to serve on the NRPA's Board of Directors. He is keenly interested in water quality preservation issues and how the estuary is affected top to bottom by events that occur at the river's mouth. He is grateful for the opportunity to serve on the Board, but more so for the opportunity to surround himself with such dedicated preservationists and historians of the river.

# Winter Speaker Series Returns in 2024

Mark your 2024 calendar for the eleventh season of *On Pettaquamscutt, Presentations on the Environment and History of the Narrow River Watershed*.

This winter speaker series is a collaboration between the Friends of Canonchet Farm, Narrow River Preservation Association, South County Museum, and the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library. On Pettaquamscutt had a very successful ten-year run before going dark during COVID, but we're back up and running for 2024 with three great Sunday afternoon talks (all starting at 1:00) at the new Narragansett Library: All talks are free and open to the public. You can register at [OnPettaquamscutt.org](http://OnPettaquamscutt.org) or at the calendar page of the library website to reserve a seat. Registration will open at the beginning of the month for each presentation. For more information or to see presentations from the first ten seasons, visit [OnPettaquamscutt.org](http://OnPettaquamscutt.org).

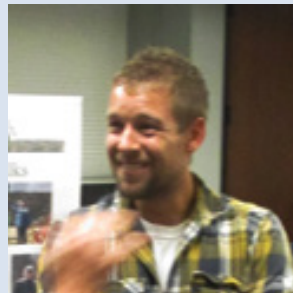


## January 28: Dressed for Life and Leisure, 1870 to 1920

Rebecca Kelly, Deputy Director and Curator at the South County Museum, will discuss nineteenth-century clothing from the museum's collection highlighting both high fashion and leisure ware, as in "what does the fashionable Narragansett visitor wear to the beach in 1900?"

## February 25: Restoring Salt Marsh in the John H. Chafee National Wildlife Refuge

Nick Ernst, Wildlife Biologist, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Ben Gaspar, Restoration Ecologist at Save the Bay, will update us on the sediment placement projects in Narrow River and other refuge locations to stave off the threats from sea level rise to salt marshes – and to the salt marsh sparrow.



## March 24: History of the Watershed in Maps and Aerial Photos

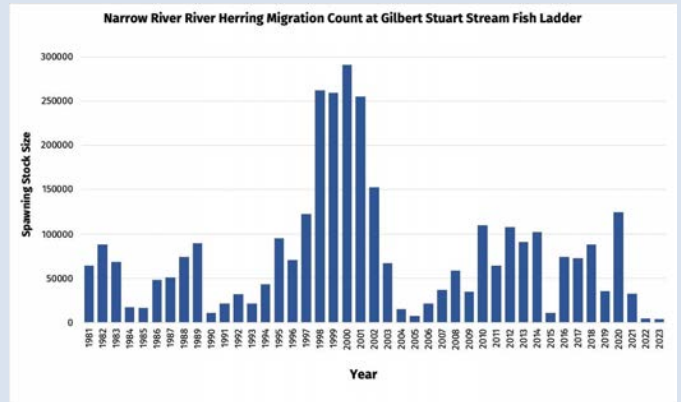
**Peter Stetson**, President of Education Mapping Service, will show us interactive GIS mapping centered on the South County Museum and the Narrow River Watershed, and their history through aerial photography.

# 2023 River Herring Report

At Gilbert Stuart Stream, as well as throughout the region, 2023 was the second year in a row of poor river herring spawning stock numbers.

“Unfortunately, southern New England saw a second straight year of poor river herring returns. Rhode Island counts were down again state-wide, as were the surrounding regions. We’ve continued to meet with our State and Federal colleagues to try to further understand these low numbers and collect additional data in attempts to get to the root of the cause.

The Gilbert Stuart site was once again under 5,000 fish. Our rough estimate for the season was 4,100.” states Pat McGee, Fisheries Biologist with the RI Department of Environmental Management, Division of Fish and Wildlife.



## Art on The River

*Continued from Front Page*

Saturday was the Venkataman’s first year drawing henna at “Art on the River.”

Since the town bought the land along the river, NRPA was asked to run educational activities in the spot. “We started doing one every month,” Co-President of NRPA Veronica Berounsky said. Residents and visitors alike had the opportunity to paint, craft, or draw, as all ages were welcome.

A couple of artists sat along the bank, sketching their own depiction of the landscape.

There were also three tents set up, each providing a different activity for attendees to try out. The tents provided a seaweed print station, fish print station and Venkataman’s henna designs.

Seaweed printing involves dipping the seaweed in water and drying it out on paper, in the sun. “The materials in seaweed are such that they stick to the paper,” Berounsky said.

The fish printing used to be performed with real fish, but NRPA have since switched to using rubber molds – opting for a neater and less wasteful avenue. “The idea is that you paint the fish and then you put a piece of paper or a t-shirt on there and let it make a print,” Berounsky said.

NRPA Co-President Richard Grant supplied coloring books and drawing paper at a table beside the seaweed station. Grant’s hope was to help get them started.

“My concept is ‘get the pencil on the paper,’” Grant said. “If you get the pencil on the paper, the young kids really don’t know what to draw or don’t even know that they can draw.”

Grant starts them out with a circle.

“And from the circle, I ask them to feel their head. And that’s round. And then their shoulders,” Grant said, adding that once the children draw a stick figure, through circular motions on the paper, it can be enhanced with water coloring.

Grant’s hope is the children he works with will continue forward with a love for drawing, into adulthood, and one day become the artists drawing on the riverbank.

“The most fulfilling thing is you can start a young person out and (help them) realize they could draw. They just need to get started.”



*Ann, a plein art painter, captures the serenity of the Narrow River.*

# Middlebridge Upgrades 2023

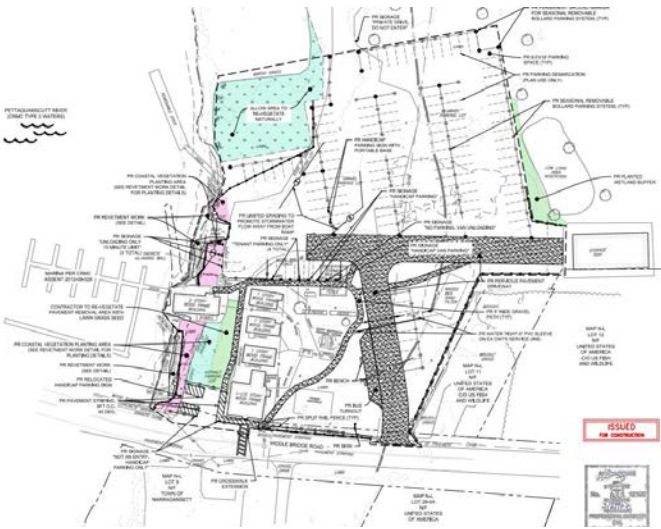
As part of the Middlebridge Conservation Land Management Plan, the Town of Narragansett intends to remove the entire asphalt parking lot located in front of the marina and relocate it to a higher elevation to the eastern side of the former café (yellow building).

In doing so, the town will restore a salt marsh at the top of bank and a coastal buffer in the former parking area and create a more resilient shoreline that is tolerant to coastal flooding. By removing the asphalt along the edge of the river, the amount of untreated stormwater runoff flowing directly into Narrow River will be reduced.

Public access will be provided to the shoreline and interpretive signage will educate the public about the Town’s coastal adaptation efforts.

The parking facility in the rear should handle most of the displaced parking although a small parking area adjacent to the cottages may be added to offset the lost spaces.

Construction will be completed in early 2024. Some landscaping and signage may carry over to Spring.



## Meet Andrew Neil

In his own words:

“Forever an optimist, I believe we can be great. But like everything in life it is not easy; it takes hard work, thoughtful thinking, smart actions, and plenty of passion”

He has a wealth of experience in natural resource management and GIS. While at the University of Rhode Island, for grad school and as a Research Associate, he worked with the National Park Service (NPS) to assess the risk to natural and cultural resources from Sea Level Rise (SLR) and Storm Surge associated with climate change. This work involved planning and managing a small team of researchers to collect and analyze environmental data. It included performing inundation modeling, installing geodetic benchmarks, collecting survey grade elevation points in natural areas, deploying tide gauges, and collecting vegetation data.

In the fall of 2021, he moved back to his home state of RI and in the spring of 2022, he accepted a fully remote position as Assistant Director for Sustainability with the Facilities Operations and Development team at OSU. In this position he manages a suite of university wide sustainability goals including reporting on seven resource stewardship goals, developing internal and external grants for sustainability projects, improving processes to embed sustainable thinking into everyday actions, and managing a small team of analysts and interns on sustainability projects. He works across the university with diverse stakeholders including students, faculty, and staff. He also partners with municipalities, non-profits, and outside organizations to enhance the impact of our programs.

Andrew applied for a position as a board member with NRPA so that his children and others can enjoy this tremendous resource for generations to come. Welcome to the NRPA Board of Directors!



# 2023 Environmental Appreciation award Winner Bob Facey



At our 2023 Annual Meeting, NRPA honored Bob Facey with a 2023 NRPA Environmental Appreciation Award in recognition of his years of dedicated volunteer service to the osprey webcam hosted by NRPA and Narrow River Land Trust.

Since its installation in March 2020, the webcam featuring the osprey family at a nest at Garrison House Acres overlooking the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River has captured the attention of thousands of viewers worldwide. The webcam is a critical component of our Osprey Education program for local fourth grade students.

Since its inception, the sophisticated and complicated technology needed to record and broadcast the video has required maintenance, troubleshooting, correction and adjustment.

Bob has braved cold, wet weather, wind, and literally hundreds of ticks to set up, troubleshoot and make repairs at the nest platform.

This year, when the internet connection through the former Narrow River Kayaks office building was discontinued, Bob led us through the process of transitioning to a direct cell connection at the nest platform. He procured and set up the necessary parts for the new setup, integrated them into the existing technology and even identified an internet provider with a special discounted rate for non-profit use.

Simply put, the webcam would not be operation but for Bob's continued support and expertise.

We offer our thanks to Bob on behalf of all who enjoy and learn from the osprey webcam along Narrow River.

## Meet The New Board Members



### Meet Christine Ariel

After retiring from the private practice of law in 2020, Christine has now turned her time and attention back to environmental preservation, drawing on both her legal expertise and biologist background in freshwater and coastal wetlands biology and management to benefit of several non-profit organizations.

Christine has been walking, swimming, and paddling in the Narrow River watershed since the 1970s. She marvels at the waters, wetlands and wildlife existing there. The need for better balancing of preservation and protection of this resource with the constant pressures of development and overuse has never been greater.



### Narrow River Land Trust

Did you know that the Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) and Narrow River Land Trust (NRLT) are two, completely separate organizations? The NRLT mission is to preserve land in the watershed in order to protect water and agricultural resources, wildlife habitat, and open space for outdoor recreation. NRLT preserves land through conservation easements, donations, fee acquisitions, and bargain sales of land. NRLT is growing their Board of Directors and volunteer committees for activities including trail maintenance, invasive species removal, and stewardship monitoring.

For more information about NRLT, please contact [office@narrowriverlandtrust.org](mailto:office@narrowriverlandtrust.org).

## Meet Jake Pietrzak, winner of the 2023 NRPA Youth Environmental Award



Jake Pietrzak was awarded the 2023 NRPA Youth Environmental Award for his numerous volunteer efforts over the last 10 years. Jake has participated in many of the Narragansett Environmental Beach Days (scavenger hunt lead), the

NRPA Road Races (registration and water, bagel and t shirt distribution), several "What Lives in the River" events (seining and set-up), "Art at the River" (set-up) the osprey camera set-up (helped carry the heavy poles), the Gilbert Stuart Spring event (tickets and table discussion) and the Narrow River book delivery (running the books up to the houses!). to name just a few. He even had a starring role in the "What Lives in the River" video! Jake can always be counted on to cheerfully support the NRPA events and is most deserving of the NRPA Youth Environmental Award.

Jake is a senior at Narragansett High School where he is in the National Honor Society and president of the NHS media club. He plays on both the hockey and the tennis teams (number one singles). In the fall/spring, he is an umpire for Little League baseball and for the past three summers, he has perfected his ice cream scooping and pizza making skills at the Bonnet Shores Beach Club. Jake is currently applying to colleges and anxiously awaiting the results.

## Dredging Report Update

As many of you are aware, the Town of Narragansett hired a consultant to develop a preliminary alternatives analysis for proposed dredging at the mouth of the Narrow River along with the potential beneficial reuse of the sand to provide increased public access to Narragansett Beach. A presentation of the initial findings was presented to the Town Council on Monday, November 20. The presentation is available for viewing – See November 20, 2023, 7:00 p.m. MP4 Video. It is the second item on the agenda Engineering presentation

This work is of great interest to the Board of NRPA. We were given the opportunity to provide technical comments on an advanced copy of the report to the Town Manager and Town Engineer. Recent storm events have substantially impacted conditions at the mouth of the river and will likely continue to do with increased coastal storm intensity. The focus of our interest in the project is to preserve and protect the Narrow River Estuary. However, the Board also recognizes the need for safe navigation for recreational boaters at the mouth of the river. We are at work with the Town and other stakeholders to seek a thorough assessment of alternatives that seeks to balance safe navigation at the mouth with estuary health (including but not limited to tidal flushing, coastal habitats, and salt marsh health/resilience), replenishment of the town beach to ensure beach recreation areas are maintained or enhanced, and coastal resilience against storms and climate change.

*Thank You*

## to the 2023 River Watch Volunteers!

In 2023, 32 volunteers participated in NRPA's River Watch Program. From May through October, these volunteers contributed their time to make measurements and collect water samples on the Narrow River. Their assistance and dedication is greatly appreciated!

This year's volunteers included: Veronica Berounsky, Rich Bourbonnais, Margaret Bradley, Deborah Casey, Elizabeth Donovan, George and Suzanne Faucher, Michelle Goldman, Chris and John Gouveia, Marcia Izzi, Karen Killian, Eric and Jennifer Kohlsaat, Alison, Ted, and Lily Kutcher, Marc Lamson, Jeri Levesque, Nancy McLean, David Moore, Betsy Motyl, Perry Moylan, Jill O'Neill, Michael Remington, Paula Santos, Rick Schultz, Mark Silverman, Rosemary and David Smith, Kate Sullivan, and Craig Wood. Special recognition goes out to Veronica Berounsky who reached the milestone of completing 20 years of monitoring this year!

The continued success of NRPA's River Watch Program is due to the dedicated service of the volunteers. It is through their efforts that we continue to learn more about the quality of the Narrow River waters. NRPA greatly appreciates the many hours of service provided by the volunteers. Thank you very much!

If you are interested in volunteering for the River Watch program next year, please contact [nrpa@narrowriver.org](mailto:nrpa@narrowriver.org) for additional information. Training for new volunteers will take place in late winter 2024 (February/March).

Annette DeSilva

# Swimming Narrow River



*Veronica Berounsky is a longtime open water and cold-water swimmer, often jumping in at the Narragansett Bay Campus beach for an ocean swim, no matter the season. She shares her first experience of swimming from the headwaters to the mouth of Narrow River, watching the marine life change as she goes. Having now done this source-to-sea swim three times, she says swimming slowly enough to observe and experience the river is key.*

It's dark when my alarm rings, but I'm immediately awake. Today, I will swim the length of Narrow River—all 6 miles of it, from North Kingstown to Narragansett, R.I. I'll be joined by two swimmer friends, Lori Pugh and Keith Ballard.

My safety kayaker, Jerry Prezioso, M.S. '91, launches into Gilbert Stuart Stream in the dim light, and my swim starts. The stream looks much like it did when Stuart, the renowned American portraitist best known for his unfinished painting of George Washington, was born in 1775 in the house at the stream's dam. I imagine him walking the road beside me as I swim.

The stream flows into Upper Pond. As I cross the 1-mile distance of the pond, which feels wide open after swimming the narrow, tree-lined stream, I glance

to the east and see the sun rising over the trees. It takes my breath away.

I've been on Upper Pond hundreds of times to collect water samples for URI and Narrow River Preservation Association, but it's different to be in the water. Too small to be seen by eye, I know there are single-cell plants (phytoplankton) floating in the water with me, using the sunlight for energy to grow. There are single-cell animals (zooplankton) here, too, eating those plants. Near the middle of the pond, there are 13 meters of water below me. That's deep enough to hide most of Point Judith Lighthouse.

I also know that the water from about 4 meters deep to the bottom is naturally without oxygen; the bacteria there get their energy from naturally occurring odiferous sulfur. But here, at the surface, there is no evidence of that.

As I approach the southern end of Upper Pond, the bottom rises to about 1 meter deep, forming Casey Sill. I float over it into Lower Pond.

Along the edges of both ponds, I see oysters, *Crassostrea virginica*. Even here, 5 miles from the ocean, seawater comes in with the tide and mixes with the freshwater, creating an estuary—Pettaquamscutt Estuary. The salinity here is ideal oyster habitat.

At the shallow southern end of Lower Pond, I've been swimming for 2 miles; I glide over the bottom, paved with oysters. The outgoing tide whisks me under Bridgetown Road Bridge. At Mettatuxet Beach, the halfway mark, I see soft-shell clams, *Mya arenaria*. They thrive in saltier water than oysters do. Just before Middlebridge, I spy razor clams, *Ensis leei*. I've been swimming for 4 miles. Passing beneath the bridge, I see eelgrass, *Zostera marina*, which does well where sunlight can reach the bottom. Blue mussels, *Mytilus edulis*, appear—evidence of saltier water.

At the 5-mile mark, swimming under the third and final bridge, Sprague Bridge, I also see quahogs, *Mercenaria mercenaria*.

As I make the final turn to flow out with Narrow River to Rhode Island Sound, I see surf clams, *Spisula solidissima*, under the waves. I turn to Jerry and say, "We made it!" Lori, Keith, and I lock hands in the waves, celebrating our swim.

*Veronica M. Berounsky, Ph.D. '90, is a coastal ecologist and is the alumni relations and communications coordinator for the Graduate School of Oceanography. She also serves as co-president of the Narrow River Preservation Association and chair of the Rhode Island Rivers Council.*

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