

# NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Protecting, Preserving and Restoring the Narrow River Watershed Since 1970/ August 2024

## MEET NRPA VOLUNTEERS

*Written by Marianne Chronley*

NRPA couldn't get by without its volunteers, and two of our favorites helped again at Art at the River on August 10th at Middlebridge.

Chris Machinski and Helen Johnson directed the ever-popular fish printing table. Following the Japanese art of gytaku, Chris and Helen guided participants, first rolling ink onto to rubber fish forms. Then tee shirts or other fabric was pressed onto the inked fish. Finally, the fabric was lifted off, and "Voila" , an amazingly detailed, unique imprint of a fish appeared on the shirt.

A visual artist with a degree in marine biology. Chris Machinski has always been fascinated with the small ecosystems to be found under rocks or a single drop of water. These amazing, complex and important little worlds are frequently the subject of Chris' artwork.

NRPA records show Chris has been bringing expertise in marine life and art to NRPA's events since at least 2018. Whether working a seine net at What Lives in the River or getting inky at Art at the River, NRPA is grateful to have Chris Machinski helping out. More of Chris' fascinating works can be seen at <https://christinamachinski.com/about>

After retiring from teaching various grades and directing enrichment programs in North Kingston schools, Helen Johnson has been



*Great group of volunteers at the June What Lives in the River*

helping out at NRPA events. Helen can keep the solar aerators for the touch tanks bubbling at What Lives in the River and doesn't mind getting covered in ink at Art at the River. During the summer, Helen can be found volunteering as an usher at Theatre by the Sea or kayaking the Narrow River. Grandkids, tennis, gardening and reading also keep Helen busy during retirement, we appreciate the time that gets carved out for NRPA.

Each year, about 100 volunteers help keep NRPA moving along in its mission in engaging people to preserve and protect the Narrow River (Pettaquamscutt Estuary) and its watershed. Our Middlebridge



*Helen Johnson (left) and Chris Machinski assist with fish printing*

educational events are a vital part of that mission, and we could not do it without volunteers like Chris and Helen.

# Presidents Cove

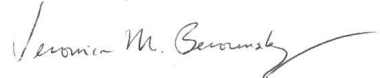
## Working Together

Dear Friends of Narrow River,

Being a coastal ecologist by training (URI's Graduate School of Oceanography) and an advocate for Narrow River (Board of Directors since 1990), I spend a lot of time on, in, and supporting Narrow River. You may have seen me, in my flat bottom 17-foot boat, anchored over the deep holes of Upper Pond or Lower Pond for hours while I lower a probe to the bottom to measure at various depths dissolve oxygen, temperature, salinity, and chlorophyll (the pigment that allows plants and microscopic phytoplankton to photosynthesis so they can grow and provide food for animals) \*. Or you might see me scooping up water off my dock on the river (URI Watershed Watch Site NR13) for nutrients and bacteria. Or you might see me swimming NRPA's Turnaround Swim (next one is June 21, 2025) or the length of Narrow River (September 16) or swimming any day, just for fun. And there are times when I and other Board members need to be inside: meeting together to look over the results of sampling, reviewing reports, preparing presentations, attending Town Council and other meetings. One of our most important meetings is NRPA's 54th Annual Meeting. That's our chance to talk to you about what we have been doing and for you to tell us what you are interested in. So please come over to the Coastal Institute on the Bay Campus at 6 pm on Tuesday October 1 and get together with me and the rest of the NRPA Board members.

And thank you for all YOU do for Narrow River and its watershed.

Take care,



Veronica M. Berounsky, Ph.D.  
President, NRPA Board of Directors

\*I do this because these deep holes (12m and 18m) are very unique environments that scientists come from near and far to study. See pages 123-5 in the book *The Narrow River: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*.

## SAVE THE DATE FOR ANNUAL MEETING

**Tuesday October 1** at the URI Bay Campus Coastal Institute Building. Reception at 6:00 p.m., Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) engages people to preserve and protect the Narrow River (Pettaquamscutt Estuary) and its watershed.

### NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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## 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.

# 2024 NRPA LESA MENG SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Since 1993, the NRPA has awarded scholarships to graduating high school seniors in the Narrow River Watershed as part of its Youth Environmental Education Program. This year has been exceptional for the NRPA Lesa Meng Scholarship program. We received a record number of high-quality applications. Typically, we award 3 to 4 scholarships, but thanks to the generosity of some NRPA donors, we were able to award 7 scholarships! Despite this, it was extremely challenging to choose among so many deserving candidates.

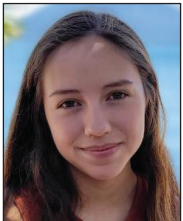
In 2007, the scholarship was renamed the NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship in honor of a former NRPA Board member who passed away. Lesa Meng served on the Board and chaired the Narrow River Road Race. The scholarship applications are judged on the student's environmentally oriented activities in and out of high school, the quality of an original essay on the river, a science teacher's recommendation, and academic achievement. **We are pleased to announce the 2024 NRPA Lesa Meng Scholarship winners:**



## Ceriana Carnevale

Ceriana graduated from North Kingstown High School, where she was a 4-year member and co-president of the Climate Club. She was also a 4-year member of the swim team, serving as captain in her senior year, and she played in the Symphonic

Band. Since 2021, Ceriana has interned at the Jamestown Community Farm, a local nonprofit providing organic produce to food pantries across Rhode Island. She plans to major in marine biology with a minor in environmental science at the University of Oregon, with an interest in the conservation of whales and other threatened marine mammals.



## Lucia Zunum-Allen

Lucia will attend the University of Rhode Island (URI) to major in Ocean Engineering and earn a second degree in Italian under the International Baccalaureate program. Fluent in Spanish, Lucia graduated from South Kingstown High School, where she was an active

member of the String Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra, playing violin and piano. She is a member of the National Honor Society and Italian Honor Society and is currently learning American Sign Language.



## Mia Ursillo

Mia, a graduate of South Kingstown (SK) High School, plans to major in biology at Florida Atlantic University with the goal of becoming a physician assistant. At SK, she was an active member of the National Honor

Society, organizing beach cleanups and co-running the school's Relay for Life, which fundraises for the American Cancer Society. She is a full-time lifeguard at East Matunuck State Beach where she also enjoys surfing with family and friends.



## Sofia Caito

Sofia, a South Kingstown High School graduate, plans to study electrical engineering at Sacred Heart University. Her goal is to provide sustainable electricity to the 760 million people worldwide

who currently lack access. Sofia captained both the cross-country and indoor/outdoor track teams and was vice-president of the student council. She was also a member of the National Honor Society, Academic Decathlon team, and orchestra.



## Maggie Taplin

Maggie plans to attend Ithaca College in Ithaca, NY, to study biology and enroll in the Health Professions Program. A graduate of Narragansett High School, Maggie was a 4-year competitive swimmer and captain of the varsity swim team, as well as a

lacrosse player. She served as vice president of the National Honor Society, student council, and class board historian. Maggie has participated in local beach clean-ups and volunteers at a local animal shelter as well as a volunteer at the weekly free sail in Jamestown.



## Jake Pietrzak

Jake, a graduate of Narragansett High School, will attend Penn State University to major in material science engineering. He aims to develop new sustainable polymers and plastics to protect the environment. Jake received the NRPA Youth Environmental

Achievement Award. At Narragansett, he founded and served as president of the Media Club, was a National Honor Society member, played forward on the varsity hockey team, and captained the varsity tennis team. He has volunteered with Special Olympics Rhode Island Tennis for four years.



## Maya DeAngelis

Maya will attend the University of Rhode Island to major in marketing and political science. A graduate of Narragansett High School (NHS), Maya was a four-year varsity soccer player and captain her senior year. She was a National Honor Society Executive Board

member, co-historian of the NHS Student Council and Class Board, and a member of the NHS Ecology Club. Maya also served as the Student Council Liaison for the Narragansett School Committee, the first student selected to represent the student body at the school committee meetings.

# Art on the River 2024

Written by Alyssa Conaty,  
Barrington High School Senior

NRPA held its annual “Art on the River” event at Middlebridge Marina with beautiful landscape views of the Narrow River on Saturday August 10.. The event draws in both local and not so local visitors, with some walking down their driveway, and others making journeys from as far as Brooklyn, New York to join in on the fun.

Both locals and visitors alike were able to print seaweed and fish onto paper and t-shirts, decorate the interior of quahog shells, and paint glamorous ‘plein air’ portraits of the river.



Plein Air artist enjoying a perfect day

Many artists showed up with easels and a chair placed along the bank of the river to transfer the natural beauty of the landscape onto their canvases. Using paints and their amazing talents, beautiful portraits were crafted. In addition to our veteran artists, many younger painters decided to join in on the plein air experience, using watercolors and pencil to record the river scenery.

The seaweed station required dipping the seaweed into water and allowing it to dry out in the sun on a sheet of paper. This would result in the seaweed sticking to the page and creating an interesting, yet natural piece of art. Volunteers Vanda Brazda and Martin Brazda, from the Czech Republic oversaw the seaweed pressing station. They made the journey from New York City to assist for the morning.

Another popular area was the fish printing station. Originally done with real fish, we used rubbery and bendable molds of fish, promoting less waste and a much cleaner process. With the use of a roller

and some ink, visitors pressed their white t-shirts, pillowcases, and various fabrics against the mold to reveal an impressive, and very realistic, fish print that they could take home with them.

Artist Chris Machinski and retired teacher Helen Johnson manned the fish printing tent. Rolling ink and pressing on fabrics, the two worked together as a great team in showing visitors the tips and tricks to reveal the best prints.

Guests painted fun creatures and nautical scenes on the interior walls of quahog shells at the quahog shell tent. The painting was done on northern quahogs, otherwise known as hard shelled clams. These shells



Fun with fish painting

featured a vibrant purple around the edges with a white, chalky center, perfect for our artists. Many painted sea creatures like lobsters and crabs while others painted things like lighthouses and sailboats. At the end of the event, everyone was able to take their personalized shells home for display.

A great event for people of all ages, the public was extremely appreciative of the continuation of the Art on the River event and the hard work of NRPA and their many volunteers. When leaving the Middlebridge Marina, many were sure to mention how fantastic of an experience it was to have with their family and friends, and how they cannot wait to hear about what else the NRPA has to offer in the upcoming months.



# 114 Swimmers Make A Splash At NRPA's 17th Annual Turnaround Swim

At NPRPA's Turnaround Swim on June 22, Narragansett's Abby Bauman impressed one final time before heading off to college.

As a Colby College commit and coming off a four-year career for the Narragansett Mariners as one of the best high school swimmers in the state, Bauman finished swimming in 24 minutes, 48 seconds, and was "first out of the water" of 114 participants.



Busy Check-in

Competitors of all ages swam the half mile downstream through still water before looping around for another half-mile back to shore at URI Boathouse off Lafarge Park in North Kingstown. It was the 17th Turnaround Swim, which was first held in 2004.



Safety Briefing

"It's an awesome community, grassroots kind of race," said Derek Jakoboski, "You get a shirt, you get a time, and you get a lot of good people here.... That's what gets me here every year. It's just fun.

Many open-water swimmers delight in swimming in new locations and local races when they travel, and a quarter of Turnaround Swimmers were from out-of-state. The swimmer who came the farthest this year was eighty-year-old Mary Cantini-Norkin, also the oldest swimmer. She traveled from San Francisco and finished in just over one hour.

The youngest swimmer was Coventry's Shyla Biswas (52nd place, 39:19). NRPA always awards a prize cup to the "middle of the pack" swimmer, Kathleen Uscinski took that coveted prize. The 2024 prize- coffee cups featuring the Narrow River- were donated by Narragansett artist Pati Sylvia.

In her first year as NRPA President, Veronica Berounsky chose "eelgrass" as the 2024 Swim mascot. Eelgrass is an aquatic plant that is rooted underwater, unlike seaweed, and healthy eelgrass is one sign of a healthy ecosystem.

President Berounsky says. "One of our goals is letting people know about this place This is public access. We want people to know that there are public access places where you can come and enjoy the river. It's a significant place.



Ready to go

Making for an odd twist in Swim record keeping, speedy high schooler Alex Tremblay started 17 minutes late but finished with the best overall time of 21:47! West Warwick tri-athlete Derek Jakoboski (37-years-old) finished in third place overall at 25:45. South Kingstown resident and 2006 inductee to the Rhode Island Aquatic Hall of Fame, David Cote (64-years-old), took first place in the men's wet suit competition (and fourth overall)- with a time of 26:05. The fastest woman in a wet suit was Annie Galliher (28:16).

Narrow River is a crucial part of Narragansett, according to Abby Bauman. "Just to be able to fund raise for the preservation of this place, and to enjoy it as well, has been amazing."

## Rain and the River - Is this wet season having an impact on water quality?

Rhode Island has certainly seen its share of rain this year. Local gardens have flourished, and it has been a banner year for the hydrangeas. Unfortunately, these rains can also have some negative impacts, such as increasing the amount of storm water runoff entering the Narrow River. Runoff can carry bacteria, lawn fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants into the River.

NRPA's River Watch program monitors 13 locations that span the length of the Narrow River, from Gilbert Stuart Stream in the north to Mumford Brook in the south. An important parameter that is monitored at each of these sites is bacteria. Bacteria can indicate the presence of sewage and associated pathogens, or disease-causing organisms.

From May to October, NRPA's volunteer River Watch monitors collect water samples once a month from each site and deliver them to URI's Watershed Watch (URIWW) Lab for analyses of fecal coliform and enterococci bacteria. Shortly after the samples are analyzed, the data is posted on the URIWW website. The 2024 bacteria data for May, June, July and August for the Narrow River, as well as all URIWW locations are available on-line at: <https://web.uri.edu/watershedwatch/data/bacteria/>.

It should be noted that while URIWW's Analytical Laboratories are State certified, their data are intended for screening purposes only. The data are very valuable for targeting areas of concerns and for tracking potential sources of bacterial contamination. The URIWW program has over 250 monitoring locations across RI and nearby CT and MA. Elizabeth Herron, URIWW Program Director, recently commented, "We have seen higher bacteria levels in lots of places this summer because of all the rain."

**Swimming** - Enterococci levels are assessed as an indicator of whether waters are safe for swimming and contact by people and their pets. This season, increased levels of enterococci bacteria have been observed at some monitoring locations south of Lacey Bridge. The Mettatuxet Beach and Sprague Bridge locations exceeded the safe swimming standard in both July and August. The site just south of Mettatuxet, "End of the Narrows," exceeded the standard in July and the Middlebridge site exceeded the standard for safe swimming in August. It's possible that this year's rains are indeed elevating the enterococci levels in the River, particularly in areas that are more densely populated and developed. On a very positive note, the sites in Narrow River's pond locations never exceeded the standard for safe swimming on the dates monitored this year.

**Shellfishing** - The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management assesses fecal coliform levels to determine if waters are safe for shellfish harvesting. The Narrow River has been closed to shellfishing since the mid 1990s. Over past years, the fecal coliform levels from many of the River sites have exceeded the standard for safe shellfishing and in 2024, this trend has continued. Unfortunately, elevated fecal coliform levels have been observed in years of little rain, as well as wet years.

**Next steps** - Although rain may have elevated bacteria levels in parts of the River, other factors may also be affecting water quality, including temperature, tides, nutrients, and dissolved oxygen. As additional 2024 data becomes available, NRPA will review the new data to more fully assess the water quality conditions of the River. In the meantime, NRPA continues to recommend that you refrain from swimming for several days after a heavy rain.

### Narrow River Preservation Association hosts "What Lives in the River"

Written by Betsy Archibald

On the morning of Saturday, June 1 participants of all ages gathered at the Middlebridge Preserve to explore the wide variety of creatures that inhabit the river and coastal zone.

Visitors took part in a range of free, hands-on activities including various netting techniques, river-water touch tanks, and close observation of specimens under the microscope. Experts were available to demonstrate techniques and explain the vital importance of the river creatures and the plant life of the estuary.

Jake Pietrzak and biologists Jerry Prezioso and Harvey Zendt showed how to use seine nets as participants entered the water to find an abundance of creatures such as small winter flounder, green crabs and shrimp. Pat Salzillo demonstrated the plankton net. Ten-year-old Chloe Wild scored the biggest catch, a huge, spirited horseshoe crab encrusted with slipper shells.

At the touch tanks biologist Walter Berry helped visitors identify 20 different species. The stereoscope provided by Ed Baker allowed for close examination of tiny creatures.

Many of those attending were repeat visitors and emphasized how much their family valued the experience. Attendance at the event this year exceeded that of all previous years.

The Beach Hut in Wakefield donated a door prize consisting of an embroidered sweatshirt and towel and other summery items. This was won by Derek and Stephanie Miller of Saunderstown.

# Dredging Report Update

Written by James Vogel



Aerial mouth of the river April 2024

For the last two years, the Town of Narragansett has been working with a consultant – Foth Engineering - to evaluate dredging alternatives at the mouth of the Narrow River. The project would include dredging sand from the mouth and placing it on the adjacent Narragansett Town Beach for coastal resiliency. Dredging of the Narrow River is a complex issue that will involve many stakeholders including the Town of Narragansett, Town of South Kingstown, Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC), Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM), US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corps of Engineers, the Dunes Club, residents of the Narrow River Watershed (North Kingstown, Narragansett, and South Kingstown), NRPA members, and anyone who enjoys the amenities and beauty of the Narrow River.

In recent history, Narrow River has never had more sand inside the mouth than it does today. Dune erosion, storm overwash, and sediment transport from the Narragansett Town beach all contribute to the plug of sand where the river meets the ocean. The NRPA Board of Directors recognizes that our members are concerned about how a dredging project might affect safe navigation and water quality. We are committed to collaborating with the Town of Narragansett and other stakeholders to develop a responsible plan for dredging and beach nourishment.

On August 5th, Foth Engineering presented three dredge alternatives to the Town of Narragansett. The dredging proposal aims to return the river to pre-2010 condition by relocating sand from the mouth of the river to the adjacent beach.

Dredging could benefit both navigational safety and water quality in the river through enhanced flushing. Other factors to consider are cost (\$2-7 million), schedule, existing sediment studies, dredging methodologies, permitting requirements, estuary health, and climate change.

It's crucial to carefully weigh the benefits with potential impacts on our river's health. NRPA continues to track the project and provide comments to decision makers on behalf of our membership, including impacts to:

**Fish and Wildlife:** The proposal could affect fish populations and sensitive wildlife, including piping plovers and salt marshes.

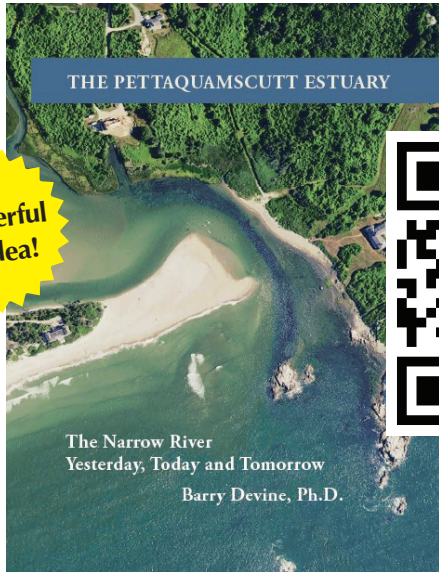
**Navigation:** Navigation may be improved for smaller vessels but the river's navigation patterns will continue to change seasonally and following significant storms.

**Estuary Flushing Rates:** Dredging and dune replenishment could alter estuary flushing rates, potentially benefiting some estuarine species (e.g., eelgrass). Dredging could also affect tide levels up stream.

**Climate Change:** Sea levels are rising and greater flushing of the river may lead to changes in tidal ranges up the river.

**Sustainability:** Maintenance dredging and dune replenishment may be required periodically to ensure a safe and resilient mouth of the Narrow river due to the damaging effects of storms. The town's plan for dredging and dune replenishment may increase the resiliency of the watershed but a significant storm could reclaim the efforts of this project.

# The Pettaquamscutt Estuary Book



Wonderful gift idea!



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.



## 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)



## Join NRPA Today!



# Osprey Cam Update

Written by Alison Kates and Craig Wood

The good news is that our osprey webcam is up and running again after an outage. Our thanks to Joseph Gleason of Mobile Beacon and Brian Coutu of OSHEAN for their critical assistance. Also to Jason Considine and Narrow River Kayaks who are now hosting the internet connection again and to the Farrell family for continuing to donate the operating costs of the webcam in love memory of Eileen Farrell.

For those who are curious, here's a diagram of the setup at the nest of the camera, microphone and antenna that send the signal to the Narrow River Kayaks office. From the receiving antenna on that building, an ethernet cord brings the signal inside the building where it connects to NRK's router and uploads to the internet. The technology at the nest is powered by the solar panels in the smaller photo, which feed a battery that enables the camera to function even at night or on very overcast days.

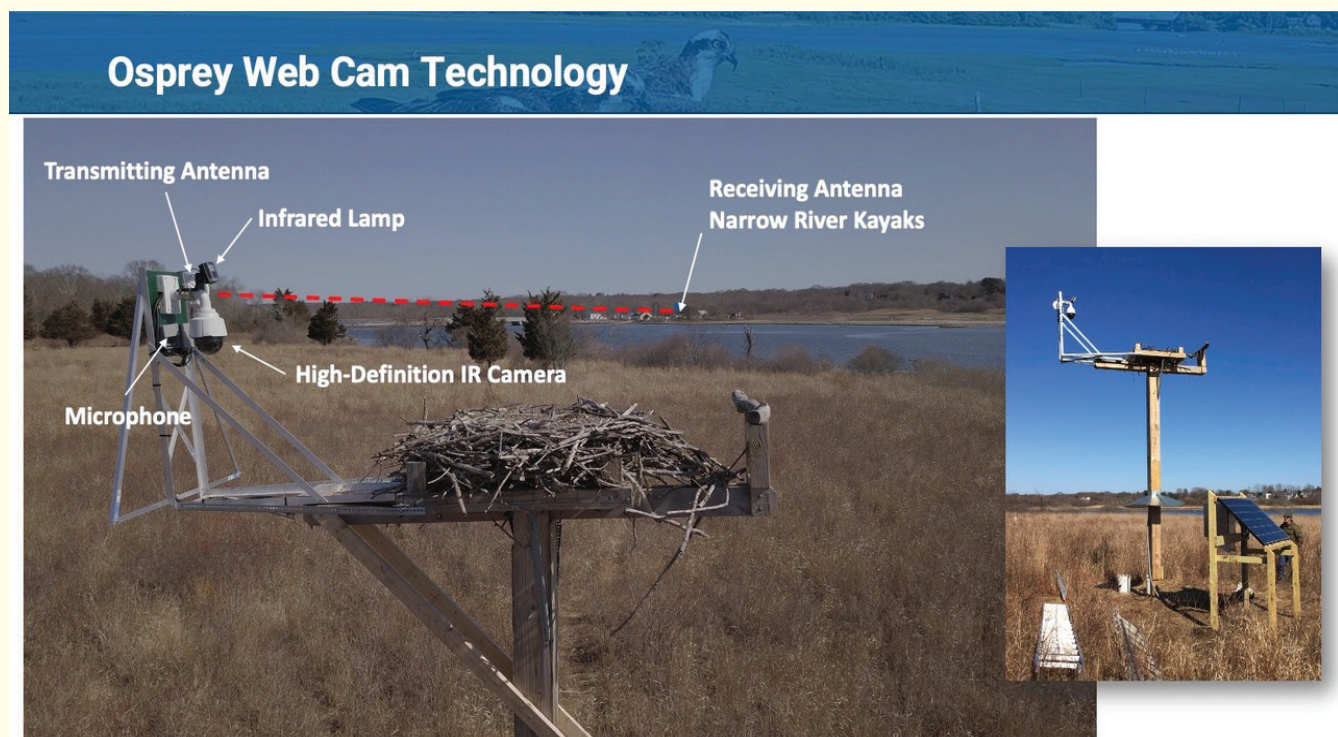


Diagram of osprey cam set-up

The bad news is that there are no chicks in the nest this year. This is a wild osprey nest and anything can happen. While we hope that healthy osprey chicks will end up fledging from the nest each season, things like sibling rivalry, predators, and natural disaster can affect this osprey family and may be difficult to watch. As hard as it may be to see anything happen to our osprey, we will let nature take its course and not intervene.

Although it appeared that the adults were incubating eggs, we weren't able to see into the nest to confirm this. And unfortunately, because the camera was down, we simply do not know what happened.

All are still welcome to enjoy beautiful views of Pettaquamscutt Cove with Sprague Bridge in the distance on the cam here. Osprey and other birds are visiting the nest throughout the day.

# Who is W.E.R. La Farge?

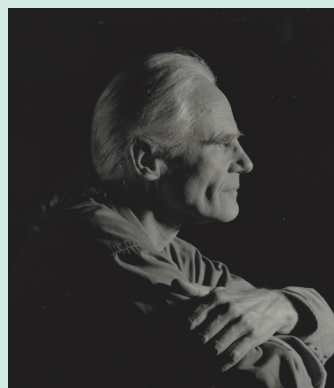
...one of the Founders of NRPA

Written by Louisa La Farge

I am writing these recollections from Saunderstown, now the fourth generation of my family to retire here. I am the eldest daughter of W.E.R. La Farge, the grandson of Florence Bayard Lockwood La Farge who bought The River Farm, Dad would tell us, for \$350 in 1906.

## Making a Life at The River Farm

Florence and her husband Christopher Grant La Farge had two sons: Christopher, who was Dad's father, and Oliver, who lived in the southwest.



W.E.R. La Farge

Christopher raised his two boys in New York City, my father the younger of the two. Dad was called W.E.R, his initials for William Ellis Rice. His brother was named Christopher Grant after their father and grandfather and was called Grant. Dad's mother, Louisa, for

whom I am named, died at age 46 when my father was 15 years old. The boys were sent to Groton School, a private school in Massachusetts, in 6th grade. When I looked up Groton's history, I learned that the school, with a campus designed by Frederick Law Olmsted, instilled a strong awareness of civil rights and social justice early on, values that Dad would embody through his work and share with us as we grew up.

My grandfather Christopher split his time between New York City and The River Farm which had been given to him by his father. He wrote several novels there in a small, wooden structure on the edge of Upper Pond, a short walk from the main house and with a direct view of the pristine pond that Dad likened to a Canadian lake where one saw nothing but nature. From a boat, with the tall, fine-looking cattails on the left, you can still peer through the grasses on the edge of the river and see remnants of that house.



The River Farm House

When Christopher died in 1956, The River Farm passed to my dad. Like his father, my dad split his time between New York City and The River Farm. In 1970 my dad, with others, founded the Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) because of his concerns about how proposed developments would affect the water quality. As young children in the 1960s, we could not swim in Narrow River since we were told sewerage seeped into the water. My sister Annik and I were allowed to sail our sailfish on the pond, which we called Bucky Pond. We would take the canoe up the stream towards Gilbert Stuart's Birthplace, as far as we could go given the shallow rock bed. We would duck into the neighboring boathouse and tell ghost stories. By the 1980s we would swim across the pond to the Boy's and Girl's Club dock. By then the river was becoming much cleaner, thanks to the tireless work of Dad and all the other committed people at NRPA.

Dad moved full time to The River Farm in 1978 to write plays and poetry and perhaps to escape the demands of the city and find peace from his NYC life.. Blessed to own this marvelous property in Saunderstown, he began a new life there that was productive in both his writing and his adventure into homesteading and land management.

*Continued on page 11*

## Who is W.E.R. La Farge? *Continued from page 10*

His father's office on the shore was fairly run down by then so Dad built his own brand-new office with the help of the caretaker, Bob Briggs. They did most of it by hand, and I remember Dad's pride and enthusiasm in creating mitered corners and large windows, along with many shelves to store all the books and magazines that he read and that gave him the inspiration for his writing. He bought an old drafting table and a tall stool and wrote at the tilted desk it provided. Dad would walk up the hill from the house with his coffee, cross the driveway, and spend the mornings in his office.

Dad cared that we loved and appreciated this beautiful spot on the river. A favorite memory was loading up his Ford Model A, a converted 1931 "truck" that Annik and I learned to drive at the age of 9, to go camping at "The Point" (on the west side of Casey's Sill). Dad would lower the tailgate, and we would bump our way along the dirt back road, hanging our



*1931 truck that we loved*

feet off the back and singing songs. We would build a campfire, lay our tent and sleeping bags down over a bed of dried pine needles, and enjoy the wildlife and sounds of the water. Dad gave us many experiences on the river that included canoeing, seining for bait, and fishing off Lacey Bridge, always with the underlying lesson of protection and a deep appreciation for its beauty.

## Thank you Narragansett Lions Club

July 27 marked the annual Blessing of the Fleet at Galilee. The Blessing of the Fleet is a colorful event featuring a parade of decorated commercial and recreational watercraft, large and small. A local clergyman blesses each vessel as they pass and the spectators along the breachway wave and cheer them on. There is also an optional boat decoration contest, should captains wish to participate. The Lions Club invited NRPA to have a table in the parking lot by the breakwater so that we could meet some new friends and see our neighbors. We enjoyed a beautiful morning, saw some interesting costumes, and enjoyed the parade of boats and the blessing. Board member Peter Gelhaar, Administrative coordinator Shirley Freitag, and volunteers Alyssa Conaty and Tracey Barton represented NRPA. For details and more great photos <https://narragansettlionsclub.org/annual-events/blessing-of-the-fleet-celebration/#blessing>



