
NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Protecting, Preserving and Restoring the Narrow River Watershed Since 1970/ September 2025

2025 NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship Recipients

The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2025 NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship. Since 1993, the NRPA has supported graduating high school seniors at high schools located in the Narrow River Watershed through its Youth Environmental Education Program. This year, five students have been selected for this prestigious award.

The NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship, named in honor of former NRPA Board member Lesa Meng, recognizes students who demonstrate a commitment to environmental stewardship, academic excellence, and community involvement. Applicants are evaluated on their environmentally-focused activities, a compelling essay on the Narrow River, a science teacher's recommendation, and overall academic performance.

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What Lives in the River

Written by Skylar Ceceri

On Saturday, June 7th, 2025, the Narrow River came alive with exploration and discovery as about 85 enthusiastic participants, ranging from curious kids to seasoned biologists and dedicated volunteers—gathered to learn what lives in and around our beautiful river.

Using seine nets, touch tanks, and microscopes, we explored the rich biodiversity of the estuary. Even under a cloudy sky, spirits were high—and some even remarked that the overcast weather made it easier to spot certain species!

Together, we found and observed a remarkable array of river life, including:

- Shrimp (glass and sand)
- Horseshoe crabs (two!)
- Hermit crab
- Green crab
- Blue crab
- Stickleback
- Glass eel and American eel
- Isopod
- Winter flounder
- Sea cucumber
- Cinder Worm
- Comb jelly
- Razor clam
- Quahogs...and more!

It was a fantastic, hands-on day filled with learning and



Everyone is fascinated by the treasures pulled up in the nets

Volunteer Chloe Wild brings in 2 more specimens to be analyzed

appreciation for the vibrant ecosystem right in our backyard. A heartfelt thank you goes out to everyone who joined us—and especially to our wonderful volunteers who made the event possible.

Stay curious, and see you on the river again for the next What Lives on The River: September 20th



Marine Biologist and Volunteer Walter Berry displaying the underbelly of a horseshoe crab.

Presidents Cove

Fresh Eyes on the River

September 2025

Dear Friends of Narrow River,

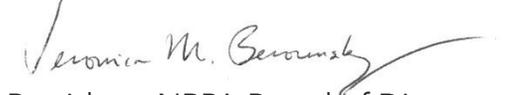
It has been a busy summer of NRPA events (Turnaround Swim, What Lives in the River, Art by the River), Riverwatch monitoring, and deep-water sampling. What I am always struck by is the wonderment of people who are seeing and experiencing Narrow River for the first time.

At the Turnaround Swim, there were people who had not swum the course before, and they were astonished by the calm and peacefulness of the La Farge Point Park area of Lower Pond. There were families who had not been to What Lives in the River before and were delighted to see horseshoe crabs and little shrimp. We had a new community of artists who came to sketch and paint at Art by the River and they had a hard time deciding which beautiful view to focus on. For 6 weeks, I had an undergraduate student intern working with me and between giving her a driving tour of the watershed and sampling weekly in the River, I saw the River with fresh eyes as she was amazed by this unique ecosystem. We often have researchers from other institutions come to sample Narrow River, and this year we had several scientists who had never been here before, and they noted how lucky we are to live in work in such a beautiful place with so much preserved land protecting the River.

So take a moment to look around you and think about what amazes you about Narrow River.

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

Take care,


President, NRPA Board of Directors

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 of NRPA's activities, events and advocacy. We accept checks payable to NRPA, credit cards, or your registered PayPal account. The mailing address is NRPA, P.O. Box 8,



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.

2025 NRPA Lesa Meng College Scholarship Recipients

Continued from cover



Lauren Avedisian Narragansett HS.

Ms. Avedisian will be attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison to study Bio-chemistry, with the long-term goal of becoming a physician's assistant. Describing herself as an avid "river lover", Lauren enjoys swimming and paddleboarding on the Narrow River, fostering a deep appreciation of its natural beauty. Her leadership skills are evident through her roles as Class Council President and Vice President of the National Honor Society. As captain of the Varsity Girls Ice Hockey team, she demonstrated her commitment to teamwork and sportsmanship. Beyond her academic and athletic achievements, Lauren dedicated over 135 hours to coaching hockey, showcasing her commitment to community service and mentoring younger athletes.



Madison Stearns Prout HS.

Ms. Stearns will be studying Bio-chemistry at Florida Tech in the fall. As captain of the varsity swim team, she participated in the Narrow River Turn Around Swim and the Great Salt Pond Swim, displaying her athletic skill and commitment to local environmental events. She is a member of the National Honor Society and a Peer Minister. She was selected by the Director of Campus Ministry and faculty as a

Peer Minister. This is Prout's highest senior position: one of faith. As well as a dedicated student and athlete, Madison is an active community volunteer, participating in Save the Bay beach clean-ups and Meals for Veterans



Myles Grim South Kingstown HS.

Myles is embarking on a journey to become an Environmental Engineer at the University of New Hampshire, driven by a deep-seated desire to protect our planet. As an Eagle Scout, he has already made a tangible impact on the environment by designing and constructing a new trailhead and kiosk for the South County Land Trust, improving public access to natural areas and promoting environmental awareness. His participation in a research project with the University of Rhode Island, studying the effects of antibiotics on bacteria in saltwater samples, demonstrates his commitment to scientific inquiry and his willingness to tackle complex environmental challenges. Myles's continued participation in the science fair, even after it was no longer required, underscores his genuine passion for science and his dedication to learning



Sean McGregor South Kingstown HS

Sean is preparing to enter the exciting world of Finance Technology at the University of Rhode Island, a field that is rapidly transforming the financial

landscape. Beyond his academic aspirations, Sean is committed to giving back to his community. He and his family have organized numerous Narrow River clean-ups, removing everything from everyday trash to discarded car tires, demonstrating his dedication to preserving the health of the local ecosystem. As a volunteer for the Rhode Island Special Olympics, he supports athletes with intellectual disabilities. Sean's four summers working at Narrow River Kayaks have instilled in him a deep appreciation for the Narrow River and its importance to the community



Alex Powell North Kingstown HS

Mr. Powell will be pursuing a degree in Mechanical Engineering at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI). His passion for engineering is evident in his extensive involvement with the North Kingstown High School FIRST Robotics team. As a key member, he contributed to the team's multiple World Championship appearances, earning the prestigious Inspire Award for his leadership and technical skills. Beyond robotics, Alex's essay demonstrated his innovative thinking by proposing the development of a real-time monitoring buoy for the Narrow River, showcasing his understanding of local environmental challenges. He is also a dedicated musician, playing in the Symphonic Band, a student-athlete competing in track and field, and a member of the Technology Student Association, where he competed at the national level in CAD engineering. His multi-faceted talents and commitment to both STEM and the arts make him a promising future engineer

Fresh Air stimulates the artists!

Written by Skylar Ceceri

On the morning of August 9, Narrow River came alive with creativity as artists, families, and neighbors gathered for Art at the River, a community art event that blended nature, culture, and expression. From 9 to 11 a.m., participants enjoyed the beautiful summer weather while engaging in hands-on art activities inspired by the river's surroundings.

The Urban Sketchers of Rhode Island joined the event, painting in plein air and capturing the vibrant scenery of the river in real time. Their work added an inspiring presence as onlookers watched sketches and paintings come to life on the spot. Kids watched them as they painted and even took some lessons from the artists.

Children and families also had the chance to create their own artwork, exploring local traditions and natural materials. Activities included fish printing and painting quahog shells, offering a creative way to connect with both the environment and Rhode Island's coastal heritage.

The atmosphere was warm, welcoming, and uplifting as community members of all ages gathered by the river. Laughter, conversation, and the quiet focus of artists filled the air, reminding everyone of the power of art to bring people together.

Art at the River celebrated not only artistic expression but also the beauty of the Narrow River itself—a place where nature and creativity meet.



Osprey Update

Written by Craig Wood-8/28/2025

This nesting season began with a bit of trepidation as no chicks hatched last year. This followed four consecutive successful nesting seasons with a total of ten juvenile birds leaving (fledging) the nest between 2020-2023. Our resident female (the same female occupying the nest since we built the platform in the late winter of 2019) arrived in late March right on schedule. We know it is the same female as she has a unique band placed on her leg in 2016, a few months after she hatched in a nest just outside of Queens, New York. As our many osprey observers know, 2025 was once again a successful nesting season with a single chick. Opportunities to view the osprey family this season are quickly running out as osprey depart our region by early September for warmer climates (typically South America). Interestingly, this year's juvenile (pictured on August 22nd) will make this very long journey alone, based strictly on instinct. Juvenile birds remain in their wintering grounds for one to two seasons before returned north in hopes of raising a family of their own.

Prior to this year's nesting season we changed our cellular provider to broadcast the osprey cam video. NRPA would like to thank Joe Gleason and Curtis Sellon with Mobile Beacon for their technical assistance and providing a reliable cellular network to maintain a stable connection for the video upload to the internet. As always, many thanks to the Farrell family for their generous support donated in loving memory of Eileen Farrell.



Single juvenile pictured in the nest in late August 2025. Juvenile ospreys have white tips on their otherwise dark wing feathers. This speckled appearance is lacking in adults.

Making waves on the Narrow River

Written by Ellis Santoro, Sports Editor, Independent.com

Boston native Eric Nilsson rarely skips an open-water race. A former Northwestern University swimmer, he's collected wins across New England, including back-to-back victories at the Narrow River Turnaround Swim in 2022 and 2023.

After missing last year, Nilsson returned to North Kingstown this summer and reclaimed the crown, finishing the one-mile course in 24:05. "It's just a nice, well-run race," he said. "Some open-water swims I do once and don't come back. I've always enjoyed this one."

The Turnaround Swim began in 2004 as an unofficial start to the open-water season and as a celebration of the Narrow River's revival.

Once considered too polluted to enter, the river has been restored through cleanup efforts led by the Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA), which continues to organize the event.

"It's not a race, it's a swim," said NRPA President Veronica Berounsky. "And we're able to enjoy the fact that we can swim in this place. It's a really beautiful setting."

This year, 85 swimmers set off from the small beach at LaFarge Point Park, guided by buoys and watched over by lifeguards in kayaks. Onlookers gathered on the sand and nearby dock as competitors made their U-turn at mid-river and pushed through the final stretch back to the URI Boathouse.

Nilsson led the way, followed by Stuart Cromarty (25:16), Kate Porter (26:16), and Abby Bauman (27:23). Porter claimed the top wetsuit time, while Bauman, for the fourth straight year, was the fastest female swimming without one.

Bauman, a Narragansett native and rising sophomore on Colby College's swim team, said the event is a highlight of her summer. "I genuinely love open-water swimming, and I've missed it," she said. "A month ago, I came home from school



and was counting down the days. It's awesome to combine my two favorite things: swimming and enjoying the ocean."

She added that the river course makes it special: "It's a lot more interesting than a mile in a pool where you're staring at a black line. You deal with the currents, but it's just so enjoyable—you get to race and take in the environment around you."

Though the operation is straightforward, NRPA has been fine-tuning. This year brought off-site parking with shuttles, a new timing system, and other small changes. "There were a lot of new things that could have made us a little nervous, but it all worked out," Berounsky said. "The weather was just perfect."

Participation dipped slightly compared to recent years, a trend Berounsky attributes to the rise in open-water events across the region. Still, the spirit of the swim was evident in the wide range of participants—from 9-year-old Youniss Mostafa to 78-year-old Thomas Allan.

With a \$45 entry fee, proceeds go back to NRPA's mission: protecting and preserving the Narrow River, the very water that now draws swimmers back year after year.

Seventeen Years of Waiting Rewarded

Written by Veronica M. Berounsky

The November 2024 overturn of Upper Pond was a scientific windfall for NRPA President and GSO staff member Veronica M. Berounsky, Ph.D. and other GSO scientists who have been monitoring Upper and Lower Ponds of Narrow River since the last persistent overturn that happened seventeen years ago, in October 2007. Their goal has been to document the conditions in the deep anoxic basins before, during and after an overturn and predict future overturns. With the 2024 overturn, they now can examine the data with respect to that event. Berounsky and GSO Marine Scientist Lucie Maranda, Ph.D. wrote a grant proposal to the University of Rhode Island titled "Comparing Two Anoxic Water Overturns, Seventeen Years Apart" and received a grant of \$2,842 to pay for nutrient analysis. That work took place this summer and is still going on this fall. Also part of this overturn team is David Borkman, Ph.D. who analyses phytoplankton samples from the Ponds. Dave is a member of the Board of the Narrow River Land Trust. Watch this space for the results.

During the summer of 2025, the Graduate School of Oceanography at the University of Rhode Island hosted a Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship in Oceanography (SURFO) program. This national program, designed primarily for science, math and engineering students, gives students hands-on research experience with laboratory methods, field work, and data analysis. The overturn team submitted a proposal to the SURFO program "Recovery of



Veronica C taking samples with pump and holding samples

Narrow River after an Anoxic Water Ventilation" and were selected for an intern who worked 40 hours/week for 6 weeks and was paid through National Science Foundation Award OCE 2150228. The intern, Veronica Cimento, is a student at Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI majoring in marine biology and also pursuing a minor in math. She was a toddler when the last persistent overturn happened! The overturn team had a very productive summer with weekly field days to profile and document levels of dissolved oxygen, temperature, salinity, and chlorophyll at various depths in the water column and also monthly samples in the ponds for nutrient and phytoplankton. Other days were spent graphing these numbers and analyzing the results of over spring, summer and fall seasons. For more information, drone videos, and photos go to <https://narrowriver.org/overturn/>.

Fourspine Stickleback

Written by Craig Wood

The Department of Environmental Management has been collecting monthly (May-October) beach seine data at three stations in the Narrow River since 2010. A small fish species frequently captured during the sampling is the fourspine stickleback (*Apeltes quadracus*). True to their name, sticklebacks have very sharp spines, which can be locked in an upright position, causing these little fish to be very unpalatable for most predators. This species prefers inshore marine



The four sharp spines are clearly visible on this 2-inch fourspine stickleback¹.

waters, especially salt marshes and tidal creeks. They have the greatest range of salinity tolerance of any North American stickleback, which has allowed many freshwater populations to develop¹. The Fourspine Stickleback often lives sympatrically with other species of stickleback throughout their range, though they are generally solitary with regard to other members of their own species. Individuals are often observed perched among bottom debris and vegetation, never in open water, hovering over a patch of substrate, picking at it frequently, then moving on to another patch². During spawning, the males of this species establish territories and build small nests in which females lay their eggs then the male cares for the eggs until they hatch³.

Works Cited:

- 1 Jacobs, R. P., O'Donnell, E. B., and Connecticut DEEP. 2009. A Pictorial Guide to Freshwater Fishes of Connecticut. Hartford, CT.
 - 2 Delbeek, J. C., and D. D. Williams. 1987. Food resource partitioning between sympatric populations of brackish water sticklebacks. The Journal of Animal Ecology 56(3):949-967.
 - 3 Courtenay, S. C. 1985. Simultaneous multinesting by the Fourspine Stickleback, *Apeltes quadracus*. Canadian Field-Naturalist 99(3):360-363.
- ing them to cross roads safely, you can help to preserve the future of this ancient and ecologically vital species.

6 NRPA: Preserving Narrow River (Pettaquamscutt Estuary) and its Watershed Since 1970

NRPA is surveying the Eelgrass levels in the watershed for 2025.

Written by James Vogel

Eelgrass is a flowering plant that is rooted in the soil and grows in shallow waters approximately three to twelve feet deep and provides critical habitat for numerous fishes and invertebrates, including juvenile salmon, crabs, herring, shellfish, and more. In turn, these species supply food for humans and wildlife. In addition, eelgrass helps prevent erosion by stabilizing sediments, buffers the shoreline from the impact of waves, traps sediment particles suspended in the water, and reduces pollution by using excess nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, removing them from the surrounding water column. Eelgrass is sensitive to changes in nutrient and light levels and is a good indicator of environmental change. Most of the NRPA efforts are focused mostly south of Middlebridge, where there are larger fields of Eelgrass. Drone and field evaluations were made in July for the beginning of the season and will be made in October for the end of the season. A summary comparing to past surveys will be shared with NRPA's partners later in the year. NRPA welcomes its members to submit their photos of Eelgrass throughout the watershed. Please send them to nrpa@narrowriver.org Please include the location on a map, or a photo of an adjacent shoreline feature to reference.



With underwater photography and mapping assistance from Mike Bradley, Research Associate, URI - Environmental Data Center

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT - a shark in the river! Compliments of the Conchon Family

During the thirties and forties my grandparents ran the boat livery and restaurant at Middlebridge. My father grew up there and spent many hours on Narrow River. In later years he made some recordings of his experiences there. The following story, as told in his words, is a transcript of one of those recordings. In the summer it always comes to my mind when I jump in the river and float to the mouth on the outgoing tide.



Louis Conchon - Rich's Grandfather

on the edge of the channel. I hadn't seen too much and Mac he set his oar down and he come up and he was kinda looking over my shoulder in the light. Well all of a sudden I look down there and this tremendous head came up right into the light under the boat and apparently this thing come more or less in the same direction we were travelling and it was under the boat, and it kept coming along,

"When I was a young feller one time, one night Abbot MacIntosh he came up to my dad's place at Middlebridge and he asked me, "how'd you like to go fire lighting" I said I thought I'd like it very much that night and we had a pretty good night to go. So, we got our Coleman lantern all ready and our spears hooked up and everything and we pushed all the way down toward the mouth of the river.

Well, what we expected primarily to do down there was to get some of these nice flounders that usually came in, this was during the summer months, in fact it was right along in August I would say. Well, it was we had gone down pretty much on the latter part of the going tide and we fooled around these sand bars down at the mouth of river for quite a while there, we did pick up quite a few flounders and the tide changed and we stood there awhile and waited and rested up awhile and waited till the tide came in a little more. So the tide come in a little more and we thought there might be some different type of fish move in there to work on.

I guess we stayed there an hour or more foolin around waiting for a little higher water. Well it went on and I was in the back of the boat and it was my turn to do the spearing, so I stood up on the back seat there, which is a normal way of doing it and push along more or less, but this time you see I had another feller with me, Abbot Macintosh was with me, so he has stayed up in the bow of the boat and sorta pushed along with the oar kinda kept us straight there as I was going along and I was just a young feller at that time, I had a good spear with us, it was a two headed spear and it must have had probably what we call about a twelve or fourteen foot stave, stave meaning the handle of the thing.

Well we got going toward the mouth of the river right

and it had a big head on it and the head seemed to me about well much as large as a bushel basket, a gray looking affair showed up quite clearly in the light and more and more of it began to move out under the light. Well of course being a young feller I was and not knowing any better I pulled back on the spear and I'm just about ready to drive it into this thing, cause it was the biggest fish I'd ever seen in Narrow River and Mackie he grabbed my arm and said "Don't put the iron in that boy" and I said, "What's the trouble," because I was a little upset, I wanted to harpoon this thing. What I'd been about to harpoon in about four feet of water was in my opinion, as we looked at it afterwards, we figured it was about a ten or twelve foot shark, and I don't think we were really equipped to handle this thing the way we were out there, so needless to say we let this feller slide right under the boat. Pretty soon his dorsal fin appeared and the rest of him moved on, and he just glided away. It was quite a sight I guess, but MacIntosh was right because if I had drove the iron in that thing I'd probably been carried out the mouth of the river or something else would have happened."



Middlebridge post hurricane '38

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NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

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TUESDAY OCTOBER 7, 2025

RECEPTION 5:30 - 6:30 PM
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ELECTION OF BOARD AND OFFICERS
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MORE INFORMATION: NRPA@NARROWRIVER.ORG