



# The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association

Spring 2008

## A Report Card for the Hoosic



Dry Brook in Adams is one of HooRWA's study reaches.

On Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup> at the Adams Visitors' Center, HooRWA hosted its annual State of the River gathering. The meeting was attended by river experts from a variety of agencies and organizations and many members of the public.

The presentations – by HooRWA's former monitoring coordination Dick Schlesinger, our present monitoring coordinator Kelly Nolan, Nick Wildman of Massachusetts Riverways, and Caroline Scully, HooRWA's Adams Stream Team coordinator – provided an overview of work completed or underway in the Hoosic River watershed.

Dick shared his recent geographic information systems (GIS)-based assessment of the watershed, and described the chemical and physical data he and many volunteers collected and analyzed over a period of several years.

Kelly described HooRWA's benthic macroinvertebrate (or BMI) monitoring initiative. BMIs, the critters that live on the bottom of our streams and rivers, show a range of tolerance to different kinds of water quality. BMIs collected by Kelly and volunteers are identified and their relative populations are compared to those typical of a healthy river. The result is a reliable snapshot of river water quality. In terms of BMIs, Kelly reported, the Hoosic generally tests "slightly impaired."

Nick and others described three upcoming dam removal projects in our watershed. (The removal of old dams reconnects streams in a watershed, and improves aquatic habitat for fish and other organisms.) Two of these dam removals - Thunder-

Brook in Cheshire and Briggsville dam in Clarksburg – are priority projects for the state. Hall Brook Dam on Hoxie Brook in Adams is also due to be removed, perhaps as early as this summer. Elena Traister, HooRWA board member and professor at MCLA, along with Dana Ohman of Mass. Fish and Wildlife, and HooRWA staff and volunteers will help monitor the streams during these dam removal projects.

Nick also brought up the possibility of habitat restoration projects along Hoxie Brook in downtown Adams as another priority project for Mass Riverways. This stream is piped through much of Adams before flowing into the Hoosic River flood chute. Restoring the brook would improve habitat and flood control, and beautify downtown Adams.

## Stream Team Starts Up

The State of the River afternoon session was spent organizing and orienting the new South Branch Stream Team. The team will survey for signs of point- and non-point source pollution, conduct clean-ups, and generally get wet. Thirteen people attended and lost no time in getting started on projects (see p.2). More are welcome! This initiative is supported by the **Berkshire Environmental Endowment Fund** and **Mass Riverways** in the Department of Fish and Game.

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*HoorWA is dedicated to the restoration, conservation and enjoyment of the Hoosic River and its watershed, through education, research, and advocacy.*

## President's Corner

# Many Hands Welcome!



I guess the gist of my presidential message this spring will be to encourage you to get involved in some aspect of HoorWA's work. I can testify that river people are great to work with.

Looking back on the year, I think the State of the River Meeting this March summed up the dedication of the folks advocating for the Hoosic and the possibilities of what we can achieve when working in partnership. The meeting brought together representatives from HoorWA, Mass Riverways, MCLA, Trout Unlimited, and the Town of Adams, exchanging information on water quality and planning initiatives throughout the watershed. Monitoring coordinator Kelly Nolan and former coordinator Dick Schlesinger gave a most impressive presentation on water quality. In the afternoon Caroline Scully organized Stream Team volunteers,

who will work this year on brooks in the Adams area.

While I am frequently awed by the expertise of my colleagues on the HoorWA Board, I was relieved to find you don't have to be an environmental scientist to contribute. I had a fine time building a canoe ramp at the Strobbridge site with several other directors, and getting lost twice with Lauren Stevens on the Taconic Crest, trying to rediscover the old spur trail coming up from Pownal. And then there are folks like Lisa Carey Moore, who every year generates a big chunk of the HoorWA budget by organizing the August bike ride.

So there are lots of opportunities to help out—sign up for a Stream Team, operate a water station for Lisa, pull out invasive species—or even join our Board. Hope to see you on the River.

*John Case* 

## Stream Team Salvages Strange Stuff



Caroline Scully, Kay Canavino, Robin Avery, Brian Jewett, and Leann Jewett shopping by Hoxie Brook in Adams.

The South Branch Stream Team was less than a month old when it completed its third clean-up – in North Adams, in preparation for the April 26<sup>th</sup> Hoosac River Lights event there. Earlier in the month the team cleaned up in Hoxie Brook and the Hoosic mainstem in Adams, and in Bassett Brook in Cheshire. Notable flotsam found included a Big Y shopping cart, a computer monitor, and a wooden checkers board. Thanks to volunteers Robin Avery, Kay Canavino, Brian and Leann Jewett, and Karen Matthews for their good work!

If you'd like to help with clean-ups or other South Branch Stream Team projects, contact the HoorWA office. We'll put you in touch with Caroline Scully, team coordinator. She knows where all the best detritus can be found! (Checkers, anyone?)







## Keeping Water in Business, in Every Way

It's spring—that is, time for us to get out the calculators and pickaxes and start gardening! HooRWA, in partnership with the Adams Community Development Department, has resumed work on small stormwater management projects with businesses in Adams, as part of a project we call **“Keeping Water in Business.”** We're installing rain gardens, rain barrels, and gutters, in an effort to help stormwater runoff percolate locally—rather than drain straight into the river, where it contributes to pollution and flood conditions. Where stormwater management needs are more than we can provide, we are helping to obtain expert advice from engineers.

Last fall, our main “KWIB” project was the installation of a rain garden and rain barrels in the courtyard of the Topia Inn, already renowned for its “green” practices. This spring, our biggest project to date is the rain garden at the photography studio of Kay Canavino on North Summer Street. With help from Nina Marks of Sexto Sol Landscaping, plus students and professors from the MCLA Environmental Studies Department, we designed, dug, and planted a sizable garden to replace a patch of bare ground. New gutters will direct roof runoff into the garden instead of the street. According to the calculations by MCLA students, this one garden can absorb tens of thousands of gallons of runoff per year, turning it into soil-filtered groundwater rather than floodwater.

Many thanks to the MCLA students who contributed both brains and hard labor—also to the MA Environmental Trust for supporting this initiative!



All part of the academic experience: MCLA students engage in hands-on learning about small scale stormwater management.

## Kids in Streams: Artists and Scientists



Being near a living stream is a multi-sensory experience—the play of light on water and leaves, the sound of the current, thrilling changes of temperature, strange patterns of ripples, the shapes and textures of trees and rocks and slimy or spiky critters. In short, it's a great place for inspiring both scientific curiosity and artistic expression.

HooRWA education programs often pair these two ways of investigating and finding meaning. Thanks to a grant from the **Hardman Family Foundation, HooRWA Artist and Scientist programs** will be offered this summer at Northern Berkshire Creative Arts in North Adams.

First, for Family Art Day on May 17, we will use found river objects—and our imaginations—to invent new river species. We will also learn about real organisms that live in the river, and use that knowledge as a basis for designing masks and decorations. (Look for the results at Riverfest!)

Later on, Artist and Scientist activities will be incorporated into more summer programs at Northern Berkshire Creative Arts. Trips to the river will allow kids to explore and understand the river from the scientific and the artistic points of view. *For more information about these programs, contact HooRWA, or Northern Berkshire Creative Arts at 413 663-8338 or [www.nbcreativearts.org](http://www.nbcreativearts.org).*

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### **Riverfest to be held Saturday May 24**

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Riverfest returns better than ever on Saturday May 24, with more activities (including more rafting) occupying more time slots throughout the day. But not everything has changed! The Vermont Institute of Natural Sciences will be bringing their raptors. Area artists will share their works under the tent and along the nature trail. And we're gearing up for yet another silly canoe parade. Here's how the day shapes up:

\*7:30 am: bird walk led by Leslie Reed-Evans

\*11 am: Riverfest tents open, with exhibits, crafts, kids' events, and food \*Rafting sign-up begins \*Kids' fun runs begin

\*11:30 am: Pony rides start \*Bowie the Clown arrives \*Rafting starts (2 rafts will take off every half hour) \*The Flown Home Band takes the stage (Fran Mandeville, Lisa Sturz, Tony Pisano, and Josh Pisano)

\*Noon: canoe decoration begins  
\*1 pm: Raptors presentation  
\*2pm: Drumming Circle with Otha Day starts  
\*3 pm: Canoe parade takes off  
\*3:30-4 pm: Raffle prizes drawn and announced.

Admission/raffle tickets are \$6 (children 10 and under free).

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Riverfest is sponsored by the Williamstown Savings Bank.

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### **4th Annual Ride**

This year, our annual 3-state bike touring event will start from Bennington College, Bennington, VT and will include THREE routes highlighting the beautiful Hoosic valley. Approximate distances will be 15, 30, and 65 miles. Families

are welcome, and will especially enjoy the tour of Bennington's covered bridges. It all starts early in the morning on Saturday, August 23. Check our website at [www.hoorwa.org](http://www.hoorwa.org) soon for more details.

