



The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association

Spring 2006



At the Hoxie Brook / Hoosic River junction in Adams, restoring the landscape would benefit the river by reducing polluted runoff.

A River Runs Through What?

State of the River Conference stresses that the Hoosic landscape is key to the river's health.

HooRWA's State of the River Conference is always about the river. But this year's meeting, on March 18 at Adams Town Hall, focused on the fact that the river's condition depends on the condition of the land around it.

All 720 Square Miles?

To assess the condition of a whole watershed from ridgetops to riverbed, you either need a large army of field researchers, or one savvy Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator with GIS capabilities. Luckily, we have Dick Schlesinger, who presented the first results of his GIS-based watershed assessment. Dick gathered and organized data about roads, urbanized areas, gradients, soil types, and other parameters. By combining

these data sets, he identified locations throughout the watershed that may need to be watched because of their potential to degrade water quality. It's an important first step in HooRWA's ambitious task of looking out for the whole Hoosic despite our limited resources. Dick emphasized that this is a work in progress, and computer results need to be checked by field work. But that only requires a small army, not a large one.

Zooming in on Hot Spots

Where do we get a small army? This was addressed by Carrie Banks of Mass. Riverways in the Department of Fish and Game. Carrie organizes and trains Stream Teams. These are volunteer groups who help take care

of waterways with on-the-ground inspections and, where needed, projects to fix problems. Stream Team training will be offered locally in the coming year.

Sculpting a Flood-Safe Riverbed

Perhaps the MOST ambitious project addressed by the Conference was the restoration of more natural conditions in the Adams flood control structures. This is

Also In This Issue

- New Projects with Williams
- Improving Pownal Riverfront
- Spring programs
- RIVERFEST and more



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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.

Stephanie's Corner



“Everybody PADDLE!”

This is the command when the HoorWA raft is approaching fast water and we need to maneuver quickly. At this stage in our 20th anniversary year, it's a motto we could adopt for everything! Turning our strategic plan into real action is exciting— like steering a raft into the rapids.

First, the three projects that we identified as priorities for 2006 are all underway. In Massachusetts, we are helping explore options for habitat restoration in Adams. In Vermont, we are about to start working with the town of Pownal to improve river access and riverbank habitat. In New York, we are helping with initiatives in Hoosick Falls to make the river an integral part of the town's cultural and recreational scene.

But that's not all! We've just started spring rafting, we're gearing up for a wonderful Riverfest in May, we are working with schools to make the Hoosic a central topic for classes and field trips, and we're getting ready to move our water quality monitoring lab to a new location at Williams College, as part of an expanded partnership.

Later this summer, our Hoosic River Ride, the cycling event along the banks of the Hoosic in August, is promising to be even better than last year. Once again, information about the ride will be available via the HoorWA website.

We hope we will see you out at some of our great spring programs or paddling on the river.

Stephanie Boyd, President

...Land Use and River Health cont'd. from p.1

a good time to explore that option. *Cont'd on p. 2*
The Army Corps of Engineers is doing feasibility studies this year on possible changes to the chutes that would improve trout habitat. The Corps study is expected to be conservative, only exploring minor tweaks of the status quo. But how much change *can* there be, without losing flood protection? Possibly a lot, according to Jim MacBroom, river restoration engineer and the

conference's keynote speaker. Mr. MacBroom explained that making the Hoosic flood-safe AND more hospitable to people and fish depends on several factors. Habitat improvements would slow the river's flow, requiring a wider channel to maintain flood capacity. Widening in turn would require that additional land be available along the existing concrete channel. As for cost: his informed, though informal, estimate was \$2-3 mil-

lion per mile— excluding costs of land acquisition.

Thus a partial, but dramatic, restoration is technically feasible. But the community would ultimately have to decide what tradeoffs it's willing to make in order to have an attractive, user-friendly, downtown waterfront.

The Adams community should have the chance to consider this option fully. Stay tuned for further events on this topic, and



Spring Adventures



With HooRWA

Save this page!

April 9, Sunday, Herp Hunt at Hopkins Forest with Tom Tynning, 10 AM- 1PM.

Back by popular demand! Don't miss this rite of spring -- first, a slide show introduction to the local reptiles and amphibians and then an excursion into forest, streams and vernal pools to find them. Last year yielded an abundance of frogs and salamanders, even a chilly snake. Led by Tom Tynning, herpetologist, author of the Stokes Guide to Amphibian and Reptile Behavior, and field naturalist extraordinaire. Co-sponsored by Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation and **supported by M.E.T.**

Admission free, donations welcome. Children should bring adults and footwear that can get wet. For directions to Hopkins Forest, go to <http://www.williams.edu/CES/hopkins/gettinghere.htm>

April 9-30. Saturday and Sunday Morning Raft Rides. See the Hoosic River from a duck's eye view! Join a guide on a 6-person raft for a paddle on the Hoosic River from the Ashton Ave. boat launch in North Adams to Lauren's Launch in Williamstown. Total time on the water 30 to 45 minutes, depending on river flow. No experience needed. Equipment is provided (but children under 40 lbs must bring their own life jackets). Meeting times are 9:00 and 11:00 AM on April 15, 16, 22, 23, 29, and 30.

Preregistration is required. To sign up or get more information, call 413-458-2742 or e-mail hoorwa@berkshire.net and leave message. *Don't delay, these trips fill up! Supported by M.E.T*

May 6-28. Saturday and Sunday Morning Raft Rides. As described above. Meeting times are 9:00 and 11:00 AM on May 6, 7, 13, 14, 21, and 28. (Raft rides on May 27 are all at Riverfest and on a first-come, first-served basis.) Preregistration is required.

May 6th, Saturday, Pownal Quarry Weed Pull and Field Trip, with VT Nature Conservancy. Visit an unusual geologic site, home to rare plants, and pull a few weeds to help maintain its unique character. Work in the morning, bring a picnic, and explore in the afternoon! Meeting site and time TBA.

May 7th, Sunday, Birding in North Bennington. Catch the wave of spring migrants along an abandoned railway that traverses wetlands. Meet at Old North Bennington RR Station, 7:30AM. Leader: E. Fielding

May 14th, Sunday, Reading the Landscape, Mt. Tom State Forest, White Creek NY. Time TBA. Leader, Kerry Woods, who has studied this site with his Bennington College students for years. This will also be a peak time for viewing spring wildflowers! Free; donations welcome.

May 21st, Sunday, Birding from Boats in Buskirk, 7-10 AM. See a heron rookery, view waterfowl of many kinds, and look and listen for songbirds along the banks of the deep and slow-moving Hoosic River in Hoosick, NY. Bring your own boats, paddles, and flotation jackets. Meet at the car-top boat put-in on the north side of the river just west of the Buskirk covered bridge. Leader: Michael Batcher. Free; donations welcome.

May 27th, Saturday, RIVERFEST, Cole Field, Williamstown, 11AM-4PM. See next page!

WHAT IS "M.E.T."? The Massachusetts Environmental Trust distributes funds from the sale of environmental license plates. MET is our biggest single source of program support in 2006 and enables us to offer programs at little or no charge. *Buying environmental license plates helps HooRWA and similar organizations statewide. More information at <http://www.mass.gov/rmv/express/plates.htm>*



Save the Date!



Riverfest!

Saturday, May 27, 11 AM to 4 PM
Cole Field, Williamstown, MA

Celebrate the Hoosic River!
Art, Music, Raptors, Raft Rides, Exhibits,
Fly Fishing, Birding, Children's Activities, Raffles, Food, and More!

*Riverfest 2006 will start with a procession of decorated craft on the Hoosic.
Prizes will be awarded! To enter YOUR craft, contact HooRWA in advance for rules and guidelines.*

Admission: \$6 Raffle Ticket*
Children 10 and under: FREE
Rain or Shine under the tents

*Prizes: Sit-on-top Kayak (Berkshire Outfitters); 2-person Kayak (excellent condition!);
Mountain Bike (The Spoke); GPS Unit (Mountain Goat)

Sponsored by



**And other
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Directions: Rte 2 to center of Williamstown, & follow signs.
For information contact HooRWA at 413-458-2742 or hoorwa@berkshire.net

An



HooRWA Goes to College(s)

HooRWA often teams up with college partners who help with everything from hauling canoes to hosting conferences. A new collaboration was born this past winter, when HooRWA and the Center for Environmental Studies at Williams College obtained a grant for \$25,000 to train students in environmental leadership by focusing on global and local water issues. Part of the student training will be in water quality monitoring along the Hoosic. The grant also enables HooRWA to set up a new water quality monitoring lab at the Williams field station in Hopkins Forest.

Meanwhile, downstream in New York, Williams Environmental Planning students Elliot Crafton, Alexis Saba, and Erin Weekly are helping the



Another academic connection: Prof. Elena Traister's class at MCLA samples river insects with HooRWA.

Hoosick Greenway Project committee decide how best to provide access to the Hoosic River, improve opportunities for walking, bike riding, canoeing, and other healthy activities, and bring the Village greenway-related economic benefits. They will help the committee to decide which riverside parcels to protect; what recreational uses to encourage and where; what obstacles exist; and where help can be obtained. Their report, which will include interviews with community members, will be given at a public gathering in Hoosick Falls later this spring.



Tough Waders to Fill

With great regret, we announce that Dick Schlesinger will be leaving his position as Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator at HooRWA at the end of March. When first hired by Lauren Stevens several years ago, Dick asked what HooRWA wanted done. Lauren's reply was, in effect, "We're hoping you can figure that out." Dick certainly did, singlehandedly creating a monitoring program that is widely respected for its quality and is now, thanks to Dick, branching out to new ways of assessing watershed health.

HooRWA has benefited tremendously from Dick's expertise as a career scientist and his readiness to get a job done without counting the hours. We can't thank you

enough, Dick, but we'll keep trying—every time we call you up for help!



Join HooRWA and help build a better Hoosic Watershed!

I want to be a part of HooRWA and work for a biologically healthy, economically vibrant, and ecologically sustainable Hoosic River watershed.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

I'm interested in volunteering for HooRWA projects.

Enclosed are my membership dues for the calendar year 2005.

- Student \$20
- Family \$35
- Kingfisher \$50
- Great Blue Heron \$100
- River Steward \$500
- Other amount _____

I enclose an additional _____ contribution.

Please return to HooRWA, P.O. Box 667, Williamstown, MA, 01267

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Partners in Pownal

HooRWA and the Pownal (VT) Recreation Implementation Committee will embark this spring on a project to enhance the river experience in North Pownal. Improved river access and a variety of educational projects will be developed at the Alan Strobridge Recreational Complex, a former tannery property on the Hoosic. The Recreation Implementation Committee is responsible for managing the Complex and more than 700 acres of adjoining forested watershed land.

Safe and convenient access points for fishing and paddling, native riparian plantings, and interpretive signs and brochures are all on the agenda for several

volunteer work days to be held throughout the spring and summer. But the fun won't stop there!

We'll also host river rambles, picnics, upland explorations, and a community event to showcase park improvements. A Pownal park page – with maps, interpretive materials, and photos, will be developed and linked to the HooRWA website.

The Pownal project is funded by a \$2500 Vermont Watershed Grant, from the sale of Vermont Conservation License plates. In 2006, funds from the sale of the State's falcon plate will support nearly twenty watershed-based projects.

Spring Rafting

They're sometimes wild, and always wet! Join us on weekend mornings in April and May for free raft rides on the Hoosic, from the Ashton Avenue boat launch in North Adams to Lauren's Launch in Williamstown. We provide the raft, a trained guide, and equipment. (BUT children less than 40 pounds must bring their own life jackets. Children must be 4 or older and have a parent along.) Meeting times are 9:00 and 11:00 AM. Pre-registration is required.

Sign up soon! These trips are popular and fill fast.

Our 2006 rafting is supported by the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, from the sale of environmental license plates.

