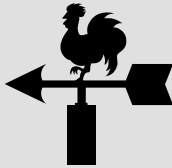


The HooRWA Report

The Newsletter of the Hoosic River Watershed Association
Summer 2004

**We've
Moved!**



Annual Meeting Highlights Connection Between Hoosic and Hudson

Find a better and more accessible office! was one of the priorities set by HooRWA's Board this past spring. Luckily, the search is over already. In mid-July, we moved just a few blocks from our old location (in the General Cable building on Water Street in Williamstown) to our new home, on the second floor of the First Congregational Church at 906 Main Street.

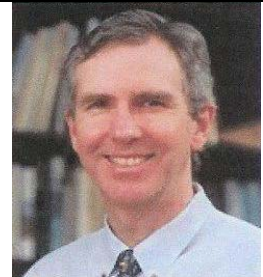
Our postal address and phone number are the same as before, and the new office is easier to visit, and much easier to reach by phone (though you may have had difficulty reaching us while the new phone line was put in). We're looking forward to forming new connections with the community in this more central location, and heartily thank the First Congregational Church for inviting us into their beautiful space. Do stop by!

Where do you live? Most of us give the political answer, mentioning a town or state. The geological answer is a little different. Regardless of other boundaries, we residents of the Hoosic watershed are citizens of the Hudson basin.

With this in mind, HooRWA invited Ned Sullivan, President of Scenic Hudson, to speak at our Annual Meeting on June 19. Scenic Hudson, an environmental organization and land trust, uses a savvy mix of coalition building, advocacy, and planning expertise to promote environmental health, smart growth, public river access, and preservation of nature along the Hudson River.

Mr. Sullivan, a Williams alum who has held important environmental positions in government and banking, has directed Scenic Hudson through five years of dramatic growth. In his talk, he noted the value of organizations that

Ned
Sullivan



are based on people's regional ties, and illustrated with stories of Scenic Hudson's past victories and present challenges. Among the latter is the ongoing battle to prevent construction of a massive cement plant on the upper Hudson.

The talk then turned to the potential for HooRWA and Scenic Hudson to work as partners in their common watershed. There are certainly opportunities to explore together. We look forward to building our relationship with such an effective and inspiring partner.

Water Quality Update: New Questions, New Investigations

Our water quality monitoring program is again afloat, under the leadership of monitoring coordinator Dick Schlesinger and with help from many volunteers from three states. A careful researcher (and patient), Dick is hesitant to draw conclusions from this year's data yet, but he says he's noticed some interesting things. One is the low levels of nitrogen in and just downstream from Cheshire Lake. It's "interesting," he says, "because I'm not sure why." He notes his teams have

found high levels of bacteria in the downstream site before, and wonders if large and active populations of bacteria might be using up the nitrogen.

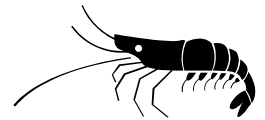
It's not too late to get involved in the 2004 monitoring program. **Dick needs volunteers** to help collect stream flow information in July and August. Stream flows will provide information on the relative contributions of several South Branch tributaries.

Help is also needed to collect and identify benthic macroinvertebrates (little

stream creatures also known as BMIs), beginning in late August.

Because different creatures tolerate different water conditions, looking at the resident BMIs will help us assess habitat conditions upstream and downstream of the flood control structures on the South Branch.

Training is provided to those interested in helping. For more information, call the office at 413-458-2742.





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Hoosic River

Watershed Association

P.O. Box 667
 Williamstown, MA 01267
 413 458-2742 (phone and fax)
 hoorwa@berkshire.net

www.hoorwa.org

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

Congratulations

To Lauren Stevens, HoorWA's former Executive Director and a current Board member, and his new wife Peggy, who were married on June 26. Happy trails to you!

Welcome

to the new members who joined us since our last newsletter went out:

Roger Bishop
 Sam & Deborah Edson
 Penny Fehr
 Steven Fein and Wendy Penner

REMEMBER, IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO JOIN HOORWA!

From the President...

This newsletter is the story of the little non-profit that could—that could in the last three months put on a huge event for young and old, run a weekend rafting program, offer walks and talks, salute eleven aspiring young environmental poets and essayists, monitor water quality in parts of three states—wheh, you have to be physically fit even to read about all HoorWA has done since our last newsletter went out!

How have we done it? I can't speak too well of the efforts of our board and staff. Several Board members helped "person" the raft rides. Every board member helped with Riverfest (but special thanks go to Lisa Carey Moore, the Riverfest coordinator).

Our staff, including our seasonal raft guides and our intern, were called upon to exercise all sorts of skills—among them rafting, hiking, planning, hosting, teaching, and most recently, moving

heavy furniture to our new office.

Things won't slow down much this summer.

The Board held several strategic planning sessions this spring, and committees and our executive director are meeting now to formulate work plans and budgets. Intern Elana Boehm will be designing trails and leading walks and clean-ups. Monitoring coordinator Dick Schlesinger will be sampling and analyzing data.

All of this activity, however, is only possible because we are joined in our efforts by friends—who volunteer their time, who donate their expertise, who give their financial support. Thank you all for your help for HoorWA, and for changing our watershed for the better!



...and From the Intern!



The next time you travel down the Hoosic River you'll notice two newly-cleaned sections – one downriver of the Ashton Avenue

canoe launch and the other along the Green River. The river is now three shopping carts, one street sign, one lawn mower, two bicycles, one tubing turtle, numerous metal poles, and countless beer bottles cleaner than at the beginning of the summer. Thank you to Overland Travel campers and leaders and Heather Linscott for making the clean-ups so successful.

I've also been working closely with

Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation to improve local interpretive trails. With the help of Overland campers we erected colorful identification and interpretation signs along the Hoosic River Trail in Williamstown. To explore this short trail and learn about local floodplain flora and fauna, walk or drive to the trailhead at the corner of Elm and Arnold Streets.

If you are interested in participating in future river clean-ups, trail work, or just learning more about the watershed, please contact me at the HoorWA office. Have a great summer!

Elana Boehm

"The society which scorns excellence in plumbing as a humble activity, and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy as an exalted activity, will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy; neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water."

John W. Gardner



Around the Watershed

If you like to wade in streams, turning over rocks to see what scurries out, you would enjoy doing a benthic macroinvertebrate survey. As mentioned on Page 1, HoorWA is seeking volunteers for a BMI survey, and we will train volunteers in the basics. However, if you wish to learn more, two workshops are offered in Warren County, NY. The first, 'Stream Bio-assessment Institute 2004', will be August 16-20 at Pack Demonstration Forest. The second, 'Benthic Macroinvertebrate Identification, will be at the same location from August 23rd to 27th. These require a substantial commitment of time and funds (\$600 per workshop) but would be excellent for anyone who wants in-depth training. For more information, visit <http://www.hudsonbasin.org>, and check the bulletin board.

BMIs were recently surveyed on the Batten Kill, as part of a VT DEC study of factors affecting trout populations, published in 2003. To judge by the BMIs, water quality and trout food in the Kill are both very good. This may be no surprise to many who know the river, but it is good to have solid data from its small crawly inhabitants.

Spring Programs Inform and Inspire

Picking up frog eggs, watching ants planting violets, spotting riverbank birds, finding wild edibles, catching dragonflies, flyfishing, and a valiant attempt to paddle to Pownal in the rain— all these brought out the Huck Finn in many adults and youngsters who came to our spring programs. The outings were a good mix of adventure, mud, and learning, and showed the watershed's many aspects.

Just for fun, try the follow-up quiz!

1. Which of these are names of local wild edibles: carrots; parsnips; groundnuts; artichokes; black locusts?
2. Is a basket-tail a bird, a fish, a dry fly, a dragonfly, or a salamander?
3. Waxwings are what? Waterproof insects; great lures; or handsome birds.
4. Which of these belong(s) in a

Stalking dragonflies.



Wild foods expert Russ Cohen with a menu item from the trail.

vernal pool: a widow skimmer, a spotted salamander, or a redstart?
 5. What event drinks the forest pools dry, ends the early wildflower season, and hides all the vireos?
 6. If it's pouring rain on Mothers Day, should you buy Mom flowers, bring her to a restaurant, or send her down the Hoosic in the Mother's Day Flotilla?

- Answers:
1. All are local wild edibles.
 2. A group of dragonflies.
 3. Cedar waxwings are birds.
 4. Spotted salamanders breed there.
 5. The leafing out of trees, takes a lot of water, shades the forest floor, and makes birds harder to spot.
 6. We're not touching this one!

**Join HoorWA and help build a better Hoosic Watershed!
 (Have you remembered to renew for 2004?)**

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 _____

Enclosed are my membership dues for the calendar year 2004.

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

I'm interested in volunteering for HoorWA projects.

I enclose an additional _____ contribution.

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

Summer 2004



The HooRWA Report

A Tip of the Hat to...



The **Overland Adventures river cleanup crew (above)**, whose enthusiasm for hauling junk out of rivers has been a great help this summer!

Everyone who purchases Massachusetts Environmental license plates. Income from these plates funds the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, which awards grants to environmental organizations like HooRWA. As other state funds dry up, this grant program provides a lifeline for our programs. Pass it on!

High Water, and Fast, Means Fun!

The HooRWA raft got a workout in April and May. Nearly every Saturday and Sunday it departed at 9:30 and 11:30 from the Ashton Avenue launch site in North Adams, headed for Lauren's Launch in Williamstown and carrying a raft-full of adventurers of all ages.

It was a terrific season, thanks to excellent water conditions, good weather, and two top-notch raft guides, namely Rachel Louis, a former HooRWA board member and expert paddler, and Ryan Johnson, director of logistics at Overland Travels. Rachel and Ryan safely conducted almost two hundred "raftees" over the riffles and around the bends. Few participants had been on a raft before, and fewer still had floated the Hoosic. Many were treated to the sight of wildlife, including geese, black ducks, wood ducks, mergansers, and beaver.

Besides the guides, who were



funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, many of HooRWA's board members acted as volunteer rafting assistants. Special thanks go to Heather Linscott, who has taken several youth groups down the river and generally helped keep the program afloat, sometimes literally. Thanks are also due to Tom Hyde, who treated 21 second graders in Sarah Madden's class at Williamstown Elementary School to trips down the river.

NOTE: Sign up early next spring! Trips filled quickly and had long waiting lists.

A Riverfest Reprise



River sports...



...silly hats...



...art...



...great music...



...even the Hoosic Monster!



...animals...



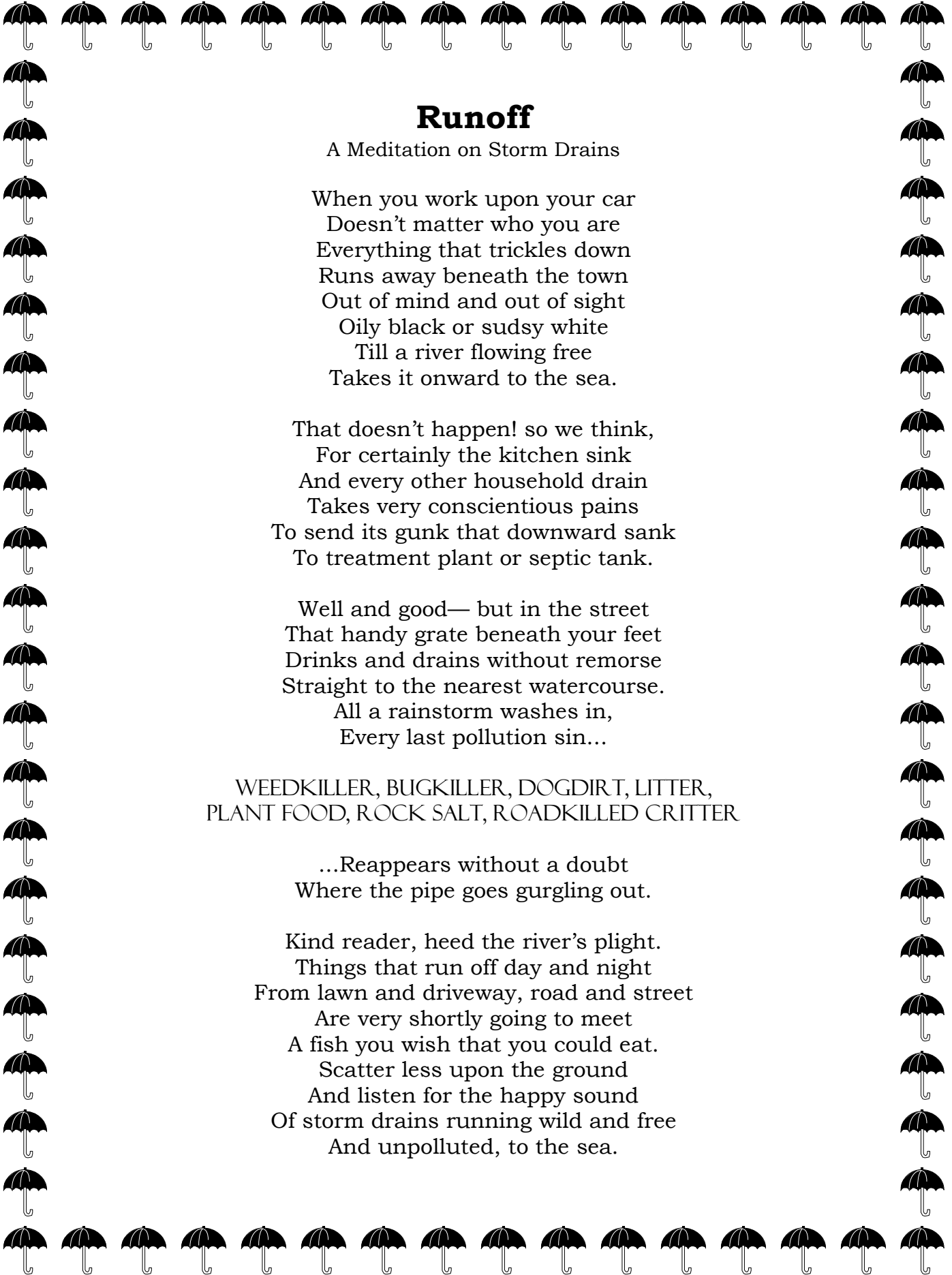
More than 500 people came to Cole Field in Williamstown on May 29 for Riverfest 2004. The ingredients for fun were sunny weather, lots of talented artists and musicians, activities for kids (you didn't miss the bug table, did you?), a raptor demonstration from the Vermont Institute of Natural Science, good food, and raft rides in a fast-flowing Hoosic River all afternoon.

Our thanks to the many who made this event possible. Riverfest's sponsor was the **Williamstown Savings Bank**, with substantial help from the **Massachusetts Environmental Trust**. But many others contributed to this event, including:

Adams Cooperative Bank
 Agway
 Allure Outfitters
 Ashley Swift and Sons

The Berkshire Museum
 Berkshire Outfitters
 Big Y
 Center for Ecological Technology
 Center for Environmental Studies
 Chenail's
 Clark Art Institute
 Clip Shop
 Coakley Peirpan Dolan & Collins
 The Cottage
 Countryside Landscaping Services
 Goodman's Jewelers
 Grinnel Dubendorf and Smith
 Harrison Gallery
 Harsch Real Estate
 Helen's Place
 Images
 In Touch Massage & Day Spa
 Jiminy Peak
 Library Antiques
 Mass MOCA
 Mass Water Watch Partnership

Michael's Restaurant
 The Mill on the Floss
 The Mountain Goat
 Persnickety Toys
 Red Lion Inn
 Saddleback Trading Post
 St. Pierre's Barber Shop
 Spice Root
 The Spoke
 Steep Acres Farm
 Storey Publishing
 Tailored Events
 Tunnel City Coffee
 Vermont Color Lab
 Water Street Books
 Water Street Grill
 Where'd You Get That?
 Wild Oats
 The Williams Inn
 The Williams Shop/Goff's Sports
 Williamstown Theater Festival
 Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation
 Zoar Outdoors
 ... and special thanks to organizer **Lisa Carey Moore!**



Runoff

A Meditation on Storm Drains

When you work upon your car
Doesn't matter who you are
Everything that trickles down
Runs away beneath the town
Out of mind and out of sight
Oily black or sudsy white
Till a river flowing free
Takes it onward to the sea.

That doesn't happen! so we think,
For certainly the kitchen sink
And every other household drain
Takes very conscientious pains
To send its gunk that downward sank
To treatment plant or septic tank.

Well and good— but in the street
That handy grate beneath your feet
Drinks and drains without remorse
Straight to the nearest watercourse.
All a rainstorm washes in,
Every last pollution sin...

WEEDKILLER, BUGKILLER, DOGDIRT, LITTER,
PLANT FOOD, ROCK SALT, ROADKILLED CRITTER

...Reappears without a doubt
Where the pipe goes gurgling out.

Kind reader, heed the river's plight.
Things that run off day and night
From lawn and driveway, road and street
Are very shortly going to meet
A fish you wish that you could eat.
Scatter less upon the ground
And listen for the happy sound
Of storm drains running wild and free
And unpolluted, to the sea.