



The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association

Summer 2008

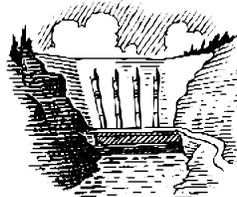
South Branch Updates



Carrying trash up Tophet Brook

Hoxie Brook by removing the dam would enable trout and other wildlife to move freely up from the Hoosic River and down from Mount Greylock Reservation in and along the stream corridor. The Adams Conservation Commission is working with an engineering firm to evaluate the plans by GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. and the Hall Brook dam

owner, Hall Brook Holding, LLC, to remove the dam between August and October of this year. The South Branch stream team will be working with HooRWA monitoring coordinator Kelly Nolan, MCLA professor and HooRWA board member Elena Traister, and Dana Omand of Massachusetts Fish and Game to monitor the stream before and after the dam removal. Fish and macroinvertebrate populations as well as chemical and other characteristics of the stream above and below the dam will be measured for a period of about six years. The pre-dam removal testing is already underway. This stream monitoring project is particularly valuable because data about the impacts of dam removal on stream ecology are in short supply.



South Branch Clean-ups

Tophet Brook is a hydrologic jewel in the Town of Adams. This remarkable brook on the east side of town flows through a deep ravine right in the heart of a residential neighborhood before making its way into an armored channel and the Hoosic River. From the ravine, the houses above are almost invisible, and there is a feeling of remoteness rare in a downtown area. Limestone bedrock provides a unique beauty, and lots of ledges and pools. "Big basin," one such pool, is the best known (and a very deep) swimming hole in Adams.

In June and July, two groups of teens from all over the country, in Williamstown for the summer as part of the Overland New England Service program, worked with HooRWA South Branch coordinator Caroline Scully and HooRWA volunteers to clean up the lower part of the brook. Lots of trash, scrap metal, and recyclable bottles and cans were gathered and turned over to the Town of Adams Department of Public Works for disposal. HooRWA thanks Overland Summers and the Town of Adams for their help!

Hall Brook Dam Removal

The Hall Brook dam on Hoxie Brook in Adams, Massachusetts is located on the west side of town, just upstream from where Hoxie Brook flows under the library and downtown Adams and then into the Hoosic River flood chutes. As it stands, the dam poses a threat both to public safety and to aquatic habitat.

The Massachusetts Dam Safety Commission considers this 19th century structure to be at risk of failing and is requiring the owner to either repair or remove it. An uncontrolled collapse of the dam could cause a release of the sediment built up behind it and the blocking of culverts, resulting in flooding in downtown Adams.

The dam also prevents movement of aquatic and other organisms up and down the stream. Reconnecting the above and below sections of

Also In This Issue

- **Hoosic River Ride!**
- **VT BMI surveys**
- **Waterway proposal**
- **Photo gallery**



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Staff

- Executive Director position open
- Kelly Nolan, Monitoring Coordinator
- Shelly Stiles, Program Director

Hoosic River Watershed Association

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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

Moving Forward



As you may have heard, our wonderful executive director, Eileen Fielding, has left us to direct the Farmington River Watershed Association. I thank her for her four years of superb leadership for HoorWA. Like the true professional she is, Eileen left us instructions for the interim, and deferred assuming her full duties in Farmington until she had seen us through Riverfest. She and Shelly Stiles oversaw a Riverfest this year that was entertaining and informative, and even made a modest profit.

Jim Niedbalski, Drew Jones and I comprise the search committee to find a new executive director. We have received a number of resumes from highly qualified candidates, and we are in the process of setting up our first round of interviews.

I also want to thank Shelly, who has single-handedly kept things on track while we search for a new

director. She has been assisted by our two interns, Dylan Gart, from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, and Chris Law, from Williams College. Dylan has helped Shelly and me get up to speed (well, a very slow speed) maintaining our website. Chris has been collecting data for the Adams Stream Team, and in his other "life" at Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, has created an exhibit of his own nature photography. Special thanks also to Caroline Scully, who has taken over our initiatives in Adams, including building rain gardens, coordinating various Stream Team projects, and leading river clean-ups with youth from the Overland Summers program.

HoorWA is in a period of transition this summer, but with the help of our staff and many board members, I believe we are prepared to come back at full strength this autumn.

John Case



HoorWA to Assess Additional Sites in VT

Earlier this year HoorWA, in partnership with the Battenkill Conservancy, was awarded a Vermont Watershed Grant to assess water quality at up to twenty sites in Vermont and New York in the Hoosic and Batten Kill watersheds. Kelly Nolan, HoorWA's water quality monitoring coordinator, will oversee the collection of benthic macroinvertebrate (BMI) samples and their identification and analysis at all the sites, including several in the Hoosic basin in Vermont.

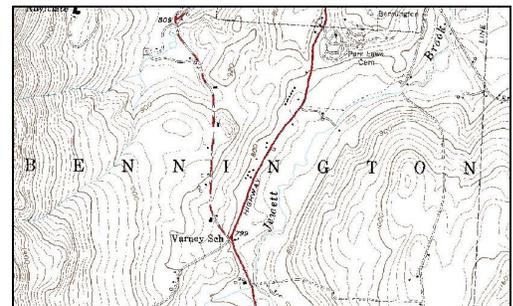
Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation maintains a

BMI sampling and analysis program all around the state, sampling at each of hundreds of site every five years. The baseline data the Department has collected in invaluable, but patchy. The grant to HoorWA will help us patch some of those holes on watercourses such as South Stream, Cold Spring, Ladd Brook, and Potter Hollow. The assessment will also support Vermont's ongoing Basin Planning process, started in the Hoosic and Batten Kill watersheds in 2007.

Site selection with VT DEC is

underway now.

The Vermont Watershed Grant Program is funded by proceeds from the sale of the conservation license plate.



Jewett Brook is a likely assessment location.



An Immodest Proposal (for a Hoosic Waterway Trail)

By Chris Law

Despite being the namesake of the watershed, the Hoosic River itself is an oft-overlooked recreational asset. Yet it is a very promising one. I discovered this myself in May, when three college buddies and I paddled from Cole Field in Williamstown to the Johnsonville Dam in Schaghticoke. I came away from the trip with an idea: What about a Hoosic River Waterway? It could be a fantastic recreational and tourist opportunity, and do wonders for exposing more of the public to the beauty of the watershed.

We faced several obstacles to this concept, however, on water and on land.

We spent our first night on a beach of silt and sand on a bend in the river in Petersburg, just upstream of NY Route 7. The second night we found a grassy knoll tucked away from the bank, out of sight of a house on the opposite bank, about a mile from the Buskirk Bridge. Both nights, our priority in bedding down wasn't finding a good spot, but not annoying landowners. Two or three designated camping areas along the river would make floating the waterway a more straightforwardly legal and pleasant affair. Such campsites could be simple, requiring no more than a clearing and signage.

While portages were by far the most difficult portion of our trip, there were only three of them on our route—the Tannery Dam in North Pownal, Hoosick Falls, and

North Hoosick Dam. Two of the portages are very difficult—with the Tannery Dam take-out necessitating moving gear up a very steep wooded bank, and with 25-foot concrete walls lining the third of a mile before the falls at Hoosick Falls. (My editor says floaters are discouraged from attempting this portage in all but very low water, when it is essentially a walk rather than a float, but the alternative is a very long carry.) Other portage routes are already in place, with a fantastic put-in after the Tannery Dam (a recent HoorWA construction) and a well-placed path at the portage a mile past Hoosick Falls.

Camping sites and improved portages will require landowner approval and funds. And it should be pointed out that the Hoosic is not always floatable. (We paddled the river at about 169 cubic feet per second at the Williamstown gage, with the low water level trailing us as we went down, to 150 and then 139.) USEPA records from the past three years indicate it is navigable generally from April through June, with

levels usually too low in July.

Whatever difficulties it might pose, paddling the Hoosic leaves you with a special connection to it. You know its story, know its secrets; you understand where it's been and where it's going. Most of all, these types of ventures help us see our natural surroundings differently—not, like the buildings and streets that encompass us, as something unchanging and tame, but rather (as you'll find with the Hoosic) something majestic and natural and alive.

Chris is a junior Political Economy major and Environmental Studies concentrator at Williams, not too far away from his hometown of Niskayuna, NY. At the college he is a tutor at Williamstown Elementary school, a saxophone player in Symphonic Winds, a member of the Ultimate Frisbee and club volleyball teams, a former Outdoor Orientation leader and a future Junior Advisor. Chris is interning for HoorWA and for Williamstown Rural Lands this summer.



Crosby Fish and Jason Copelas downstream of the Tannery Dam.

In this issue:

- **Hoosic River Ride flyer inside!**
- Adams updates
- Hoosic waterway
- VT BMI assessments

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The Hoosic River Voice

Eye Food (aka recent HooRWA activities)



Intern Chris Law captured this scene on Hoxie Brook, Adams, while surveying the brook.



Riverfest drummers.



Overland Summers 'yout' and their 'loot.'



Riverfest drummers, led by drummer extraordinaire Otha Day.



Monitoring coordinator Kelly Nolan gave S. Branch stream team volunteers a benthic macroinvertebrate overview.



VINS sent Samantha Hoff and a great-horned owl to help us hoot and holler at Riverfest.