



The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association Winter 2014
Clean Water Habitat Restoration River Access Watershed Recreation

Bacterial Contamination in the Hoosic an Ongoing Concern by Laurel Hamers

Outdated sewage systems are contributing to high levels of bacterial contamination in the Hoosic River, according to a report from researchers at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. MCLA environmental studies professor Elena Traister, accompanied by Caroline Scully and students Filipe Aedo and Richard Doucette, conducted an extensive survey of water quality in the Hoosic last year; their results have sparked an ongoing initiative by local environmental organizations to address problems uncovered by the survey.

The MCLA project developed out of a 2008 effort by the Massachusetts DEP to carry out bacterial source tracking in the Hoosic River. "We wanted to determine not only whether the water quality is bad, but where the problems are coming from," Traister explained. Bacterial source tracking allows researchers to trace contaminated water to its point of origin, helping to identify specific areas that are contributing to pollution and, ideally, enabling the problem to be fixed.

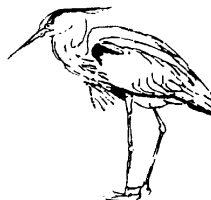
Most of the problems that the MCLA team identified stemmed from municipal water systems. Pipes entering the Hoosic are part of the storm water system, which current regulations specify must be kept separate from the sewage system. However, the pipes for the two systems sometimes run side-by-side, so that when rainfall levels are high, sewage floods the storm water system and contaminates the

river. "These pipes in some places are 100 years old, so they aren't watertight. Sometimes you end up with sewage leaking out or water leaking in," said Traister.

In response to the MCLA team's findings, area communities have taken steps over the past year to address the problems. According to Traister, both Adams and North Adams fixed problematic pipes after being alerted to their locations.

However, the issue is far from resolved. "Cost is absolutely a limitation," Traister said. Fixing faulty pipes is expensive, and so is the equipment that makes identifying them easier. "Williamstown is in a good position because they were able to invest in a remote-controlled camera," said Traister. Whenever the roads are redone, repair crews can insert this device into the already-exposed pipes to identify problems. Unfortunately, budgetary limitations are making it difficult for North Adams to purchase its own camera; local environmental groups are working to help fund the investment. The result will be well worth the effort—a healthier, safer river for us all to enjoy.

Laurel Hamers is a senior at Williams College. Look for her feature article on this topic and others on the HoorWA website soon.



Note:

MCLA students Filipe Aedo and Richard Doucette presented their findings to the larger community at HoorWA's January 2013 annual meeting. Following subsequent discussions with the City of North Adams, the HoorWA board authorized donating up to \$5,000 to the City to offset the cost of its purchase of a remotely operated camera. The City would use the camera to pinpoint locations where the sewer mains are leaking into the stormwater system, and then prioritize repairs. Some fixes may be logistically simple and inexpensive, and could be implemented as part of the City's routine maintenance of its infrastructure. Others could require innovative sources of funding.

Thank you members!

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Hoosic River Watershed Association

- P.O. Box 667
- Williamstown, MA 01267
- 413 458-2742
- office@hoorwa.org
- www.hoorwa.org

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

Hooray for HoorWA for giving us many opportunities over this past year to protect and enjoy the Hoosic River and its watershed.

Last spring we offered a free rafting trip and picnic for HoorWA members. We carried out a very heavily rain-impacted Riverfest. And we put on a very sunny Hoosic River Ride with 7,30,50,75, and 100 mile routes, followed by a delicious picnic.

This year we hope to move forward with many other projects to benefit the river and its watershed, including:

- cooperating with others to remove three dams from Pecks Brook in Cheshire.
- working with several communities in Massachusetts to identify watercourses where human interventions can help reduce the impacts of climate change.
- working with the Village of Hoosick Falls to reclassify the river there from Class C to Class B (swimmable and fishable).

President's Post by Tom Hyde

• working with the hamlet of Valley Falls to approach the N.Y. Department of Environmental Conservation to convert a gutted old mill into a town park with improved recreational river access.

• continuing our efforts to create a portage trail around the North Pownal dam, and creating a trail connecting the Strobridge Park there to the Taconic Crest Trail.

We also hope to help watershed residents have fun and get to know the watershed by, among other activities:

- sponsoring a Hoosic River Float and picnic in May.
- putting on our annual Hoosic River Ride (hopefully on another sunny day).
- hosting river clean up days and encouraging HoorWA members to volunteer their time to help.
- sponsoring guided hikes and bird walks in the watershed.

I hope that these efforts in 2014 will earn another Hooray for HoorWA!

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Hoosic River Watershed Association
P.O. Box 667
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Also in this issue:

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- President's Post
- Our wonderful members!

Winter 2014



The Hoosic River Voice

HoorWA Holds Its Annual Meeting

The Hoosic River Watershed Association held its 27th annual meeting in Williamstown on February 3rd.

President Tom Hyde of Williamstown addressed an audience and spoke on the achievements of the organization over the past year and projects on the horizon.

Re-elected by those members present to the Board of Directors were Lauren Stevens of Williamstown and Thom Gentle of North Bennington. Andy Kawczak of North Adams was elected to his first term.

The featured speaker was Tom Jorling of Williamstown. Mr. Jorling is the former Assistant Administrator for the Environmental Protection Agency and he spoke on the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 and what it has done for our country and the environment. He spoke of the

national events of the late 1960's and early 1970's and the culture of the U.S. Congress that made it possible to pass the Act. Until the passage of the Clean Water Act, industry could pollute by right until someone objected. The Clean Water Act now requires permits for any polluting discharge. Amendments were made to the Act in 1977 and again in 1987, but essentially it has stood the test of time. Mr. Jorling noted how the values of waterfront property adjacent to previously neglected city harbors and rivers have skyrocketed and attracted business and residential developments since polluted waters have been cleaned up.

Jorling answered questions from the audience on the process of drafting major environmental

legislation and how difficult the same process would be today.

State Representative Gailanne Cariddi also spoke of the process of working on legislation in the Massachusetts State House. Representative Cariddi went on to praise the work of the watershed association and offered her continued support.

SPRING IS COMING!

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR E-MAILS FROM US ANNOUNCING UPCOMING EVENTS, INCLUDING A RIVER FLOAT AND PICNIC, RAFT RIDES, AND MORE. OR CHECK OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.HOORWA.ORG.