



Currents

A Publication of the Saugus River Watershed Council

Volume 15, No.4, Fall 2006

Saugus Iron Works Temporarily Closed Until Spring 2007

The 8.5-acre Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site, located along the banks of the Saugus River, has been temporarily closed since 25 September 2006 due to a major construction project aimed at improving accessibility at the site.

During the construction period, which is expected to last until Spring 2007, the Saugus Iron Works, will be open to visitors by appointment only. In addition, National Park Service Rangers will be available to conduct special, curriculum-based education programs off-site in area classrooms. "We hoped to keep the site open, but closure is necessary to maintain visitor safety", said NPS Superintendent Patricia Trap. A restricted tour of the construction work will also be available by appointment.

Walkways will be improved for wheelchair access, a range of unique visual, auditory and tactile exhibits will be added, and existing buildings will be converted to a new collection storage facility to protect the site's renowned archaeological collection.

For more information about the construction project go to www.nps.gov/sair. In addition to information on the park, photographs and updates of the construction project will be posted at this website on a regular basis. To schedule an educational program, contact National Park Service Ranger Amy Curry at 781-231-7344. ❖

Volunteers Clean Up Rumney Marsh



Photo credit: Tom Kobuszewski

Approximately 85 volunteers worked together during CoastSweep 2006 to remove 2.5 tons of debris from Rumney Marsh in Revere, September 2006.

On 16 September, 85 volunteers joined the Saugus River Watershed Council, General Electric Aircraft Engines, and Revere High School for CoastSweep 2006 to clean up Rumney Marsh. High school students from Revere and Lynnfield joined in with the volunteers to remove over 2.5 tons of small and large debris from this valuable salt marsh habitat. While some trash was washed into the marsh from the ocean, most was a result of illegal dumping of household garbage and larger items such as appliances and construction debris.

The Council extends special thanks to: General Electric for providing heavy equipment, dumpsters, t-shirts and logistical support; the Revere Department of Public Works for providing heavy equipment and crews to assist; David Eatough and Revere High School for recruiting 40+ students to help with the cleanup; and the VFW Mottolo Post 4524 for providing a staging area and drinks for the volunteers.

Sincere thanks also to all of our volunteers and the following additional event sponsors: Rep. Kathi-Anne Reinstein, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the Office of Coastal Zone Management. ❖

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Editorial:

Holiday Giving that Helps Protect the Local Environment!

Efforts to protect the environment are made possible through the generous donations of individuals, businesses, and foundations. Below are some holiday suggestions that will make your season bright with the knowledge that you are helping to protect the natural resources of the Saugus River watershed.

Sponsor Environmental Education for Local Youths

A \$25 donation to the Saugus River Watershed Council will enable a student to participate in our watershed environmental education programs. Through classroom activities and field trips, children learn about local wildlife, watershed awareness, and strategies to protect the valuable natural resources of the watershed. Mail donations to SRWC, P.O. Box 1092, Saugus, MA 01906. For information, call 781-233-5046 or go to www.saugusriver.org.

Protect and Restore Lake Quannapowitt

Friends of Lake Quannapowitt is a non-profit organization working to protect and restore the natural resources of Lake Quannapowitt in Wakefield. Donations will support water quality monitoring and efforts to improve water quality in the lake. Donations can be mailed to FOLQ, P.O. Box 517, Wakefield, MA 01880.

Support the Northern Strand Community Trail

Bike to the Sea is a non-profit organization working to establish a 9-mile multi-use trail connecting Everett, Malden, Saugus, Revere and Lynn to the sea. Donations in support of the trail can be mailed to Bike to the Sea, 83 Jacobs Street, Malden, MA 02148. For information, call 781-397-6893 or go to www.biketothesea.com.

Gift Wrapping for the Environment

Help support Saugus Action Volunteers for the Environment's environmental scholarship fund by participating in one of their book wrapping fundraisers on Friday, 22 December from 5:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. or Saturday, 23 December from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Barnes and Noble Bookstore, Route 1, Saugus. The wrapping is free and donations are appreciated. For more information, call 781-233-5717 or go to www.saugus.org/SAVE.

Purchase Hats, Note Cards, or T-shirts Featuring Lynn Woods

Lynn Woods is a 2,200-acre forest reserve with ponds, wetlands, streams, forest and rocky ledge. Friends of Lynn Woods helps protect the wildlife and natural resources of the park by hosting cleanups, natural history events and lectures. For information, call 781-593-7773 or go to www.flw.org.

Purchase Breakheart-Themed Hometowne Collectibles

Friends of Breakheart Reservation sponsors many family-oriented events at Breakheart Reservation in Saugus, including hiking trips, maple sugaring, fall festivals, and more. You can purchase a limited edition Hometowne Collectibles featuring the Christopher P. Dunne Visitors' Center for \$20. Available at the Visitors' Center in Breakheart Reservation or the Rossetti Insurance Agency in Cliftondale Square. Proceeds go to Friends of Breakheart and the Christopher P. Dunne Foundation. For more information, call 781-710-3129 or go to www.saugus.org/fobr/.

Enjoy the holiday season!

Joan LeBlanc ❖

Tennessee Gas Pipeline

The Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company recently filed a Draft Environmental Impact Report with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Unit. The report highlights the proposed environmental impact and mitigation measures associated with construction of a 7.81-mile gas pipeline which would travel through Saugus, Wakefield, and Lynnfield. SRWC will review and submit comments aimed at protecting Reedy Meadow, the Saugus River, Breakheart Reservation, and other natural resources of the watershed. For a copy of the report, contact Kathleen Miller, Northern Ecological Associates, 207-879-9496. Comments must be submitted to MEPA by 24 November 2006. ❖

Saugus River



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“Spotlight on Nature” Wild Turkeys Make a Comeback

By Lisa Capone-Condon



MassWildlife released 37 wild birds from New York into southern Berkshire County in 1972 and 1973. Those birds reproduced in western Massachusetts, and MassWildlife transplanted their offspring to suitable habitat in central, southeastern, and

northeastern Massachusetts between 1979 and 1996. Now flourishing in virtually every part of the Commonwealth, the estimated statewide population is approximately 18,000 birds.

Among the public, the surge in turkeys has brought both wonder and concern. Like several other wild creatures, turkeys can be a nuisance – and sometimes aggressive - if they become too used to humans. In a “Preventing Conflicts with Turkeys” section of its web site, MassWildlife urges people not to feed turkeys – either directly or indirectly (i.e., seeds dropped from songbird feeders). It adds that turkeys often peck at shiny objects, such as car doors or windows. In this case – and in any situation where turkeys seem bold or aggressive, MassWildlife recommends scaring them with loud noises, water squirted from a hose, or by keeping a leashed dog nearby. Educating neighbors is important, the agency says, because “it requires the efforts of the entire neighborhood to help keep wild turkeys wild.”

“We do get calls from people who are concerned about turkeys around bird feeders, too close to kids waiting for school buses, or chasing joggers,” Horwitz said. “But most people simply enjoy watching them, especially when you realize that 30 years ago, we didn’t have them.” ❖

Standing nearly three feet tall, tipping the scales at up to 24 pounds, and sporting iridescent plumage, the wild turkey is impressive to behold. And, while they were rare in the Bay State a generation ago, catching a glimpse of these grand birds is now increasingly common not only in the Saugus River Watershed, but throughout Massachusetts.

Before 1980, “the concept of someone calling to complain that there were too many turkeys was totally foreign,” said Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife) spokeswoman Ellie Horwitz. Since then, however, turkey numbers have soared, and “now we do get calls,” she said.

Widespread from Cape Cod to the Berkshires when the Pilgrims arrived, turkey populations dwindled as colonial settlement advanced and hardwood forests gave way to cities, towns and farms. By the early 1800s, turkeys were uncommon in Massachusetts. The last known native bird was killed on Mt. Tom in western Massachusetts in 1851, according to MassWildlife.

As farms were abandoned after the Civil War, forests began to reclaim the Massachusetts landscape – creating habitat wildlife experts believed could again support wild turkeys. After a series of failed restoration attempts utilizing game farm turkeys,

Town Line Brook Update

With funding of \$285,000 from the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, the City of Revere is planning to implement several major restoration projects in the Town Line Brook watershed beginning during the spring of 2007.

The Revere Conservation Commission recently approved plans to: 1) implement a pilot project to create offline flood storage and restore wetlands, 2) address problems with the headwall located at the confluence of Trifone Brook and Town Line Brook, and 3) implement sidewall repairs along Town Line Brook and Trifone Brook.

The bulk of the funding will go toward the offline storage and marsh restoration pilot project which will take place on approximately 4.6 acres of land owned by the City of Revere located behind St. Mary’s Church. The project will assess and demonstrate the viability of a full-scale implementation of recommendations included in the Town Line Brook Hydrology and Hydraulics Study. Public access improvements such as passive recreational trails and wildlife observation points will be incorporated into the project to promote public awareness and accessibility.

The pilot scale facility will be designed to include a relatively small diameter self-regulating tide gate structure and an adjustable overflow weir to achieve the combined goals of wetlands/salt marsh restoration and maximum fresh water storage.

The Saugus River Watershed Council will work with the City of Revere and GeoSyntec Consultants to assist with public outreach regarding the project, and interpretive information at the site.

For more information about the Town Line Brook project, contact the Revere Planning Department at 781-286-8181. ❖

Massachusetts State of the Environment

The Environmental League of Massachusetts recently released its 2006 State of the Environment Report for Massachusetts. After evaluating a series of environmental indicators ranging from drinking water quality to greenhouse gas emissions, the report concludes that, despite progress in some areas, the Massachusetts environment is getting worse. Some of the reports' findings are highlighted below.

Drinking Water Quality - Good.

Over 90% of public drinking water supplies are in compliance with state regulations for clean, safe water.

Mercury - Poor. Policies in place now should result in decreases in mercury releases during the next few years.

Environmental Justice - Poor.

A significantly higher proportion of environmentally hazardous sites are located in low-income communities and communities of color.

Ozone & Air Quality - Good. The number of days that exceed ozone standards each year has gone down over the past two decades.

Toxics - Fair. Although use and release of toxics is down, overall levels (8.8 million pounds released to the environment during 2004) and health impacts remain high.

Solid Waste - Poor/Fair. We are generating 30.3% more waste since 1994 while population remains steady / recycling rate has risen.

Green Buildings - Good. Although the # of Leadership in Energy in Environmental Design (LEED) buildings is small, they are increasing at an encouraging rate.

Hazardous Waste Sites - Fair. Of the 2,626 Tier 1 sites discovered since 1984, only 1,493 (56.9%) have been cleaned up while 1,133 (43.1%) still need remediation.

Marine Fisheries - Poor. All ground-fish species examined are below levels needed to sustain healthy populations.

Water Quantity - Fair.

If current water use trends continue, dozens of communities will face water shortages by 2030 or sooner.

Land Conservation - Poor. Slight increase in # of acres protected during past two years, but still below average of the past two decades.

Surface Water Quality - Poor. Data is limited, however, many water bodies are not meeting surface water quality standards.

State Parks - Poor. Funding for the Department of Conservation and Recreation has increased slightly in the past two years, but is still well below historic levels and funding in other states.

Water Safety at Beaches - Poor.

While more beaches are now tested, water is not safe for swimming at many beaches on certain days.

Vehicle Miles Traveled - Poor.

The number of vehicle miles traveled continues to increase despite stable population.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions - Poor.

Emissions are rising despite scientific consensus that we are experiencing global warming.

Wetlands - Fair. We are still losing wetlands with the majority of losses due to illegal filling.

Endangered Species - Poor. If habitat loss increases, already threatened and endangered species will be put at greater risk.

Songbird Species - Poor.

Troubling declines in bird species have been documented over a 35 year period.

Invasive Species - Poor.

While there is only limited data available, many invasive species have been identified and ecosystem and economic disruption have been documented.

SRWC

Membership Renewal

Special thanks to all those who have taken the time to send in membership dues or join as new members of the Saugus River Watershed Council during 2006.

A red sticker on the mailing label of this newsletter indicates that your annual membership dues to the Saugus River Watershed Council are now payable.

While individual and family membership rates remain very low, your financial contributions are an important source of income to help support our ongoing efforts to protect and restore the natural resources of the Saugus River watershed.

Please take a moment to check the status of your membership. To renew at this time, simply clip and send your tax deductible donation along with the form located on page 8 of this newsletter.

Your continued support will help fund our watershed environmental education programs offered free to schools located within the Saugus River watershed, our ongoing efforts to restore fisheries such as alewives, smelt, and American eel, our water quality monitoring program, and our advocacy efforts aimed at protecting and restoring natural resources throughout the watershed. Any questions regarding SRWC membership can be directed to 781-233-5046.

As always, the many contributions of our members through volunteer work and in-kind donations are also very much appreciated! ❖

To view or download a complete copy of the 62 page report, go to www.environmentalleague.org. ❖

Around the Watershed

Pleasure Island Tour



Photo credit: Robert Pushkar

On Sunday, 8 October, approximately 35 people joined Bob McLaughlin for an informative tour of the former site of Pleasure Island in Wakefield. Participants explored the area which is now home to Edgewater Office Park, and discussed the layout of the park and many of the activities and events which took place there during the 1960's. Participants in the walk included a man who worked on the railroad tours at Pleasure Island which were operated by Edaville Railroad, and a woman who remembered seeing an appearance by Jerry Mathers from Leave It To Beaver.

Lake Quannapowitt Monitoring Wells

Plans are in the works for the engineering firm of Brown and Caldwell to install monitoring and testing equipment in and around Lake Quannapowitt to determine levels of groundwater and lake sediment contamination associated with the historic gas manufacturing plant which operated from 1859 to 1926 adjacent to the lake. The work is being paid for by the Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department to comply with a state order to clean up contaminated lake sediments.

Lake sediment samples will be collected from four sites and five to seven groundwater wells will be monitored to determine if

groundwater around the lake is contaminated.

Following results of the testing, which is expected to take approximately 12 months, the engineers will file a Notice of Intent with the Wakefield Conservation Commission outlining a plan to remediate any contamination identified.

Potential Eel Ramp for Saugus River

The Division of Marine Fisheries is proposing installation of a seasonal eel ramp at the Lynn Water and Sewer Commission (LWSC) dam to promote migration and spawning of American eel in the Saugus River watershed. The proposal, developed with support from the Saugus River Watershed Council and the Lynn Water and Sewer Commission, would enable eels to migrate upstream of the LWSC dam during spawning season. Depending upon funding of the project, implementation could begin as soon as spring 2007.

South Harbor Site, Lynn

The City of Lynn recently announced that redevelopment of the so-called "South Harbor" parcel of land located at the end of the Lynnway along the Saugus River is poised to move forward. This major waterfront development project will likely include a mix of commercial, retail and residential construction. The Saugus River Watershed Council will review and comment on plans for the site to promote environmentally sound stormwater management and ensure public access along the Lynn Harbor and Saugus River waterfront.

Events at Breakheart Reservation, Saugus

The Department of Conservation and Recreation will hold several events this fall at Breakheart Reservation in Saugus. On Saturday, 18 November, 1:00 p.m., the Breakheart-Fells Hiking

Club will host a moderate two-hour hike exploring the Saugus River Trail to Camp Nihan and the Fox Run Trail.

This year's Breakheart Turkey Trot will take place on Sunday, 19 November, at 10:00 am. This free 5K road race covers a difficult hilly course on paved road. Register on day of road race. Includes refreshments and a turkey raffle.

Participants in both events will meet at the Christopher P. Dunne Visitors Center, 177 Forest Street, Saugus. For more information, call 781-233-0834.

Rumney Marsh Wildlife



Photo credit: Joan LeBlanc

Horseshoe crabs and cormorants are just two of the interesting marsh animals viewed during the Saugus River Watershed Council's canoe trips this past summer. Participants also saw great blue heron, sandpipers, turtles, snowy egrets, and much more while exploring the natural beauty of the Rumney Marshes Area of Critical Environmental Concern.



Photo credit: Joan LeBlanc

Please Note:

SRWC Director Joan LeBlanc will be working part-time due to maternity leave from mid-November through mid-February. ❖

SRWC Annual Meeting a Success



Photo credit: Dan Burgess

SRWC Board Member David Eatough (left) presents River Stewardship Award to John Markley of Revere.



SRWC Board Member Kathy Wrynn (left) presents River Stewardship Award to Karyl Stoia of Lynn.

On 26 September, 81 people joined the Saugus River Watershed Council for our annual meeting and dinner at Prince Restaurant on Route 1 in Saugus. This year's event was a great success.

Keynote speaker Bob McLaughlin, President of the Friends of Pleasure Island, gave an extremely fun and informative presentation highlighting the history of Pleasure Island in Wakefield from 1959 to 1969. In addition to showing a collection of historic photos, guest appearances were made by former performers at Pleasure Island including Priscilla Hendricks, Herb Sauve, and Lou Ciafello.

Congratulations to recipients of the Council's River Stewardship Awards. John Markley of Revere received the award for outstanding contributions toward raising public awareness and protecting the natural resources of the Rummey Marshes Area of Critical Environmental Concern. Karyl Stoia of Lynn was honored for outstanding contributions and long-time volunteer efforts toward protecting and restoring the natural resources of the Saugus River watershed.

SRWC also expressed sincere thanks to the following outgoing board members for their efforts on behalf of the Council: Kory Hellmer, Walt Silva, and Bob Smith. ❖

Winter Reading for Green Gardening & Lawn Care

The Greenscapes program is a collaborative effort of environmental groups, state agencies, and local communities working to promote environmentally sound gardening and landscape practices to conserve water and protect our land and water from pollution. Greenscapes suggests reading books such as those listed below over the winter to help plan a "green" garden next spring. A full reading list as well as gardening tips are available at www.greencscapes.org.

- ⇒ Let it Rot!: The Gardener's Guide to Composting, Stu Campbell.
- ⇒ Native Trees, Shrubs, and Vines: A Guide to Using, Growing, and Propagating North American Woody Plants, William Cullina.
- ⇒ The Well-Designed Mixed Garden: Building Beds and Borders with Trees, Shrubs, Perennials, Annuals, and Bulbs, Tracy DiSabato-Aust.
- ⇒ The Wild Lawn Handbook: Alternatives to the Traditional Front Lawn, Steve Daniels. ❖

SRWC 2006 Highlights

During the September Annual Meeting, SRWC Executive Director Joan LeBlanc highlighted some of the Council's accomplishments over the past year to protect the natural resources of the Saugus River Watershed, including:

- Conducted second year of fish monitoring program in partnership with the Division of Marine Fisheries, Corporate Wetlands Restoration Program, and the National Park Service. During 2006, 1,412 rainbow smelt were caught and released - - great news highlighting the potential of the Saugus River to provide healthy habitat for fisheries.
- Continued working in partnership with Lynn Water and Sewer Commission to voluntarily limit water withdrawals from the Saugus River during fish migration periods.
- Published An Evaluation of Fish Passage and Hydrology with funding from the Gulf of ME Council on the Marine Environment and technical support from the Division of Marine Fisheries. Currently working with partners to implement recommendations.
- Launched a new education program in partnership with New England Discovery. By the end of 2006, approximately 800 students from schools and youth programs located within the watershed will have participated in free classroom and field programs featuring innovative hands-on activities about local wildlife, water conservation, wetlands, and watershed awareness.
- SRWC staff and board members attended numerous public hearings and submitted written comments during the state and local environmental permitting process for major development projects in several communities around the watershed. Our priorities include protecting buffer zones, preventing increased stormwater pollution, and protecting fisheries. ❖

Friends of Lake Quannapowitt **Statement in Favor of Establishing a Vegetative Buffer Zone** **Around Lake Quannapowitt**

This position statement was drafted by the Board of Directors of Friends of Lake Quannapowitt. Primary author: Alison Simcox.



Photo credit: Joan LeBlanc

The Board of Directors of the Friends of Lake Quannapowitt (FOLQ) formally endorses establishing a vegetated buffer zone around Lake Quannapowitt to protect the ecological health of the lake and its shoreline, and to enhance surrounding recreational lands by discouraging geese from using these areas.

Many studies have demonstrated that shoreline vegetative buffers perform a broad range of functions that provide environmental, social, and economic value (e.g., see references in The Massachusetts Buffer Manual, 2003). Functions of vegetative buffers that would provide direct benefits for Lake Quannapowitt and the people of Wakefield are:

- preventing erosion,
- filtering nutrients that promote algal blooms,
- discouraging Canada geese from using lawns next to water,
- improving aquatic habitat,
- improving wildlife habitat, and
- adding natural beauty and scenic vistas.

Lake Quannapowitt, one of the Boston area's best-known recreational resources, attracts tens of thousands of walkers, runners,

cyclists, sailors, and fishermen annually. Currently, flocks of geese, often in numbers exceeding 100 individuals, regularly graze on grassy areas around the lake. Although geese are beautiful birds, they are prolific producers of fecal material - each adult goose pro-

duces about 1.5 pounds or more of droppings per day. To reduce the lake's goose population, FOLQ has promoted and participates in a town "goose committee." This committee has taken a multi-prong approach to the problem, including use of coyote decoys, a specially trained Border Collie, and a goose distress-call system; installation of monofilament fencing with flagging; and annual oiling of eggs. However, a vegetative buffer is key to solving the problem. Without this, FOLQ believes that all other efforts will have only limited and temporary success. For example, the dog can only succeed in moving geese from one place to another around the lake as long as there are other areas that offer an attractive habitat for geese (i.e., ready access between the shoreline and the lake).

Part of FOLQ's mission is to promote education about environmental issues. To protect the ecological health of the lake and to address the goose problem, we have been aided by the large body of literature on this subject, much of which is readily available on the internet. We are especially impressed that scientific consensus appears to have been reached on the value of vegetative buffers along rivers and lakes.

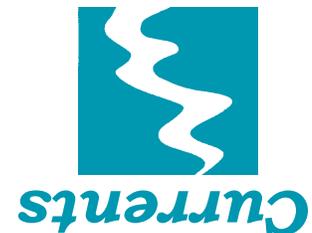
In fact, we could find no literature that did not recommend establishment of vegetative buffers.

While FOLQ understands that an optimal buffer width may not be possible to achieve, we emphasize that any buffer width is better than no barrier at all, which is now true of many shoreline areas around the lake. Therefore, FOLQ formally states herein a goal of establishing, to the extent possible, a vegetated buffer zone around the entire shoreline of Lake Quannapowitt. We also urge town offices with lakeshore jurisdiction (e.g., DPW, Conservation Commission) to set a similar goal. As a first step in reaching this goal, FOLQ offers to work with the Conservation Commission in hiring and working with a qualified wetland professional to inspect the lake and provide recommendations for developing and maintaining a vegetated buffer zone that does not diminish visual enjoyment of the lake, and that provides access for activities such as fishing and boating. ❖

Editor's Note:

The Saugus River Watershed Council strongly supports the Friends of Lake Quannapowitt's efforts to protect and restore water quality in Lake Quannapowitt. Restoring buffer zones around the lake as well as the main stem of the Saugus River throughout the watershed will protect the wildlife, water quality, and natural resources of the Saugus River watershed.

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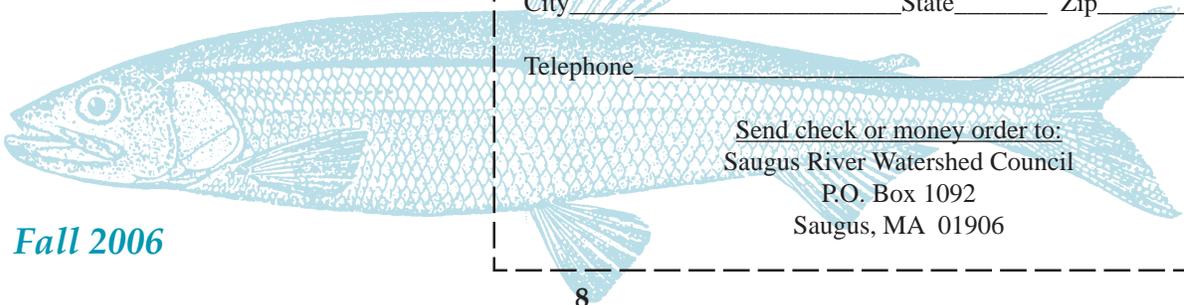


Making a Difference

The Saugus River watershed stretches from Lake Quannapowitt to the Lynn Harbor / Saugus River estuary, encompassing all or part of eleven communities.

The Saugus River Watershed Council is a non-profit organization founded in 1991 to protect the natural resources of the watershed. Our priorities include restoring water quality, expanding public access, restoring habitat for anadromous fish and other wild life, and protecting critical resources such as Rumney Marsh and Reedy Meadow.

Please consider adding your voice, as a member of the Council, to our efforts to protect the natural resources and beauty of the Saugus River watershed.



Fall 2006

Join the Saugus River Watershed Council

Yes! I would like to become a member of the Saugus River Watershed Council.*

New Member Membership Renewal

Individual (\$10) Family (\$15) Friend (\$25)
 Steward (\$50) Patron (\$100) Other \$_____

* Corporations interested in joining the Saugus River Watershed Council should call 781-233-5046 for additional information.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Send check or money order to:
Saugus River Watershed Council
P.O. Box 1092
Saugus, MA 01906