



Currents

A Publication of the Saugus River Watershed Council

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Shellfish Beds Reopen in Rumney Marsh

During February, 230 acres of clam flats in Revere and Saugus reopened to commercial clam digging following close to two decades of closure due to bacterial contamination. The newly reopened beds are located in the estuarine portion of the Pines and Saugus River.

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries' decision follows years of closely tracking water quality improvements in the Rumney Marsh Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

For now, the beds will be open at least one day per week from October 1 through July 15.

Depending upon water quality conditions, the beds may open for two days per week in the future.

The clam beds are considered to be 'conditionally restricted' - to ensure that they meet health and safety standards, the clams must be processed through the state's shellfish purification plant in Newburyport before reaching the market. The beds will continue to be temporarily closed after rainstorms due to potential stormwater pollution.

Only fishermen with a Massachusetts Shellfish License from the Division of Marine Fisheries and a "Master Digger" designation are eligible to harvest clams from the Pines River.

The City of Revere Department of Public Health is handling licensing and enforcement for Revere and Saugus. For information about license requirements, contact the Revere Department of Public Health at 781.286.8176. ❖

River Night Dinner & Auction Set for 8 May 2007

Live Auction includes:

South Africa Luxury Photo Safari for Two Maine Sailing Vacation for Two



www.zulunyala.com



www.mainewindjammer.com

Mark your calendar now for the Saugus River Watershed Council's 5th Annual River Night dinner and auction to be held on Tuesday, 8 May 2007 at Spinelli's on Route One South, Lynnfield.

Guests attending this popular event will enjoy a delicious Italian dinner and live music while bidding on exciting live and silent auction items. This year's live auction will feature a six day / six night South Africa Photo Safari for two (value \$2,950), a Maine Sailing Vacation for two (value up to \$1,600), Red Sox outings, and many other items. Our silent auction will feature theatre tickets, restaurants, sports, getaways, personal luxuries, nature activities, home and garden, and much more.

Proceeds from this important event will support the Council's youth environmental education programs and efforts to protect and restore the natural resources of the Saugus River watershed.

For more information about donating an item for the auction, sponsoring the event, or joining in the fun, contact the Saugus River Watershed Council at 781.233.5046 or srw@shore.net. Our website, www.saugusriver.org, will soon feature a full list of auction items. ❖

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Editorial: Fisheries Benefit from Healthier Watershed

With spring upon us, marine life in the Saugus River watershed is showing healthy signs due to improving water quality conditions and natural resources.

The recent reopening of shellfish beds in Rumney Marsh is a key indicator that water quality conditions in the estuary have improved over the past decade. Staff from the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) have been closely monitoring water quality conditions in Rumney Marsh for several years with an eye toward reopening some of these historic clam flats to commercial fishing. The decision to reopen the shellfish beds in February was in large part due to decreasing levels of bacterial pollution in the region. Much of the improvement is related to ongoing municipal projects such as the City of Revere's work to upgrade their stormwater and sewer system and the Lynn Water and Sewer Commission's work to limit Combined Sewer Overflows.

Now in its third year, the Saugus River fish monitoring program has again set its nets to assess rainbow smelt populations in the watershed. The Division of Marine Fisheries, the Saugus River Watershed Council, and the National Park Service are working together to manage the rainbow smelt monitoring program which runs from March 5th through May.

Rainbow smelt are showing up in exceptionally large numbers in the Saugus River this spring. During one week in March, approximately 600 smelt were found in the river. According to Division of Marine Fisheries biologist Brad Chase, smelt numbers in the Saugus River are outpacing several other locations around the state this year including the Parker River, Fore River and Jones River.

The existence of a healthy rainbow smelt population in the Saugus River is consistent with improving dissolved oxygen levels found in the river over the past several years. A sample of the smelt analyzed by Marine Fisheries staff indicated that the fish and their eggs were healthy.

While healthy fisheries is a positive sign for the watershed's overall condition, additional progress is needed to further improve natural resources. The presence of bacteria, following rainstorms, will continue to 'conditionally restrict' shellfish harvesting in the Pines / Saugus River estuary until more sources of pollution are eliminated. A major sewer system upgrade in Saugus over the next several years should help. Ongoing efforts to address pollution from faulty sewer lines and pet waste in the Town Line Brook subwatershed in Revere will also help improve conditions for the future.

Joan LeBlanc ❖

Saugus Sewer Update

SRWC board member Dick Lynch attended a public meeting regarding the Town of Saugus' Sewer System and Private Inflow Source Removal Plan. According to project consultants, of 9,000 homes surveyed, 1,200 sump pumps were identified including 150 that were illegally hooked up to the stormwater drainage system. The team also identified 1,500 manholes that are currently leaking groundwater. Several proposals to fix

the problem were presented to the Town.

This past January, the MA Department of Environmental Protection awarded the Town of Saugus a \$3.3 million low interest loan from the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund. The funds will be used to support the Town's sanitary sewer overflow reduction program. Saugus was one of 93 projects to receive loan funding from the state. ❖

Special Thanks to Lisa Capone

Special thanks to outgoing Saugus River Watershed Council Co-President Lisa Capone. Lisa has resigned to take a position as Press Secretary for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs under the Patrick Administration.

We sincerely appreciate Lisa's leadership as Co-President of the Council for the past two years, as well as her help with writing newsletter articles and running the Council's many programs and events. We wish her the best of luck in her new position! ❖

Saugus River



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Supporting the Saugus Library

By Lisa Capone



Photo credit: Dan Burgess

A new mural, created by local artist Yetti Frenkel, features nautical scenes in the children's activity area as well as a nautical alphabet encircling the entire children's room at the Saugus Library.

The Saugus Public Library Children's Room was the place to be the afternoon of 16 November. About 40 children turned out to take part in environmental education and craft projects led by the Saugus River Watershed Council as part of the library's celebration of a new ocean-themed wall mural.

A dedication ceremony that evening marked completion of the library's Children's Room Mural Project. Begun several years ago, the project features beautiful, lifelike paintings of a nautical alphabet, beach scenes and sea creatures by local artist and author Yetti Frenkel. Frenkel's final mural, completed last fall, depicts a right whale mother and calf, sea turtles, cod, bluefish, sharks, and jellyfish. Library Director Mary Rose Quinn expressed gratitude for donations from patrons and supporters that made the mural possible, including a \$500 gift from the Saugus River Watershed Council.

"We were thrilled to take part in a project that celebrates Saugus' strong and historic ties to the

marine environment," said SRWC Executive Director Joan LeBlanc. "Supporting the mural project fits with the council's mission of educating citizens about the wide array of natural resources right here in their local environment."

Before the dedication, SRWC board members Kathy Wrynn and Lisa Capone led an arts and crafts workshop, helping children make hanging mobiles of colorful paper turtles, butterflies, and fish. Meanwhile, kids got a hands-on lesson in how watersheds function during a workshop led by SRWC educators Bob Metcalfe and Sharon Zagaria of New England Discovery.

Watershed Council board member and Saugus School Committee Chair Deb Panetta was on hand for the mural dedication ceremony, along with several library trustees, Saugus selectmen, town meeting and Friends of the Library members, and members of Saugus Volunteers for the Environment (SAVE). ❖

Developer Proposes Plan for 212-acre Site in Lynnfield

National Development has hosted a series of local public meetings regarding redevelopment plans for the 212-acre site which is currently home to the Sheraton Colonial Hotel and Golf Course, the Colonial Center, and a fitness club.

The most recent version of the proposed development includes: 1) deeding over 100 acres to the Town of Lynnfield with a permanent open space restriction, 2) keeping the fitness center as is, 3) refurbishing the Sheraton Colonial Hotel, 4) removing most of the golf course and the Colonial Center, and 5) developing the remaining 62 acres by building 450,000 square feet of retail and office space, a 40-unit elderly housing complex, and a 180-unit apartment complex.

The 62-acre new development portion of the site would consist primarily of two-story retail businesses set up in a 'village' type setting with paved parking areas surrounding the development.

The current plan can only be pursued if the Town of Lynnfield votes to approve a zoning change to 40R on the site. A Town Meeting vote will take place on 30 April.

Saugus River Watershed Council staff and board members, along with Lynn Water and Sewer Commission staff, met with National Development Project Manager Ed Marsteiner to discuss environmental concerns about the project. Priorities include protecting the natural resources of the Saugus River, Reedy Meadow and the City of Lynn's drinking water supply. Although most of the engineering plans for the project have not yet been created, concerns regarding stormwater pollution, increased impervious surfaces, vegetated buffer zones, sewer treatment, waste management, water use, and public access were discussed. ❖

“Spotlight on Nature” Harbor Seals



While harbor seals are not typically associated with the Saugus River watershed, they can sometimes be spotted by the careful observer as they swim about in the estuary. Employees at General Electric have noted the playful marine mammals swimming offshore of their Saugus River property. This past January, SRWC member Frank Fitzgerald reported a harbor seal swimming in the river near

Spud's Restaurant in Saugus. Of course, harbor seals don't just visit the Saugus River for fun. They come in search of fish that may be swimming in the estuary or heading upstream to spawn. Harbor seals are generally five to six feet as adults and can weigh up to 350 pounds. While primarily solitary in the water, harbor seals often haul out in large groups to sun themselves on rocky outcroppings. Research indicates that there are approximately 99,000 harbor seals in the western North Atlantic and as many as 500,000 in the world. They are currently protected in the United States under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. ❖

Spud's Restaurant in Saugus.

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Upcoming Programs at Breakheart Reservation

The Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Friends of Breakheart Reservation will host the following free programs at Breakheart Reservation this spring.

Sunday, 1 April 2007

Civilian Conservation Corps - Hike and Presentation

Join a DCR Ranger on an easy hike to explore some of the work done by the Civilian Conservation Corps at Breakheart. The hike will be followed by a slide show and video presentation.

Saturday, 5 May 2007

Spring Cleanup

Volunteers will meet at the Christopher P. Dunne visitor's center to help clean up the park. A barbecue lunch will be provided.

Sunday, 13 May 2007

Birding with Dave Brown

Join naturalist Dave Brown in search of migrating birds at Breakheart Reservation. Bring binoculars.

All programs will meet at the Christopher P. Dunne Visitors Center at Breakheart. For more information contact Breakheart at 781.233.0834. ❖

North Shore Road, Revere

SRWC Board Member Joe James and Director Joan LeBlanc recently attended a meeting with the MA Environmental Policy Act staff to discuss environmental permitting issues associated with 71 North Shore Road in Revere.

The project proposes constructing a 10-story residential building at 71 North Shore Road, along the Saugus River in Revere. The plan includes a building with two stories of parking and eight stories of condominium units, public access improvements, utilities, drainage, seawall repairs, grading and landscaping.

Environmental permitting agencies expressed major concerns regarding the potential plan to add 1,100 square feet of additional fill to the site as part of plans to reconstruct the seawall.

Following the meeting, SRWC submitted written comments regarding the Environmental Notification Form for the project.

SRWC comments included: 1) All seawall repairs should be conducted within the existing property foot print with no new fill, as there are already 4,900 square feet of historic unauthorized fill on the property. 2) While the new stormwater management systems should improve overall stormwater management on the site, efforts are needed to ensure appropriate soil conditions for the proposed drainage swales. 3) Upgrading sewer infrastructure as part of this project will alleviate existing burdens on Revere's sewer system. 4) Proposed walkway, open space and seating will provide much needed public access. Visible signage is needed at the front of the property to ensure that the public is aware of the access area.

Overall, the project could create new public access and improve stormwater conditions while redeveloping an abandoned site that currently attracts significant illegal dumping. ❖

Around the Watershed

Susan Snow-Cotter 1961-2006

The Saugus River Watershed Council staff and board of directors would like to express our sadness in learning that Susan Snow-Cotter, former Director of the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, lost her battle with breast cancer on 13 December 2006. Throughout her 12 years at CZM, Susan was an inspiration to many with her forward-thinking vision, level-headed leadership, pragmatic decision making, and endless patience for coordination and cooperation. Susan will be dearly missed.

Lynn Woods Earth Fest

This year's Earth Fest environmental cleanup will be held on Saturday, 21 April 2007 at Lynn Woods from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. This annual event is cosponsored by several organizations including North Shore Community College, Friends of Lynn Woods, General Electric, and Saugus River Watershed Council. Volunteers will meet at the Lynn Woods Park House, Pennybrook Road entrance. Refreshments, t-shirts, gloves and bags will be provided. For more information, call 978.762.4000.

Bike to the Sea Everett Trail Construction

Bike to the Sea recently received a grant of \$5,000 from Recreational Equipment Incorporated (REI) for construction of a short portion of the Northern Strand multi-use trail in Everett. The project includes clearing and building a 1,000 foot stretch of rail trail adjacent to a 7-acre park in Everett. In addition, the Malden and Everett Rotary Clubs have also raised another \$5,000 toward separate segments of the trail.

Native American Artifact Display at Breakheart

The Department of Conservation and Recreation and the Friends of Breakheart Reservation recently unveiled a new exhibit featuring native American artifacts. The exhibit, currently on display at the Christopher P. Dunne Visitor's Center at Breakheart, highlights the importance of local native American history.

Evidence at Breakheart Reservation suggests that this was once a native American campsite. Often tribes living in the area would spend their summers near the coast and then move inland during the winter months for protection offered by forests. The Saugus River provided easy access for native Americans during their seasonal migrations. ❖

Governor Deval Patrick Names Ian A. Bowles to Head Environmental Agencies

Governor Deval Patrick has hired Ian A. Bowles to serve as Cabinet Secretary for the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Secretary Bowles has nearly 20 years of experience in the energy and environmental sectors. He was a Director or Advisor to three clean energy technologies companies and has broad leadership experience with environmental policy. Bowles served in the Clinton Administration as Associate Director of the White House Council on Environmental Quality and as Senior Director of the Global Environmental Affairs directorate at the National Security Council. In these positions, he played a key policymaking role on climate change and the Kyoto Protocol, on the negotiation of bilateral clean energy agreements between the United States and India and China and on numerous other areas of environmental policy.

In accordance with a recent reorganization, environmental and energy functions will be combined in April to form the new Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). Secretary Bowles has recently named several members of the EOEEA Management team, including:

- Jane Corr, Chief of Staff
- Ken Kimmel, General Counsel
- Philip Griffiths, Environment Undersecretary
- Ann Berwick, Energy Undersecretary
- Greg Watson, Asst. Secretary for Clean Energy Technology
- Robert Keough, Asst. Secretary for Communications and Public Affairs
- Deerin Babb-Brott, Asst. Secretary for MEPA Office
- Sandra Bachman, Asst. Secretary for Administration and Finance
- Mary Sharkey, Asst. Secretary for Human Resources
- Betsy Shure-Gross, Director, Office of Public/Private Partnerships
- James Hanlon, Director of Environmental Law Enforcement
- Lisa Capone, Press Secretary
- Priscilla Geigis, Acting Commissioner, Dept. of Conservation and Recreation
- Scott Soares, Acting Commissioner, Dept. of Agricultural Resources
- Arlene O'Donnell, Acting Commissioner, Dept. of Environmental Protection
- Thomas French, Acting Commissioner Dept. of Fish and Game
- Bruce Carlisle, Acting Director, Office of Coastal Zone Management ❖

Volunteers Needed for Spring Fish Monitoring Programs



SRWC fisheries technician Dan Burgess (left) with Division of Marine Fisheries staff at Saugus River, March 2007.

Photo credit: Joan LeBlanc

The Saugus River Watershed Council is looking for volunteers to participate in this year's spring fish monitoring programs. The Council is again working with the Division of Marine Fisheries and the Saugus Iron Works National Historic Site to assess rainbow smelt and American eel populations in the Saugus River.

Volunteer opportunities will be available from April through June. Volunteers are needed to work on site with staff from the Council, DMF and/or the Saugus Iron Works. The volunteer work will take place in the Saugus River adjacent to the Saugus Iron Works site and at the Lynn Water and Sewer Commission dam on the Wakefield/Lynnfield line. Volunteers will be expected to:

- be comfortable working in the river with hip waders,
- be comfortable climbing up and down potentially unstable river banks,
- be available to sign up for periodic volunteer fish monitoring sessions of approximately two hours,
- receive on-the-job training to assist with checking fish net and eel trap,
- receive on-the-job training to assist with assessing water quality conditions in the river, and
- receive on-the-job training to identify, measure, count and release fish caught during the monitoring period.

Fish monitoring programs will take place primarily during weekdays before 2:00 p.m. The Council will circulate a fish monitoring schedule via e-mail to volunteers who can then sign up for sampling on days when they expect to be available. For more information, please contact the Saugus River Watershed Council at srw@shore.net or 781.233.5046. ❖

Partners in Parks

Join park advocates, state agency personnel and other organizations to celebrate and invest in Massachusetts' public lands by participating in a statewide working session on 9 June 2007, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Worcester Technical High School. The event is sponsored by the Trust for Public Land. For information go to www.conservationandrecreationcampaign.org. ❖

2007 Youth Education Programs

The Saugus River Watershed Council and New England Discovery are working in partnership during 2007 to provide a rich environmental education experience to youths throughout the Saugus River watershed.

Through innovative hands-on science, field trips, and classroom projects, students will learn about environmental stewardship, watershed concepts, and local wildlife.

Sample program topics include: building a watershed model, learning how fish use the Saugus River, exploring the natural resources of the watershed through field trips to Rumney Marsh, Breakheart Reservation or Reedy Meadow, identifying signs and tracks of local wildlife such as deer, river otters and coyotes, and learning about the valuable role of salt marshes.

Programs are provided free for public schools and youth groups located in our 11 watershed communities: Saugus, Lynn, Lynnfield, Wakefield, Reading, Revere, Malden, Melrose, Everett, Stoneham, and Peabody. Does not include transportation. Typical programs include a classroom visit followed by a field program at locations such as Rumney Marsh, Reedy Meadow, or Breakheart Reservation.

All programs are designed to meet the Massachusetts Science and Technology Curriculum Frameworks. Registration is based on a first come first serve basis and will fill up quickly.

To register or find out more about spring youth environmental education programs, contact SRWC at 781.233.5046 or srw@shore.net. ❖

DEP Fines Saugus Landowner \$220,000 for Wetlands and Hazardous Waste Violations

The MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) penalized Helen McCarthy \$220,000 for numerous environmental violations along the Saugus River, including destruction of wetlands, operating a solid waste facility without approval, and improper storage and handling of hazardous waste.

James McCarthy, son of the landowner, had operated a business on-site that involved construction and demolition debris - the handling and disposal of which resulted in many of the violations found on this 72-acre parcel of land. "MassDEP Strike Force responded to a complaint from the Town of Saugus and, as the investigation unfolded, we discovered numerous and varied environmental violations," said Pamela Talbot, the acting director of the Massachusetts

Environmental Strike Force. "Working closely with MassDEP's wetlands officials, it was determined that the scope of the violations warranted a significant penalty and a commitment from the landowner to restore the damage."

Among the violations were:

- operating a transfer station (e.g., construction and demolition debris, tires, trailers, roofing shingles) without approval from either the local board of health or MassDEP;
- storing hundreds of gallons of waste oil in violation of hazardous waste management regulations (e.g. failing to register, failing to properly label, store and accumulate the waste oil);
- leaving unauthorized fill in a wetland resource area and failing to restore illegally altered wetlands;
- partially burying solid waste (scrap metal, demolition waste, tires);

- failing to provide records regarding the transportation and disposal of regulated foundry waste material.

The Saugus Conservation Commission had previously ordered the removal of unauthorized fill material from a wetlands resource area on the McCarthys' land, located along the Saugus-Lynnfield border.

In addition to payment of the penalty, McCarthy must also conduct comprehensive restoration and replication of damaged wetland resource areas, and must remove and dispose of asbestos-contaminated debris and other fill material in accordance with regulations.

DEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and preservation of wetlands and coastal resources. ❖

Exploring Tracks and Signs of Winter Wildlife



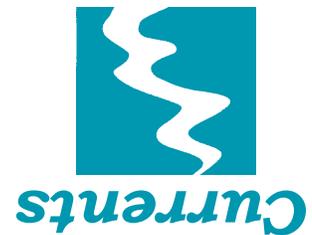
Photo credit: Joan LeBlanc

Bob Metcalfe of New England Discovery taught children about the different types of tracks to look for before heading into the woods. February, 2007.

Approximately 36 people joined the Saugus River Watershed Council and New England Discover on Sunday, 25 February, for a wildlife signs and tracking program at Breakheart Reservation in Saugus. Bob Metcalfe of New England Discovery gave an informative slide show highlighting wildlife found in the Saugus River watershed and the North Shore. Following the slide show, Bob shared a collection of pelts with families participating in the program.

After the indoor presentation, the group headed out onto the hiking trails at Breakheart in search of signs of local wildlife. With recent snow on the ground, tracks from fox, chipmunk, fisher, mice, and many other animals were easy to spot. ❖

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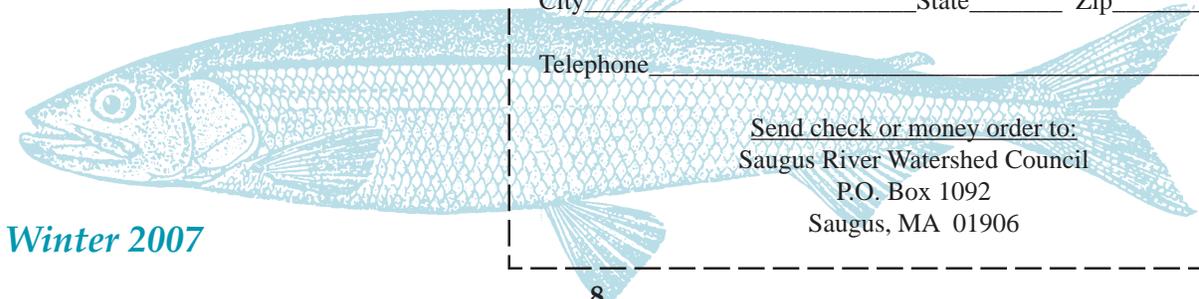


Making a Difference

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.



Winter 2007

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:
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