

# In the Mainstream

Newsletter for Members of the Norwalk River Watershed Association [NRWA]  
New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT, and Lewisboro, NY

www.norwalkriver.org

## REI DONATES \$5,000 TOWARD EXPANSION OF NORWALK RIVER VALLEY TRAIL SYSTEM

Following their tradition of contributing to nonprofit environmental organizations in the communities where their stores are located, Recreational Equipment Inc. (REI) has donated \$5,000 to the Norwalk River Watershed Association to help implement a section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) System. One of NRWA's major initiatives includes bringing individuals outdoors to explore our natural resources via the watershed-wide trail system, which includes several miles of blazed walking trails.

However, many of these trails are not currently interconnected or able to serve multiple purposes. The NRWA therefore is working on a collaborative effort to develop a significant multi-use trail that would extend approximately 8 miles from Calf Pasture Beach to the Norwalk-Wilton line. The existing section of trail in Norwalk links together a number of attractions, including the Maritime Aquarium, the Lockwood-Matthews Museum, the new Heritage Park, and Union Park. Another short section of completed trail extends from New Canaan Avenue (Route 123) to Broad Street. The next proposed section will extend from Union Park, north along Riverside Avenue to Route 123. When this section of trail is completed, it will be possible to go from the Maritime Center to Broad Street via the NRVT. We hope that this section of trail becomes ADA-accessible in the future. Once complete, the proposed multi-purpose trail would be easily accessible from multiple modes of public transportation, and can be used by different users including walkers, bicyclists, runners, those on roller blades, those wheeling strollers, and people in wheelchairs.

NRWA is planning a trail cleanup event on Saturday April 17, from 9am-2pm to prepare this proposed section of trail along the river for fall plantings and

- continued on page 3-

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring of 2010 brings changes to many of us, NRWA included. As a Board Member since 2007 and President of NRWA since January 2009, I have greatly enjoyed my time with NRWA, but will be stepping down from the Board this May. When I first moved to Silvermine in 2006, the community's close connection with the river was readily apparent, and as an ecologist, I have a passion for preserving nature and helping others understand how they can do so also. A few weeks ago, when thinking about the niche that NRWA has served over the years, I posed a question to our members... "Why is NRWA important to you?" I was gratified to hear the responses that compound why we are a 14-year old organization that is imbedded in the community.

*"I value that you are out there keeping an eye on the Norwalk River."*  
- Nancy Faesy, Wilton

*"NRWA is important to me because of the programs and events that engage the local community. Through these offerings, people are active in learning*

*more about the watershed environment and what they can do to help ensure sustainable river health."*

- Gray Lincoln, Wilton

*"NRWA is the only organization in the 7 towns that educates and informs residents of what is happening in the Watershed. Be it educational programs, hikes, historical walks, and vital news of environmental issues - such as the natural gas terminal that had been planned for the Long Island Sound and the [Merritt Parkway Rt.7 interchange]."*  
- Flora Kueppers, Ridgefield

Yes, NRWA is all of these things, and we want to continue our mission of improving water quality and the quality of life here in the community. In order to keep NRWA operating smoothly, we are hiring an Executive Director to help us coordinate and publicize our watershed programs and events. We are also restructuring our Board to create co-chair positions so that we can continue to operate as watershed stewards with the help of our members and volunteers.

- All my best,  
Sara N. da Silva

## INVITATION TO THE PUBLIC

### NRWA Annual Meeting & Event "Historic Tour of Georgetown & Water Quality Update"

Local historian, Brent Colley, will lead us on a tour of Georgetown, which will focus on the Town's historic Main Street. Starting at the Georgetown Bible Church, Colley will lead us along the Norwalk River and down Main Street, and along the way will bring famous legends, people, businesses, and events from Georgetown's past back to life (the stagecoach route, Chamber's coal mine, Gilbert & Bennet, Flood of '55, and more!). Dick Harris, well-known Director of Harbor Watch/River Watch, whose volunteers and scientists have been tracking water quality for years, will also update us on the state of the river along the way. Refreshments at the Georgetown Saloon to follow.

Members of NRWA and the public are encouraged to attend.

Wednesday May 12, 6:15-8:00 PM  
(Rain date: May 19<sup>th</sup>)

Meet at the Georgetown Bible Church parking lot  
Rt. 107, just east of junction with Rt. 57

Call 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463) toll free for information/directions.

## NRWA NEWS

### New River Rangers!

**Ridgefield** – This past fall, Ridgefield Girl Scout Troop 50567 signed up to be monitors of the section of the Norwalk River which runs through Aldrich Park. They are focusing particularly on removing invasive Japanese barberry and winged euonymus shrubs from the park. This spring they will be planting native trees and shrubs to replace the invasive shrubs they removed in order to improve habitat and biodiversity in the Park. The troop will earn their bronze badge at the end of the project.



Girl Scout Troop 50567

**Georgetown-Cannondale** –The Green Club at Weston High School has signed up to be the monitor of the section of the Norwalk River from the junction of Rt. 107 and 57 in Georgetown to Seeley Road near Cannondale.



Weston H.S. Green Club

**Silvermine - Broad River** –In celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of scouting, New Canaan Cub Scout Pack 70 has signed up to be monitors of the section of the Norwalk River which runs through the CT Light & Power property on the north side of Rt. 123 in Broad River, Norwalk. Their first cleanup event is on April 24<sup>th</sup>.

### Schenck's Island - Service Learning with NCC

This past Fall, Peter Rossini and Greg Cunningham signed up as volunteers with NRWA through the Service Learning project administered by Norwalk Community College. Peter and Greg spent a total of 30 hours from October to the beginning of December cutting back invasive vines and maintaining trails at Schenck's Island, an important green space in Wilton Center. Schenck's Island is a 17-acre park that is the site of an on-going collaborative restoration project by the Town of Wilton and Wilton Land Conservation Trust along with several organizations and individuals to create a native meadow at the park. Approximately 400 black locust trees and many thorny invasive shrubs were removed over a 2-year period, and this area adjacent to the Norwalk River was recently seeded with



L-R: Bruce Beebe, Sara da Silva, Peter Rossini, Greg Cunningham, and Theresa Mucci.

native plants. Trout Unlimited has been actively conducting bank stabilization along this section of the river for the past five years. NRWA continues to help manage invasive plants at the site.

## THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

We gratefully acknowledge donors from April 1, 2009, through March 12, 2010. Contributions received after this date will be listed in the Spring/Summer 2011 newsletter.

### THE RIPARIAN SOCIETY

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REI

#### Patron

CBET Foundation, Inc.  
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#### Contributor

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#### Basic Membership

#### Supporter

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#### Thanks for Gifts of Services

Coleyweb.com – Website Design and Maintenance  
St. Luke's School, New Canaan – Meeting Space

#### **In the Mainstream** © 2010

Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.

*The mission of the Norwalk River Watershed Association is to improve the water quality and the quality of life in the region by fostering education, cooperation, and action on the part of individuals, businesses, community groups, and governmental agencies in the seven Norwalk River Watershed Towns.*

#### Officers of NRWA Board of Directors

Sara N. da Silva, President (Norwalk)  
Mark Riser, Treasurer (Ridgefield)  
Louise Washer, Secretary (Norwalk)

## REI (continued from page 1)

signage. The focus of this event will be trash cleanup as well as invasive vine removal along the riverbank. Invasive plants such as Oriental Bittersweet are currently choking out native trees and shrubs along this section of the Norwalk River. We will cut and hand-pull invasive plants to rescue the existing native vegetation and prepare the site for supplemental planting of native trees and shrubs. NRWA will provide on-site training on how to identify the invasive vines, and will provide the necessary tools and gloves (though bringing your own tools is also encouraged). In fall 2010, we will purchase native trees and shrubs and utilize the assistance of volunteers to plant them. Lunch will be provided by REI at these events.

Additionally, NRWA will work with our partners to design and install signage that will identify the trail and

direct users across road crossings. No comprehensive trail maps of the entire watershed trail system have yet been publicly available other than the current on-line Watershed Trail Mapper available on the NRWA website and a traveling large scale map that we display at local festivals.

NRWA is in the process of updating its comprehensive digital trail map. As part of this grant, NRWA will finish trail map updates and produce a paper trail map designed and printed for outdoor use.

NRWA is collaborating with Dan Landau of the Norwalk River Valley Trail committee, the City of Norwalk, the Norwalk League of Women Voters, and ConnDOT (partial land owner) to begin work on this proposed section of trail from Union Park to Route 123.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

NRWA programs highlight the importance and features of the river and its watershed and ways people collectively and individually can improve the region.

Programs are free, unless specified, but space may be limited, and reservations are suggested. Call the leader listed or **NRWA toll free at 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463)** for more information, directions, and reservations. Hikers should always wear hiking shoes and bring water.

### 2010 Traveling Photo Exhibit "Living Waters"

NRWA has organized this photo exhibition to publicize the many beautiful and interesting features along the Norwalk River and its Comstock and Silvermine tributaries. The exhibit will be displayed during the following months at these locations throughout the watershed:

**February:** New Canaan Library

**March:** Norwalk Library

**April:** Weston Library

**May:** Ridgefield Rec Center

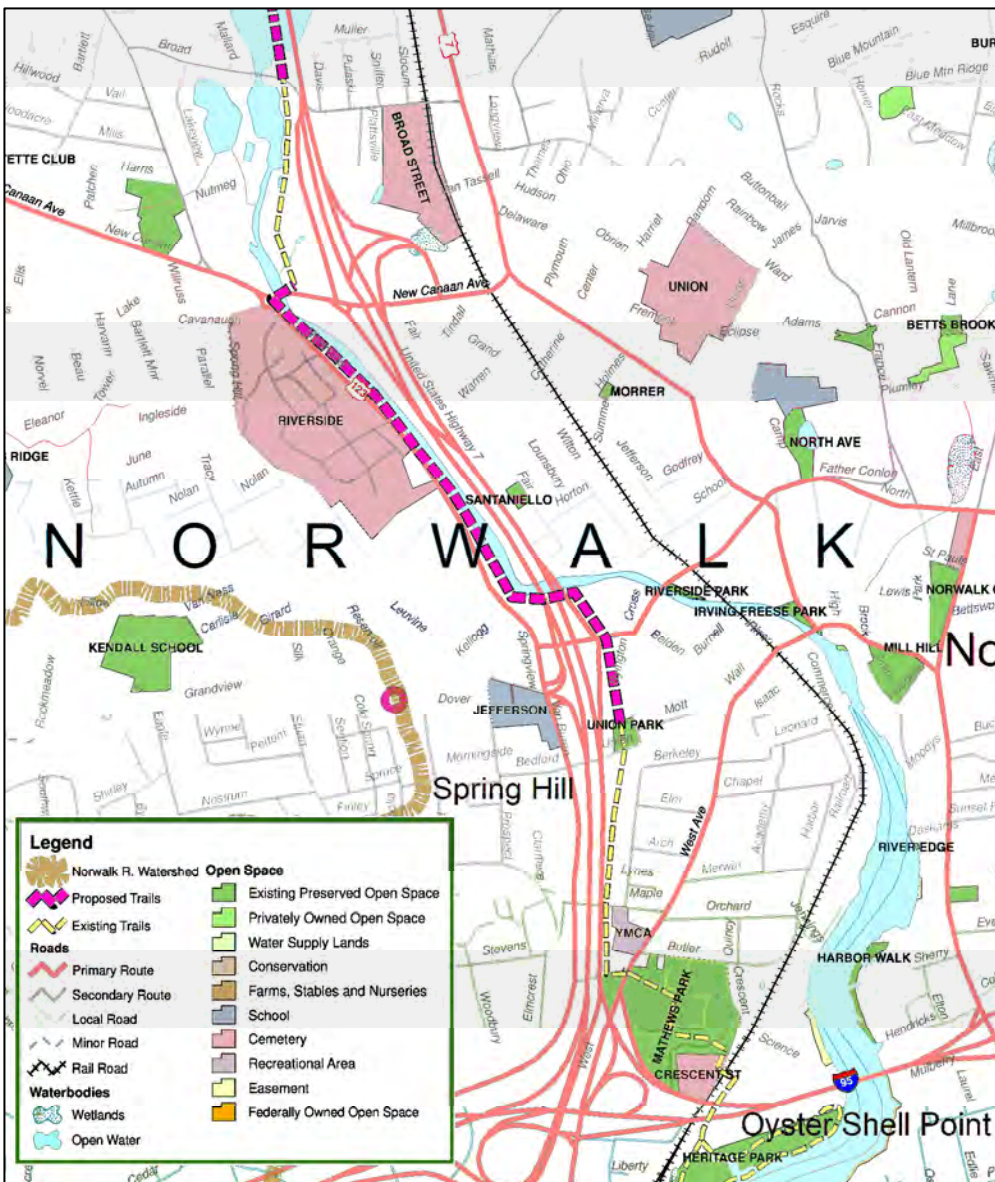
**June:** Wilton Library

**April 17, Saturday, 9AM-2PM. Trail Improvement Party at Riverside Avenue, Norwalk.** Help us prepare a section of proposed trail along Riverside Avenue and the Norwalk River that will connect existing trails at Union Park (just west of Norwalk Public Library) to existing trails on the north side of Rt. 123. We will be picking up trash and cutting back invasive vines. There are jobs for a variety of age levels. Meet at the north side of Casatelli Marble & Tile (34 Riverside Ave.). Please bring your own tools if possible. Thanks to a grant from REI, some tools, as well as

**lunch for our volunteers**, will be provided! Call or e-mail NRWA to sign-up.

**April 24, Saturday, 9 AM. Norwalk River Cleanup, Wilton.** Trout Unlimited - Mianus Chapter's annual spring cleanup of the Norwalk River

needs volunteers to help clean between Merwin Meadows and School Road, which always yields a truckload of trash. Contact Jeff Yates at [jjyates@mianustu.org](mailto:jjyates@mianustu.org) or call 203.216.7078 for info and directions.



**April 24, Saturday, 9AM. Norwalk River Cleanup, Norwalk.** The cub scouts of Pack 70 have signed up as River Rangers to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Scouting. They will be working on the section of river between Rt. 123 and Broad Street in Norwalk. Help them give this stretch of trail a spring cleaning! Contact David Havens at 203.853.5876 or [havensd@stlukesct.org](mailto:havensd@stlukesct.org) for more info.

**April 24, Saturday. Earthday at Earthplace in Westport.** Visit [www.earthplace.org](http://www.earthplace.org) for more info.

**April 27, Tuesday, 9:15-10:15AM, River Study- Adult Training.** Veteran's Park School in Ridgefield. Contact Donna Roscoe at [donna@roscoe.cc](mailto:donna@roscoe.cc).

**May 1, Saturday, 9AM-noon. Norwalk River Clean-up at Oyster Shell Park (SoNo).** Join NRWA for a shoreline cleanup of Oyster Shell Park at the mouth of the Norwalk River. Boots, long pants, and work gloves are recommended. Call or e-mail NRWA to sign up and for more info.

**May 2, Sunday 11AM-4PM. Wilton Go-Green Festival.** Join us for this community-wide event that celebrates green living. For more info, visit [www.wiltongogreenfestival.com](http://www.wiltongogreenfestival.com)

**May 12, Wednesday, 6:15-8PM. Historic Tour of Georgetown & Water Quality Update (NRWA Annual Meeting Event).** Meet at the Georgetown Bible Church, Rt. 107. See invitation on first page for more info. **Rain date: May 19<sup>th</sup>.**

**May 22, Saturday, 10AM-2PM. Norwalk-Wilton Tree Festival at Cranbury Park.** The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Norwalk-Wilton Tree Festival is a collaboration of the Norwalk Tree Alliance, Norwalk Department of Public Works, Wilton Garden Club and Wilton Tree Committee. The festival offers family style activities like a popular rope tree-climb for kids and showcases a diverse lineup of environmentally-minded exhibitors (including NRWA), demonstrations by experts in tree care, and a primer for homeowners with trees on the property. Rain or shine, and Free! Cranbury Park is located at 300 Grumman Ave. in Norwalk, north of

the Merritt Parkway near Rt. 7. Visit [www.norwalktreealliance.org](http://www.norwalktreealliance.org) for more info.

**June 6, Sunday, 10AM-1PM. Natural History Walk at Weir Farm to Celebrate National Trails Day.** Greg Waters, Horticulturist at the Weir Farm National Historic Site will lead this informative hike along the Norwalk River Watershed Trail from Rt. 33 in Ridgefield, through Wilton Land Trust open space, Woodcock Nature Center, Weir Preserve, and Weir Farm National Historic Site. Call Greg Waters (203.544.9829, x11) to register and for directions to the hike's starting point.



Lighthouse at Sheffield Island

**June 20, Sunday. Kayak Tour of Norwalk Harbor.** Join us on this Appalachian Mountain Club trip led by Jean Trapani of the Flat-Water Coastal Paddling Committee. Commentary by NRWA Board Member David Park on local history, shellfish industry and biodiversity. This is a free event. Bring your own kayak or rent from the Small Boat Shop, 144 Water Street, South Norwalk. Call 203.606.9459 or email [flatwater@ct-amc.org](mailto:flatwater@ct-amc.org) for reservations.

**July 31-August 1, Saturday-Sunday, Norwalk Islands Kayaker Jamboree.** Kayak out to Shea Island from Calf Pasture Beach for a weekend of camping and activities, or just come for the day. Shea Island cleanup on Sunday Morning. Sponsored by the Stamford Kayak Group. For more info, visit [www.meetup.com/StamfordKayakGroup/](http://www.meetup.com/StamfordKayakGroup/).

**August 14, Saturday, 10-noon. Butterflies!** Lepidopterist Vic DeMasi, Research Affiliate for the Peabody Museum and NRWA Advisory Board Member, has been studying butterflies and moths in an area along the Norwalk River since

1977. He'll introduce area butterflies and moths, discuss their food and habitats, and show his remarkable collection. Meet at 10am at the Simpaug Turnpike in Redding, just east of Route 7, Ridgefield. Easy walk. To reserve your spot, call or email Vic DeMasi at (203.938.9016) or [victormonarch@yahoo.com](mailto:victormonarch@yahoo.com). **Rain date: August 15<sup>th</sup>.**

**September 18, Saturday, 9AM-noon. International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) – Norwalk River.** Be a part of the ICC and join the Norwalk River Rowing Assoc. (NRRA) & NRWA for a shoreline cleanup. Whether by boat or by land, help us pick up trash and clean up the Norwalk River. Wear work gloves and appropriate footwear. Meet at NRRA boat house at 1 Moody's Lane, Norwalk. Contact Louise Washer at 1-877-NRWA-INFO to sign up.

**October 2, Saturday, Water Quality Training & Testing Day in Ridgefield.** You can help Ridgefield monitor the quality of its waterways. Join us for this one day event in which volunteers will be trained on how to collect vital water quality information and will then test the water at several waterbodies in Ridgefield. The goal is to test as many bodies of water as possible in one day. Sponsored by the Ridgefield Conservation Commission. Contact Kitsey Snow at 203.313.0656 for more info and to sign up.



### Upcoming Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days:

**April 24<sup>th</sup> - Weston**  
Public Works Facility (8:30am-12:30pm)  
**May 15<sup>th</sup> – Greenwich**  
Greenwich High School (8am- 1pm)  
**June 5<sup>th</sup> – Darien**  
Noroton Heights RR Station (9am-1pm)  
**July 10<sup>th</sup> – Stamford**  
Scalzi Park at Bridge Street (9am-2pm)  
**September 11<sup>th</sup> – Norwalk**  
Norwalk High School (8am-2pm)  
**September 25<sup>th</sup> - New Canaan**  
Wastewater Treatment Plant (8am-2pm)  
**October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Westport**  
Yard Waste Site (9am-2pm)  
**October 30- Wilton**  
Miller/Driscoll School (9am-3pm)



## NEW BOOK “KAYAKING IN AND AROUND THE NORWALK ISLANDS” BY DAVID PARK

In the spring of 2009, I came up with the idea of documenting the locations of active osprey nests along the coast of Norwalk, Darien and Westport. Over a decade ago when I started kayaking the local waters, there was only one active nest in Norwalk and one in Westport. The osprey, a fish hawk that flies to South America each winter and returns in late March, has made a dramatic comeback in recent years. The decline in population has been attributed to the use of the pesticide DDT, banned in 1975. During 2009, there were 13 active nests in the Norwalk area and approximately 17 chicks hatched during this past summer...all good news.

I then decided to write about kayaking around the Norwalk Islands in addition to my osprey nest locations. Since I knew all the nooks and crannies of the local waters and was well versed in the sport of sea kayaking, I started composing chapters and taking photographs.

“Kayaking In and Around the Norwalk Islands” took all year to produce with many drafts and design changes, but it is finally in print. Included in the chapters are local launch sites; navigation; descriptions and brief history of all the islands; details of local kayaking along the coast, rivers and around the islands offshore; safety suggestions and other pointers; nesting birds including egrets, herons, terns and other birds; and of course the latest Norwalk area osprey nest locations.

It has been a lot of work and fun to produce the book, but I am quite pleased with being able to share the book and all it has to offer. It has proven to be quite popular as it has filled a niche. The Norwalk Islands have become a popular destination for kayakers from all over Connecticut and New York State. A few of the islands are open to the public, and kayakers can get out of their boats, explore and camp at designated sites. If the book continues to be popular, I plan on updating it as needed and doing additional printings.

The book is available for under \$10 and can be picked up or ordered for delivery at the Outdoor Sports Center in Wilton, (203) 762-8797, and the Small Boat Shop in Norwalk, (203) 854-5223. It is also available at the Norwalk Dept of Recreation & Parks, and Norwalk Museum Gift Shop.

David is chairman of the Norwalk Historical Commission, board member and secretary of the East Norwalk Library Foundation, East Norwalk Improvement Association and board member of the Norwalk River Watershed Association. He has been a canoeist of New England lakes and rivers all his life and kayaker of local waters for over a decade. He is also a backyard bird watcher enthusiast.

## MEMBERSHIP FORM

I support the improvement of the Norwalk River, its tributaries and its watershed. I would like to learn more about the needs of the region and ways we can all help.

I would also like information about opportunities to **volunteer**.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible, annual membership contribution. I would prefer to receive the semi-annual newsletter, *In the Mainstream*, via:

- The name and address written below, or
- The email address listed below.

Riparian Society  
 Steward \$1000 and up  
 Protector \$750-\$999

Benefactor \$500-\$749  
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Oyster Shell Park by Sara N. da Silva

**Or, you can donate on-line  
using PayPal through our  
website!**

[www.norwalkriver.org](http://www.norwalkriver.org)

**Please make check payable to: NRWA, Inc., and mail to the  
Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc., P.O. Box 197, Georgetown, CT 06829**

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Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Town State Zip

877-NRWA-INFO  
(877-679-2463) Toll Free

## HIGH WATER MARKS: SCOTT SHARLOW

NRWA has Scott Sharlow to thank for bringing together its watershed-wide digital trail maps. He spent many hours verifying trail locations and entering them into a Geographic Information System (GIS) database so that the trails could be easily aligned with scores of other available digital datasets, such as roads, parks, streams, lakes and ponds. Scott has been involved with NRWA for the past 10 years, first as a hike leader and then through the trails mapping project.

Scott has also been involved in local zoning and wetland meetings. He is a founding member of the Ridgefield Open Space Association, the VP of Friends of Bennett's Pond, and is also on the Saugatuck River Watershed Partnership. Scott is currently employed as the Information Technology and GIS director for the Town of Newtown, CT. He has been working for the Town since 2002. Prior to that, he worked for the New York City Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Water Supply and Protection in the GIS and Modeling Group. He also consults privately on mapping initiatives and projects.



*Scott Sharlow on the trail.*

Scott grew up in Ridgefield near the Titicus River. He spent many hours playing in the streams near his house, and remembers going to the Norwalk River nature study site on Route 7 as a kid. While studying at St. Lawrence University he was able to enjoy the many beautiful and scenic rivers of upstate New York, but also learned how the health of those systems had been compromised by superfund sites that dot the landscape. It became clear from his experience how hard it is to clean up these ecosystems once they are impacted. "It seemed that most of my environmental classes preached education but it appeared that even the educated would make concessions and compromises when faced with political pressure. ... It takes real leadership to stand up for what's right with respect to the natural environment, realizing that the health of our ecosystems is analogous to the health of our people. I believe that the Norwalk River Watershed needs educated citizens to help provide the balanced voice moving forward. We need to decide how we want this river to look into the future. If we leave it up to chance then we are destined for a stream system dominated by Sewage Treatment Plants instead of clean free flowing water." As an avid outdoorsman, Scott believes that nature in itself has its own value that need not be quantified for the sake of swaying the few. He is inspired by the beautiful majesty of free flowing rivers and waterways with their standing waves, ripples, eddies, oxbows and waterfalls... the awesome power of nature.

## NRWA Is Looking for Volunteers

River Rangers, River Guides, River Adult Training Coordinator, Hike Leaders, Trail Workers, Board Members, Grant Writers, Environmental or Website Writers, Graphic Designers, Gardeners, Scientists...these are just some of the volunteer positions we would like to fill. The more help we have, the more we can do. You can make the difference! Let us know your interests, expertise, and where you would like to help. Contact [info@norwalkriver.org](mailto:info@norwalkriver.org). We'll get back to you and see how we can mesh our needs with your talents and availability. Every person counts, so please let us hear from you.