

# 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

Spring/Summer 2014

## NORWALK RIVER DAM REMOVAL UPDATE

BY ELISABETH CORDNER

Last October Norwalk received a grant of \$970,000 from U.S. Fish and Wildlife to remove the Flock Process Dam, a 22-foot-high dam located south of the Merritt Parkway on the Norwalk River in Norwalk. The Dam was built in the 1850s to generate power to produce flock, which was the term for a tuft of wool or cotton fiber used to stuff mattresses, but has been non-operational for many years. Removing the dam will have numerous positive ecological effects on the River and the watershed community. Co-owner of the Hotel Zero Degrees, Bill Burnham, has vowed the fight the dam removal, however. Views from the Hotel and its restaurant overlook the falling water of the dam. The NRWA believes that the dam should be removed in order to begin to restore the river to its natural state.

Dam removal will increase the movement upstream of anadromous fish--those that breed in fresh water but live their adult lives in the ocean. NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has rated the potential for an increase in fish passage restoration in the Norwalk River as high. The effectiveness of fish ladders as an alternative has recently been questioned, with as few as 3% of migrating shad reaching their spawning grounds according to a study reported in *Yale Environment 360*. An increase in anadromous fish passage has the potential to result in increases in the populations of these



**NRWA supports the removal of the Flock Process dam in Norwalk, which faces opposition by Hotel Zero Degrees owner.**

*—Photo Courtesy of The Norwalk Hour*

fishes, helping support local commercial and recreational fisheries.

The Mianus Chapter of Trout Unlimited reports that fishing for sea-run brown trout may become possible upstream to Wilton as a result of the dam's removal. The dam is the lowest fish barrier on the River, and its removal would allow trout, alewives, herring and other fish to travel 7 miles upstream to superior spawning habitat. Upstream of the Flock Dam is the Dana Dam at Merwin Meadows Park in Wilton. Engineering for removal of that dam has already been completed. The next barrier for fish, the Cannondale Dam, supports a fish bypass channel installed by Trout Unlimited, so after the Flock and Dana dams are removed, fish will be able to swim 11 miles upstream to Georgetown.

*--continued on page 2*

## HIGH WATER MARKS: NRWA THANKS FLORA KUEPPERS FOR OVER FIFTEEN YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE WATERSHED

NRWA would like to express its appreciation to Flora Kueppers for the many years of dedicated service she has given to helping protect the watershed and helping NRWA to run smoothly. A life-long native of Ridgefield, Kueppers says she became interested in the environment on the first Earth Day. "I spent most of that day picking up litter in Ridgefield," she recalls. In 1990, she joined the Ridgefield Earth Alliance Board of Directors, eventually becoming Treasurer. In 1999, she joined NRWA Board of Directors as Secretary where she served for nine years keeping the database of members, producing mailing lists and sending thank-you letters to donors. After resigning from the Board, she continued to work for NRWA keeping the records until this spring. NRWA thanks Flora for her humor, hard work and dedication to the organization.

**Congratulations to NRWA Board Member  
David Havens  
Who has Won the  
2014 Excellence in Environmental Education  
Award Sponsored by the Connecticut Outdoor  
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--Dam Removal continued from page 1

Removing the dam will also likely reduce the frequency and intensity of flooding in the area, as the standing water levels will decrease after the dam is removed and water begins flowing downstream instead of collecting behind the dam. A final major benefit of dam removal is the prevention of dam failure. Dam failure results in a sudden, uncontrolled input of water and sediment downstream, which can only have deleterious effects. Other benefits to dam removal include the re-establishment of natural flow regimes, increased river connectivity, stabilization of water temperatures, and increase of dissolved oxygen, all of which result in improved habitat quality for native aquatic organisms. The Department of the Interior has estimated that the total socio-economic benefit from removing the dam will be \$1.75 million.

While there may be some negative consequences of removing the dam, such as increased turbidity due to sediment disturbance, these effects have been shown to be short-lived, lasting as little as 6 months, in small dams such as the Flock Process Dam. There is also a risk that contaminants built up in the sediments retained by the dam will be released and spread downstream. In the case of the Flock Process Dam, however, the project scope includes ensuring that these contaminants will not be mobilized.

## The New Documentary

### DamNation

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We gratefully acknowledge donors from March 1, 2013, through March 1, 2014. Contributions received after this date will be listed in the Spring/Summer 2015 newsletter.

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Community members exploring the River with NRWA as part of last Spring's Wilton Go Green Festival.

## SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

NRWA programs highlight the importance and features of the river and its watershed and ways people can improve the region. Programs are free unless otherwise 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.

**Amphibian Walk. Sunday, March 30, 1 PM.** Join us in search of frogs and salamanders! Dave Havens of NRWA will begin with a short introduction on amphibians and how to spot them, then lead a woodland walk to visit vernal ponds coming to life with salamanders, newts, frogs and toads. Discover some of the many species in our area, search for eggs and tadpoles, and learn about amphibian development. Meet at the 1st parking lot on the right, behind the ball field at St. Luke's School, 377 North Wilton Road, New Canaan. Tall, waterproof boots are suggested. All ages are welcome to this free event. Contact us at [info@norwalkriver.org](mailto:info@norwalkriver.org) or 1-877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463) for reservations and more information.

**Saturday, April 5, 9 AM - 12 PM. Wilton's Annual Town-wide Cleanup.** Volunteers will clean up the roadsides and banks of the Norwalk River. Meet at the Gazebo on the Green in Wilton Center to receive garbage bags and work gloves.





**Saturday, April 12. Keep Norwalk Beautiful Cleanup Day.** Once again, Keep Norwalk Beautiful is sponsoring Norwalk's spring litter cleanup and neighborhood beautification program. They will provide gloves, bags, and litter grabbers (while supplies last) to those who volunteer to help cleanup the common areas and open spaces in Norwalk including parks, beaches, schools and streets. For more information, contact David Shockley, [dshockley@norwalkct.org](mailto:dshockley@norwalkct.org) or 854-7810 ext. 46782.

**Tuesday, April 22, 9:15-10:15 AM. River Study Training for Parents, Ridgefield.** Veteran's Park Elementary School. For information, contact Donna Roscoe at [donna@roscoe.cc](mailto:donna@roscoe.cc).

**Friday, April 25, 9 AM - 3:30 PM. The 23rd Annual Long Island Sound Citizens Summit: Celebrating Long Island Sound's Past & Charting its Future.** Long Island Sound has seen much change since Adriaen Block sailed its length 400 years ago. Recognizing we were facing a tipping point, the 1994 Long Island Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan (CCMP) created a blueprint to protect and restore this culturally important estuary. The conference will bring together a variety of stake-holders,

including businesses, universities, and members of the public, including NRWA's Dave Havens, to discuss updating the blueprint for LIS based on the CCMP. The conference will feature scientific, cultural and community perspectives on the history and more importantly future of the Sound. Held at Iona College, New Rochelle NY. For more information contact Brittany at [bchamberlin-martin@savethesound.org](mailto:bchamberlin-martin@savethesound.org).



*Long Island Sound photo courtesy of Norwalk Patch.*

**Friday, April 25, 8AM-4PM. The 11<sup>th</sup> Biennial Long Island Sound Conference at The Maritime Aquarium.** The Southeastern New England Marine Educators Association (SENEME) will sponsor this event featuring keynote speaker, Dr. Charles Yarish, Professor of Ecology & Evolutionary Biology and Marine Sciences, UCONN. The conference features the IMAX presentation, "Great White Shark," behind-the-scenes tours of the aquarium, a marine life study cruise, and a variety of workshops. Information at [senemeweb.wix.com](http://senemeweb.wix.com).

**Saturday, April 26. Festivities to Celebrate the Opening of a Norwalk River Valley Trail Demonstration Trail.** The NRVT steering committee is planning a

party to mark the opening of their demo trail, which is intended for the residents of all five NRVT towns to get a feel of what the full-length trail will be like. It runs a half mile from near Wilton's Orem's Diner up to Raymond Lane. There will be fun activities to acquaint young, and older, with all the NRVT offers. The event will take place during the course of the morning. More information at [www.nrvt-trail.com](http://www.nrvt-trail.com).

**Sunday, May 4, 11AM-4PM. Wilton Go Green Festival.** Visit the NRWA table and help us celebrate green living. Event includes live music, healthy food, educational and fun activities. Held at the Town Green and Wilton Library, Wilton. For more info visit [www.wiltongogreen.org](http://www.wiltongogreen.org).

**Friday & Saturday, May 9 & 10, 8AM-2 PM. Ridgefield Garden Club Plant Sale.** Ballard Garden, Ridgefield.

**Friday (12PM-7PM) & Saturday (9AM-12PM), May 9 & 10. Wilton Garden Club Plant Sale.** At the gazebo on the Green in Wilton Center.



*Check the Events page at our website [norwalkriver.org](http://norwalkriver.org) for updates and additional information on upcoming activities in the watershed.*

## Interested in Volunteering?

River Rangers, River Study Adult Training Coordinator, Hike Leaders, Kayak/Canoe 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).

**Saturday, May 17, 11AM-3PM. The Connecticut Tree Festival.** This 7th annual festival offers family-style activities such as a rope tree climb for kids and showcases a diverse line-up of environmentally-minded exhibitors (including NRWA). Rain or shine, free admission. Cranbury Park, 300 Grumman Ave, Norwalk. More information at [norwalktreealliance.org](http://norwalktreealliance.org).

**Wednesday, May 14, 7PM. NRWA Annual Meeting.** The public is invited to join us to learn more about what NRWA does and how you can get involved. For more information and the location, see our website [norwalkriver.org](http://norwalkriver.org) in the coming weeks or contact us at 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463) or [info@norwalkriver.org](mailto:info@norwalkriver.org).

**Sunday, June 8, 2PM. Nature Walk To Celebrate National Trails Day. Woodcock Nature Center.** National Trails Day and CT Trails Day Weekend is June 7-8 this year. Join NRWA and Woodcock Nature Center for a guided walk and discussion of the wildflowers and invasive species. Hike leaves from Woodcock Nature Center, 54 Deer Run Road, Wilton. Bring cameras, field glasses, boots and questions. To register or for more info call Woodcock at 203-762-7280 or NRWA at [info@norwalkriver.org](mailto:info@norwalkriver.org) or 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463).

**Sunday, June 8, 10AM. NRVt Trails Day Hike.** The Norwalk River Valley Trail will lead a hike from Broad Street in Norwalk up to iPark at the Norwalk-Wilton line on June 8<sup>th</sup>. The 2.5 mile, easy hike will start at Broad Street, and may include an option to hike on to Wolfpit Road in Wilton. More information at [www.nrvt-trail.com](http://www.nrvt-trail.com).

**Saturday, June 14, 10AM-1PM. Shoreline Cleanup at Veterans Park Sponsored by NRWA and Ocean blue @ Rex Dive Center.** Join us to help clean up the mouth of Norwalk River where it enters Long Island Sound at Veteran's Park. Bring gloves and wear waterproof shoes. We will supply trash bags. For more information and to check for weather cancelation, contact NRWA at 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463) or [info@norwalkriver.org](mailto:info@norwalkriver.org).



**Saturday, August 2, 10 AM -12 PM. Butterflies!** (Rain date: August 3) Victor DeMasi, lepidopterist, research affiliate for Yale's Peabody Museum and NRWA Advisory Board member, has been studying butterflies and moths in an area along the Norwalk River since 1977. He will introduce area butterflies and moths, discuss their food and habitats and show his remarkable collection. Meet at 10 Simpaug Turnpike, Redding, a half-mile east of Rt. 7. Easy walk. For reservations, contact DeMasi at 203-448-0106 or [victormonarch@yahoo.com](mailto:victormonarch@yahoo.com).

## ***VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:*** **BUILDERS BEYOND BORDERS** **HELPS FIGHT INVASIVE** **PLANT SPECIES ALONG THE** **NORWALK RIVER BANK**

Last fall over thirty Builders Beyond Borders high school volunteers from the area helped clear the banks of the River at Merwin Meadows park in Wilton of invasive plant species including winged euonymus and Japanese bittersweet. NRWA thanks these hardworking volunteers for their long hours of labor and their dedication to helping protect and restore the Watershed.

## **Household Hazardous Waste** **Collection Days 2014**



**April 26- Weston**  
Public Works Facility (8:30am-12:30pm)  
**May 10- Greenwich**  
Greenwich High School (8am-1pm)  
**June 7 – Darien**  
Noroton Heights RR Station (9am-1pm)  
**July 19 – Stamford**  
Rippowam Middle School (9am-2pm)  
**September 6-Norwalk**  
Norwalk High School (8am-2pm)  
**September 20- New Canaan**  
Wastewater Treatment Plant (8am-2pm)  
**October 4- Westport**  
Yard Waste Site (9am-2pm)  
**October 25- Wilton**  
Miller/Driscoll School (9am-3pm)

### **Officers of NRWA Board of Directors**

Kristen Begor, President (Wilton)  
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### ***In the Mainstream* © 2014**

Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.

*The Norwalk River Watershed Association, incorporated in 1996, is a not-for-profit membership organization whose mission is to improve the water quality and fish and wildlife habitats of the 40,000-acre Norwalk River watershed; to restore the riverbanks, meadows and forests through invasive plant abatement and promotion of native species; to encourage recreational use of the river, its trails and the surrounding open space; and to promote research, legislative advocacy, education, cooperation, and action on the part of the stakeholders in the seven watershed towns in CT (Ridgefield, Redding, Wilton, New Canaan, Weston, and Norwalk) and NY (Lewisboro).*



# PENDING LEGISLATION WOULD ALLOW TOXIC FRACKING WASTEWATER DISPOSAL IN CT

BY ELIZABETH CRAIG

Connecticut has no oil or gas bearing shale deposits, which means no hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, can take place here. But there are now serious concerns that Connecticut could end up as a major disposal site for fracking wastewater from nearby states such as Pennsylvania, which produced an estimated 1.2 billion gallons of wastewater in 2012, and New York, should fracking be approved there. The Connecticut legislature and the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection are considering a bill that would allow fracking wastewater to be shipped into Connecticut for treatment. The Norwalk River was declared 'A Waterbody Improved' in January by the EPA as two sections of the River have been removed from the its list of impaired waters. This took years of effort from community and municipal groups. The results are now realized with improved water quality and healthier fish populations. These are hard-earned gains. Now is not the time to take a big step backwards by letting fracking companies dump wastewater here. If we allow dumping here, much of the toxic waste could end up in our groundwater, rivers and finally Long Island Sound.

Fracking is the process of drilling and injecting fluid into the ground at a high pressure in order to fracture shale rocks and release natural gas inside. It takes 1-8 million gallons of water to complete each fracturing job and this water is mixed with sand and chemicals. Approximately 40,000 gallons of chemicals are used per fracturing site. Up to 600 chemicals are used including the known human carcinogens and toxins methanol, benzene, toluene, and sulfuric acid. In addition, the spent fracking fluid as it returns to the surface from the drill pit can contain naturally occurring radioactive materials and salts, and sometimes arsenic all picked up from deep inside the earth. The wastewater from the Marcellus Shale wells of Pennsylvania, Ohio and West VA is highly radioactive, with studies indicating radon levels 20 to 80 times greater than is safe for humans. The radioactivity found in much of the fracking waste consists of radium 226, which has a half-life of 1,600 years.

Under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), oil and gas production waste is exempt from being categorized as hazardous waste. Which means it is not subject to the regulations for treatment and disposal of such waste. Currently federal law does not require energy companies to reveal exactly what types of pollutants are in the fracking wastewater. This would make it impossible to know exactly what is in the wastewater coming to Connecticut. And since the federal government does not consider it hazardous, the gas industry does not even have to report where its wastewater is going; there is no public disclosure required for the final destination of the waste.

In Pennsylvania the disposal of fracking wastewater has been and will remain a chronic problem. Do we really want Connecticut to be a dumping ground for highly toxic unregulated waste from Pennsylvania and New York?

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## MEMBERSHIP FORM

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## **YOUR MEMBERSHIP AT WORK: EPA NAMES NORWALK RIVER AS CONSERVATION SUCCESS STORY**

BY LOUISE WASHER

Last month the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) included the Norwalk River on its list of "Waterbodies Improved" because of reduced bacteria levels and improved water quality over the last 16 years. The EPA reclassified two sections of the river, one near Old Mill Road in Wilton and

one in the Stonehenge area of Ridgefield, removing them from its "Impaired Waters" list. Crediting the work of NRWA, Harbor Watch, Norwalk River Watershed Initiative and Trout Unlimited, the EPA reports, "Watershed Approach Improves River" and recognizes the importance of the work NRWA members and volunteers do to protect and restore the watershed. The report states: "Countless volunteers have participated in efforts to monitor water quality, identify pollution problems on the river, restore streamside buffers, and enhance trails and access points." That is the work you have all done, so congratulations on a job well done.

The EPA lists pollution sources in the Watershed as including, "permitted municipal wastewater and stormwater discharges, runoff from impervious surfaces, failing septic systems, pet and domestic animal waste, and wildlife." The results from data collected from 1998 to 2011 showed levels of e-coli above those that meet water quality standards for recreational use and aquatic life support. Beginning in 2012, our community changed that after years of helping to "educate schoolchildren, garden club members, and the public about household pollution prevention, domestic animal waste management, management of nonmigratory Canada geese, organic land care, and the use of LID practices such as rain barrels and rain gardens," as the report states. E-coli levels have significantly decreased in these areas as a result. In addition, the report mentions a septic system study conducted by NRWA that led to an increased municipal focus on septic problems. This is great news and should serve to inspire us all to continue working to become even better stewards of our magnificent watershed and its truly beautiful river.

