

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 2013

PARTNERS 4 PLANTS

EFFORTS TO RID PIERREPONT STATE PARK OF INVASIVE SPECIES

BY KITSEY SNOW

The Ridgefield Garden Club (RGC) is transforming Pierrepont State Park in Ridgefield, thanks to a three-year grant from the Garden Club of America. The mission of the Partners 4 Plants Initiative is to support one project in each state using a small bit of funding and a large amount of volunteer help to improve a large (at least 300 acres) publicly-owned space. Pierrepont State Park is a 313-acre space in Ridgefield donated to the state by the Pierrepont family in 1960. It includes Naraneka Lake and Barlow Mountain (971ft), along with wetlands and upland woodlands. As a diverse ecosystem, the park provides the RGC with a rich range of flora to study.

The park is also, unfortunately, home to a large variety of invasive plants. The mission of the RGC in the park is to remove all of the invasive plants (clearly a daunting task in itself) and to propagate and plant native material. Some of the worst offenders in the park include Oriental bittersweet, Japanese barberry, Winged euonymus, and Garlic mustard. Smaller amounts of Japanese stiltgrass, Black swallow-wort, Mulitflora rose, Japanese honeysuckle, Purple loosestrife and Phragmites (Common reed) are in evidence. There are also some invasive tree species, including Autumn olive, Black locust and

Continued on page 2



VOLUNTEER ACTION: BUILDERS BEYOND BORDERS HELPS CLEAN THINGS UP

BY LOUISE WASHER

B3, for short, is an organization that takes high school students all over the globe where they “help build a better world in their host communities.” These hard working, dedicated students log dozens of volunteer community service hours both at home and abroad in places like Guyana and Costa Rica where they work side-by-side with residents to “help make their communities a better place to live.” These students

strive to “*Build Serve Inspire*,” and they inspired NRWA members when they joined us to help clean up Veteran’s Park and a Section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail last Fall. Over a dozen B3 volunteers cut back thick invasive vines and bagged garbage along the trail between Union Park and Mathews Park in Norwalk, while another group of over two dozen filled 30 bags of shoreline debris from Vet’s Park. Thanks B3.



Builders Beyond Borders volunteers at work on Veteran’s Park (above left) and the Norwalk River Valley Trail (above).



Photograph courtesy of Louise Washer

Paddlers return after crossing Long Island Sound at last summer’s Kayak For A Cause event.

**NRWA Thanks
Kayak For A Cause
For Its Generous
Donation
And For Its Tireless
Dedication To
Supporting Adventure
and Conservation in the
Norwalk River
Watershed and
Long Island Sound**

Partners 4 Plants continued from page 1
Norway maple.

Volunteers have also created three study areas (two are 20m x 20m and one is an island), where, with the help of six Ridgefield High School interns and two summer employees, they have inventoried each plant, removed the invasive plants and will, over the next two years, see what emerges, hoping native seedlings will thrive.

One of the three study areas is Chauncey Island--a tiny island in the middle of Naraneka Lake. The island is a remarkable example of what existed before invasive plants and deer, and includes Swamp azaleas, Highbush blueberries, Witch hazel, Bayberry and a healthy American Chestnut. Unfortunately, deer have been seen crossing the ice this past year to reach the island.

As Parnters 4 Plants begins the second year of the project, it will continue to remove invasives, concentrating on the barberry, multiflora rose and euonymus. Towards the end of the summer, the group hopes to begin planting native plants and shrubs. Some restoration work has been done in the park previously by an RGC member, Julia Cencebaugh Kloth, who planted over 300 native ferns two years ago for a master gardener project. The ferns have begun to flourish along the shore near the main entrance to the park. Unfortunately, volunteers must choose plants that are not appealing to deer, which greatly narrows the list of possible alternatives.

The third year of the project will entail significant planting, and the group will continue to monitor the spread of invasive plants. If you are interested in following the project, contributing plant material or volunteering, please visit the website: www.partnersforplants.blogspot.com

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

We gratefully acknowledge donors from March 1, 2012, through March 1, 2013. Contributions received after this date will be listed in the Spring/Summer 2014 newsletter.

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Samantha Holmes and Hannah Haynes—Volunteer

Work Removing Invasive Plant Species

St. Luke's School, New Canaan—Meeting Space

Woodcock Nature Center, Wilton—Meeting Space for Events

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Victor DeMasi's August Butterfly Walk.

Photograph courtesy of Louise Washer

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. Contact NRWA at info@norwalkriver.org or 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463) for more information, directions and reservations. Hikers should always wear hiking shoes and bring water.

April 4 and 5, Thursday (classroom) 9 AM to 3:30 PM and Friday (field installation) 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Residential Rain Garden Training, Old Town Hall, Wilton. A short course followed by a field installation presented by the University of Connecticut's NEMO program for landscapers, designers, maintenance care providers and volunteers to learn about the importance of rain gardens in protecting waterways from the contaminants in storm water runoff. The course is co-sponsored by NRWA, The Wilton Garden Club and the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative. Register by March 29th at nemo.uconn.edu/raingardens. Fee: \$45 includes all materials and lunch. Wilton Old Town Hall, 69 Ridgefield Rd., Wilton.

April 6, Saturday. Keep Norwalk Beautiful Day. Register now to help keep Norwalk Beautiful. You will be assigned to a group of volunteers and given a specific area to clean up

including parks, beaches, schools and streets. To register or for more information, contact David Shockley, Norwalk's Neighborhood Improvement Coordinator at dshockley@norwalkct.org or 854-7810 ext. 46782.

April 6, Saturday, 9 AM to 12 PM. Annual Town-wide Cleanup, Wilton. 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.

April 22, Monday, 1-4 PM. Earth Day Event, Meadow Ridge Senior Living Center. NRWA will participate in this annual event at 100 Redding Road, Redding. For more information, call 203-544-1000 or see meadowridge.com.

April 23, Tuesday, 9:15-10:15 AM. River Study Training for Parents, Ridgefield. Veteran's Park Elementary School. For more information, contact Donna Roscoe at donna@roscoe.cc.

May 4, Saturday, 10 AM-1PM. NRWA and REI-Sponsored Volunteer Hiking/Biking Trail Work Day at Union Park, Norwalk. Join NRWA, Norwalk Tree Alliance, NRVT and REI Norwalk to help enhance the section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT) that runs from Union Park to Mathews Park. Volunteers will clean up trash along the trail, cut back invasive plants and help plant over a dozen native trees as well as indigenous wildflowers and grasses. NRWA board members Dave Havens and Elizabeth Craig

will identify and discuss the invasives present along the Trail and instruct volunteers on the proper removal techniques. A grant from REI will supply the trees, plants, tools and refreshments. Bring work gloves, clippers and shovels. Meet at Union Park at the end of Mott St. behind the Norwalk Public Library. All ages welcome. Rain date May 5th. Contact us at info@norwalkriver.org or 1-877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463) for reservations, information, to check for rain dates, or for further directions.



Cub Scouts from New Canaan Pack 70 clearing invasive plants from the banks of the Norwalk River.

Sunday, May 5, 11 AM-4 PM. Wilton Go Green Festival. Visit the NRWA table at this community-wide event that celebrates green living and includes live music, and healthy food as well as educational and fun family activities. Held at the Town Green and Wilton Library, Wilton. For more info visit www.wiltongogreen.org.

May 10-11, Friday and Saturday, 8 AM-2 PM, Ridgefield Garden Club Plant Sale. Ballard Garden, Ridgefield.

May 10-11, Friday (12-7 PM) Saturday (9-12), Wilton Garden Club Plant Sale. At the gazebo on the Green in Wilton Center.

May 11, Saturday, 11 AM - 3 PM. Norwalk Regional Tree Festival, Cranbury Park. Hosted by the Norwalk Tree Alliance, 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. Info at norwalktreealliance.org.

May 21, Tuesday, 6:00 PM-6:45 PM. NRWA Annual Meeting followed by *Adventurers and Scientists for Conservation*, a presentation by Gregg Treinish at 7 PM, Wilton Library. Join us for our annual meeting upstairs at the Wilton Library in the Rimer Room to learn more about current NRWA projects. Afterwards attend a talk in the Brubeck Room by adventurer, scientist and conservationist, Gregg Treinish, co-sponsored by Wilton Go Green, the Wilton Library and NRWA. This is a free event. For more information contact NRWA at 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463) or info@norwalkriver.org.

Saturday, June 1, 10 AM-12 PM. Guided Hike Along the Rock Walk at Weir Farm in Wilton to Celebrate both National Trails Day and Connecticut Trails Day. Join NRWA, the Weir Farm National Historic Site and the National Park Service for an NPS-guided hike of moderate difficulty

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.

along a loop trail through land managed by the National Park Service, Ridgefield Conservation Commission, and State of Connecticut. Leaders will discuss New England land use history, plant identification, and biological monitoring currently being carried out on NPS land. The trail passes through old fields, wetlands, mountain laurel groves, and towering rocky ledges. Come prepared with sturdy walking shoes and a water bottle. There is no fee, but registration is required. Please call (203) 834-1896 ext. 28. Meet at Weir Farm National Historic Site parking lot, 735 Nod Hill Road, Wilton (off Rt. 7 and Rt. 102). Park Rangers will direct hikers to an alternate parking area.

June 1, Saturday, 10 AM. Trail Day Hike Along the Norwalk River Valley Trail (NRVT). NRVT Norwalk Implementation Group and Friends of NRVT are sponsoring three hiking options: "Easy Walk" along completed sections of the trail and paved walkways from Lockwood Mathews Mansion to Calf Pasture Beach, passing the Maritime Aquarium (approx 3 miles, 2 hours); an "Easy Biking" via a route similar to the easy walk; and a "Moderate Level Hike" of blazed, unimproved trail through urban woodlands along the Norwalk River from Mathews Park to Deering Pond (approx 3 miles, 2.5 hours). Please wear appropriate clothing and footwear and bring water. Only heavy rain will cancel the event. Preregistration is not required. Meet at the kiosk along the trail in Mathews Park, 295 West Ave, Norwalk. Questions: contact leader Jim Carter at (203) 682-3000 or David Park at (203) 866-7555.



The Trail Day Hike at Weir Farm in June.

Sunday, June 2, 2 PM. Nature Walk To Celebrate National Trails Day. Woodcock Nature Center. Join NRWA and Woodcock Nature Center for a guided walk and discussion of the area's amphibians, aquatic life, 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 or 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463).

Saturday, August 10, 10 AM -12 PM. Butterflies! (Rain date: August 11) 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'll 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.

UPDATE: CURRENT STATE OF OUR WATERSHEDS

BY KRISTEN BEGOR

Although our nation has devoted substantial resources to restoring impaired waters, we continue to experience the loss of some of our remaining healthy aquatic ecosystems. The following EPA key statistics provide clear evidence of both recent and ongoing declines in our aquatic resources:

- *Over the last 50 years, coastal and freshwater wetlands have declined; surface water and groundwater withdrawals have increased by 46%; and non-native fish have established themselves in many watersheds (Heinz Center, 2008).*
 - *A recent national water quality survey of the nation's wadeable streams showed that 42% of the nation's stream length is in poor biological condition and 25% is in fair biological condition (U.S. EPA, 2006).*
 - *Nearly 40% of fish in North American freshwater streams, rivers, and lakes are found to be vulnerable, threatened, or endangered; nearly twice as many as were included on the imperiled list from a similar survey conducted in 1989 (Jelks et al, 2008).*
- For more information see water.epa.gov.

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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 aesthetic value of the 40,000-acre Norwalk River watershed; to encourage recreational use of the existing trails and open space; and to promote research, 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).

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Days:

April 27- Weston

Public Works Facility (8:30am-12:30pm)

May 11- Greenwich

Greenwich High School (8am-1pm)

June 1 – Darien

Noroton Heights RR Station (9am-1pm)

July 13 – Stamford

Rippowam Middle School (9am-2pm)



September 7-Norwalk

Norwalk High School (8am-2pm)

September 21- New Canaan

Wastewater Treatment Plant (8am-2pm)

October 5- Westport

Yard Waste Site (9am-2pm)

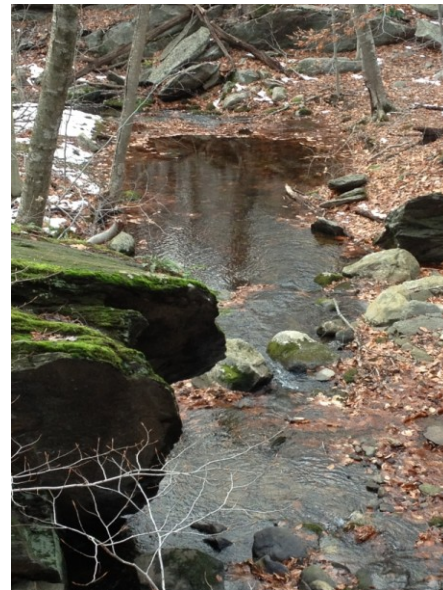
October 26- Wilton

Miller/Driscoll School (9am-3pm)

THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PROTECTING WATERSHEDS

BY KRISTEN BEGOR

We have learned over time that conserved ecosystems generate social and economic benefits. Clean and healthy waterfronts boost property values as well as revenues for adjacent retail and commercial businesses. Protecting our remaining healthy ecosystems, in particular our watersheds, is critical because of the "services" they supply such as water filtration and storage, air filtration, carbon storage, nutrient cycling, and soil formation which ultimately provide us with clean drinking water, clean air, thriving fisheries, food and timber production, and human recreation. These ecosystem services, which impact our quality of life, are provided by the natural environment and are often expensive or impossible to replace after ecosystem degradation. An engineered ecosystem service replacement may only provide a fraction of the services provided by highly functioning natural systems. There are many estimates of the value attributed to the loss of natural assets or ecosystem services that range from \$250 billion per year globally in terms of environmental damages due to land conversion to tens of trillions of dollars annually for loss of ecosystem services.



Retaining high-quality, natural, green infrastructure minimizes property damage and clean-up costs from flood damage and storm surges. Intact wetlands store and capture excess water, reduce the area and impact of a flood, minimize the economic burden on public infrastructure, reduce erosion and water treatment costs, and restore natural groundwater recharge. Healthy watersheds that maintain protected riparian areas that are hydrologically connected to their landscape can maintain their functionality, are more adaptable to change, and better equipped to handle large storm events. Additionally, forested cover prevents runoff from moving rapidly across the landscape and allows it to infiltrate slowly into the soil, reducing erosion and replenishing groundwater supplies.

Understanding the contribution that healthy watersheds provide to local economies is an important tool for land stewardship. Strengthening protection of high quality waters or diverting new development from these sensitive areas can have a positive economic and social impact and maintain these benefits for generations to come.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

☐ Enclosed is my tax-deductible, annual membership contribution of \$ _____.

I would prefer to receive the semi-annual newsletter, *In the Mainstream*,

☐ By mail

☐ By email

Riparian Society

Steward \$1000 and up

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Protect water and the organisms that need it. Do NOT flush medicines down the drain or toilet. Instead turn them in at the pharmaceutical collection day in your town.

HIGH WATER MARKS: DAVE HAVENS

The Norwalk River Watershed Association would like to recognize educator, environmentalist and long-time NRWA board member, David Havens, for his years of volunteer service to the organization. Since 1970 Havens has worked as an environmental educator, including several years as a field researcher. Since 1977, he has been a full-time classroom teacher, and since 1981 has been an environmental coordinator and science teacher at St. Luke's School in New Canaan. Havens also serves as a Green School Alliance teacher and mentor. The Green Schools Alliance is an international environmental awareness

program that asks schools and students to address their ecological footprint and pledge to make a difference by reducing their ecological impact on the planet.

Outside the classroom, he is active in a number of local, state, and national environmental organizations including NRWA. Havens leads many of its outdoor events, such as the Amphibian Walk, Owl Prowl, and Sea Bird Hike. He also works with students and adults interested in learning about invasive plant species, how to recognize them and control them. As Havens puts it, "My goals are simple. I want to share the experience and environmental appreciation I have enjoyed during my lifetime with my students and reintroduce the outside world to a population of children currently unaware of its existence."



Havens leading an Amphibian Walk in early Spring.



Havens leading an Owl Prowl.