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# Phosphorus Responsible for Excessive Vegetation

by Nigel Pickering

Phosphorus is a threat to the health and beauty of the Charles and other Massachusetts rivers.

Although CRWA has worked hard to improve water quality in the Charles, nutrients, especially phosphorus, are still a water quality problem.

Much of the Upper Charles River is classified as a 303(d) "impaired water body" under the Federal Clean Water Act due to excessive nutrients.

Excessive phosphorus exacerbates growth of water lilies, algae, and other aquatic plants, especially in slow-flowing waters behind dams. The Charles has twenty dams along its length and many have excessive aquatic plant growth. EPA's interim water quality guidelines for phosphorus suggest that phosphorus concentrations should be less than 0.05 parts per million (ppm) in flowing reaches and less than 0.03 ppm behind a dam.

Besides being unsightly and interfering with boating, excessive aquatic plants create a subtle problem. As plants grow they absorb phosphorus, then they die and the decaying plant material

deposits sediments on the river bottom. These organic sediments slowly fill in the impoundments and could potentially release phosphorus back to the river even if new phosphorus sources to the river were all eliminated. These potential long-term problems mean that inaction now will

lengthen the recovery time of the river.

Both stormwater runoff and industrial discharges contribute to the phosphorus loads. The primary industrial source of phosphorus to the river is from waste-

water treatment facilities (WWTFs). The WWTF phosphorus load is particularly harmful because the phosphorus is primarily in the form of orthophosphate, which is easily absorbed by aquatic plants. The discharge is continuous, so the impact is augmented in the summertime when river flows are low and aquatic growth is fast due to favorable weather.

Last fall, EPA revised the phosphorus permit limit for the six WWTFs in our watershed. The summertime total phosphorus limit was lowered from 1.0 ppm to 0.2 ppm. The stricter limit reflects

*(continued on page 2)*

***These potential long-term problems mean that inaction now will lengthen the recovery time of the river.***

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Greenway to Honor Marty Sender

by Ralph Abele  
CRWA Past President

When Marty Sender passed away last December, the Charles River lost one of its true friends, best neighbors and most ardent admirers. I was privileged to serve on the CRWA Board of Directors with Marty from his first meeting in November 1992. We were both sons of Western Pennsylvania who ended up falling in love with the Charles River — a far cry from Lake Erie and the mightier Allegheny and Monongehela Rivers of our youth. Marty was my set of eyes on the Charles, watching for ice out in the coves or monitoring the growth (and demise) of river-choking nuisance plants. On my numerous canoe paddles up and down the river, I looked forward to spotting Marty on, in, or near the river and talking to him about our mutual friend.

After Marty's memorial service I spoke with Newton Mayor David Cohen about creating a lasting memorial so that others could come to appreciate the river in the many ways that Marty did. Over the last several months CRWA, Mayor Cohen, Doug Dixon of the Newton Conservators, Dan Driscoll of the Metropolitan District Commission, and Robin Young, representing Marty's friends from *Evening Magazine*, have developed and will support a plan to honor Marty.

The plan is to create the Marty Sender Greenway which will run from Lyons Field in Auburndale, along the east side of Ware's Cove through Flowed Meadow to Forest Grove in Waltham. The entrance in Auburndale will be marked with engraved granite markers. A bench and engraved boulder will be placed overlooking his beloved Ware's Cove. Tasteful plantings will be placed around the pillars, bench and boulder areas.

Our goal is to complete the project this year. From the greenway one will be able to travel many miles along the river to the Lower Basin in Boston, or linger next to "Marty's Cove" and remember his work, and vow to help continue it.

## Phosphorous

(continued from page 1)

the best available technology for phosphorus removal. During the summer months, however, there is little instream dilution and the phosphorus concentrations in the river will still exceed the suggested EPA limit of 0.05 ppm.

Reducing WWTF phosphorus loads seems to be an obvious solution however, there are currently few cost-effective ways to lower effluent limits. An immediate method is to reduce the source load to the WWTFs. Phosphorus sources to the WWTFs are from human and food waste, automatic dishwashing detergents, and polyphosphates used to control corrosion in the water supply systems. The one source that obviously could be controlled is automatic dishwasher detergent. Using conservative assumptions, CRWA estimates that 9 to 34% of the phosphorus load to domestic WWTFs is from automatic dishwasher detergents. Less conservative assumptions yield numbers in excess of 50%.

### So What Can We Do?

CRWA submitted a comment letter recommending support for Senate Bill No. 1114. The act closes a loophole in the phosphorus environmental regulations that exempt dishwasher detergents from the laws governing other detergents. Non-phosphate automatic dishwashing detergents are available in Massachusetts although they can be more expensive. Until this law becomes effective, CRWA recommends that you use the dishwasher conservatively or even better, switch to a brand that contains minimal phosphorus (e.g. Shakelee or Seventh Generation).

CRWA recently embarked on a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) project funded by EPA and DEP. The TMDL project will use intensive monitoring and modeling to quantify the nutrient load contributions of stormwater and wastewater discharges to the river. The TMDL process will also assess the relative impact of these sources and recommend a mitigation action plan.



*This virtual rendering of the proposed sailing pavilion by BU's architects shows how the facility would be situated between the Mass. Ave. and BU Bridges on Esplanade parkland.*

## BU Hits Rough Water on Sailing Pavilion Proposal for Esplanade

by Margaret Van Densen

**C**RWA continues to lead the campaign to ensure full environmental and public review before legislators act on Boston University's (BU) proposal to build a new sailing pavilion on prime Esplanade land. Because this is parkland held in trust for the citizens of Massachusetts, a conversion to private use requires a two-thirds vote of the legislature. BU's bill to lease 1.45 acres of parkland and river adjacent to Sherborn Street is pending before the State House's Joint Committee on State Administration.

CRWA and our coalition of environmental and neighborhood groups testified at a standing-room-only hearing on BU's bill on April 23<sup>rd</sup> before the joint committee. Over 300 groups and individuals sent messages and 1700 persons signed a petition urging the committee not to take action on the bill until environmental review, including an analysis of alternative locations, is performed and the public has an opportunity to comment on the findings. Senator Dianne Wilkerson, the co-

chair of the Committee, noted the unprecedented number of communications calling for further study.

Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Robert Durand, the state's top environmental official, sent a letter requesting that the legislature not act on BU's bill until the project is reviewed under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). Legislators questioned BU representatives about why the project had not yet entered the MEPA process.

Bob Zimmerman took legislators on a river tour of the area under consideration via a video prepared with the assistance of CRWA Board Member Richard Gonci. Bob discussed the importance of this stretch of the Esplanade to the public and why an area closer to the Massachusetts Avenue Bridge may be a better location for a new boathouse from the public's perspective. On June 25th, the joint committee voted to put BU's bill into "extension," which we believe signals that legislators are unlikely to take action on the bill until the MEPA process is completed.

BU has now filed for MEPA review and is to be commended for taking this important step. Many people attended the public MEPA scoping session on June 20<sup>th</sup> and spoke eloquently about their use of the Esplanade and the river; the size, scale and design of the project; the proposed public amenities and mitigation measures. CRWA and Conservation Law Foundation submitted extensive written comments on the issues that must be studied, including alternative locations. As we go to press, Secretary Durand has not yet issued his MEPA certificate prescribing the required studies. We anticipate that the studies will be performed by BU this summer and fall. You can visit our website at [www.charlesriver.org](http://www.charlesriver.org) to view our video, read CRWA's MEPA comments, or review the Secretary's decision.

Many thanks to all who wrote to legislators, signed CRWA's on-line petition, attended the State House hearing or the MEPA scoping session, or wrote to Secretary Durand about the sailing pavilion. Your efforts have been enormously helpful and made a real difference.

# Volunteers Target Miles of Charles Riverbanks for Spring Cleaning

by Anna Eleria

**B**uilding on the success of the first Charles River Earth Day clean up last year, over 1,000 volunteers joined forces on Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup> to pick up trash at 20 sites along the banks of the Charles River. In addition, volunteers in motorboats from Community Rowing and Massachusetts Institute of Technology collected debris in the river.

Co-sponsored by CRWA, Massachusetts Community Water Watch (MCWW), Clean Charles Coalition, Senator Steven Tolman's office, and Charles River stream teams, the second annual clean-up united over 40 groups under one goal: to preserve the health and beauty of the Charles by removing unsightly and environmentally harmful trash from the river and its banks.

Participating groups included 15 universities, as well as university alumni organizations, neighborhood associations, women's clubs, boy scouts and girl scouts, garden clubs, and other civic organizations. This year, Northeastern University combined the clean up event with its service day for students and alumni. Over the past five years, Senator Tolman's office has coordinated with the Brighton Treatment Center to clean up areas underneath Mass. Pike bridges in Brighton. "We can always rely on the great effort of the center's boys and staff to make this a successful event," Sen. Tolman said.

Volunteers filled over 2,000 trash bags with small items, and retrieved larger cast-offs such as tires, shopping carts, home appliances, gallon drums, car parts, and construction debris. The biggest challenges were a motorboat in the Forest Grove area of Newton and a car near Cutler Park in Dedham. Trash bags, gloves, pick up sticks, and rakes were supplied by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). Triumvirate Environmental, Inc. donated additional gloves. MDC also provided trash pick-up and disposal after the event.



*Equipped with trash bags and gloves, hundreds of the volunteers from area universities, businesses, and civic groups scoured the heavily-used Esplanade in the second annual Charles River Earth Day Clean Up on April 21st.*

"Clean-up events play an important role in raising awareness about water quality issues," said Katie Baltus of the Massachusetts Community Water Watch. "I'm thrilled that more than 1,000 volunteers – up from 800 last year – gathered together to make a difference on the Charles."

All volunteers received t-shirts designed

by Massachusetts College of Art student, Althea Chen. The Stop & Shop Supermarket Co. and Rebecca's Bakery supplied lunch at a post-cleanup party at Herter Park, Allston. Providing financial support and volunteers were Boston University, Brandeis University, Community Rowing, Genzyme, Harvard University, Ionics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Northeastern University, Polaroid, Royal Sonesta Hotel, and Triumvirate Environmental, Inc.

For next year's clean-up, event organizers hope to include more volunteers and sites, especially in the upper reaches of the watershed.

# Run of the Charles Draws Thousands; Corbin Wins Sixth Consecutive Race

**N**early 1,800 professional and amateur paddlers filled the Charles River with hundreds of boats on Sunday, April 29 for CRWA's 19<sup>th</sup> Run of the Charles Canoe & Kayak Race. Professional and amateur competitors were cheered by thousands of spectators watching five race divisions along the winding course from Dedham to the Finish Line Festival at Herter Park, Allston.

Serge Corbin of St. Boniface, Quebec and Jeff Kolka of Grayling, MI won the 26.2-mile \$10,000 Professional Flatwater Marathon, sponsored by Boston Duck Tours, in 3:29:01, just off Corbin's 2000 winning time of 3:28:08. Corbin now has won the Professional Marathon all six years the division has been held.

The 44-year-old Corbin, considered the "iron man" of canoe marathon racing, has won 90% of the races he's entered. Corbin enjoys the Run of the Charles, in part, the Canadian joked, "because Boston's a lot warmer than Quebec."

Kolka, 42, who shared the Professional Marathon's first place prize with Corbin in his first race in Massachusetts, was pleased with the variety and quality of the Charles River. "I was really impressed," he said, noting the clarity of the water along much of the river's length. "I've paddled a lot of metropolitan rivers. I commend CRWA for what they've done with the Charles River. Other paddlers have told me how much the river has improved over the years," Kolka



*Serge Corbin of Quebec reclaimed the Professional Marathon trophy.*

said. He and Corbin plan to return to defend their title at the 20<sup>th</sup> Run of the Charles in 2002.

The team of Randy Martin of Swanzey, NH and Neil LeBlanc from Athol, MA won the 19-Mile Race in 2:34:37, paddling a racing 2-man canoe. Todd Boucher of Hudson, NH teamed with Sean Rogers of Exeter, NH and won the KeySpan Energy Delivery 19-Mile Open 2-man recreational canoe race in 2:51:15. According to Boucher, he and Rogers, both experienced runners, have an advantage over other paddlers because they both "love the portages." Boucher has noticed the improvements in the Charles River since his first Run of the Charles in the mid-1990s. "Back then, I couldn't get the water-spots off my sunglasses during the race," he noted. "Now it's not a problem at all." Boucher and Rogers

also enjoy the camaraderie and sportsmanship of the race.

The 24-Mile Relay Race, sponsored by *NSTAR*, drew 134 teams this year. The winning team for the second consecutive year was sponsored by McGladrey & Pullen, LLP of Burlington, MA. Anchored by brothers Michael and Steven Dylingowski of Amesbury, MA, the team posted a winning time of 3:50:59.

In the 9-Mile Race, which included only three portages, Cambridge's Dan Boyne teamed with West Tisbury's John Moore to post a winning time of 1:19:39 in their 2-man kayak.

Out of 86 boats finishing the 6-Mile Race, Kirk Olsen of North Andover, MA placed first for the second year in a row in his kayak "Geezer," the fastest small boat, at 47:58. Overall, the fastest 6-Mile boats were the crowd-pleasing outriggers competing in the new DUKE OC-4 Hawaiian Outrigger Canoe Race. The Kent Island Outrigger team of Del Skillins of Swampscott, MA, John Dostall of Morristown, VT, and Debbie and Jim Hall of Severna Park, MD crossed the finish line in 47:23.

CRWA thanks the following for their support: Metropolitan District Commission, Charles River Canoe and Kayak, Boston Duck Tours, *NSTAR*, KeySpan Energy Delivery, Mirant, Patagonia, and SR Weiner/WS Development, Honorary Race Chairman Hal Gill of the Boston Bruins, Community Newspaper Company, WBZ-TV, American Red Cross of Eastern MA, Richard Gonci, and 120 of the *best* volunteers.

# Are You Fertilizing the River?

The same nutrients that create lush lawns also encourage plants and algae in the Charles to flourish. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus in the river causes algae blooms, the proliferation of aquatic vegetation, objectionable odors, and inhibited recreational access. To protect the Charles from contamination by runoff and leaching of excess fertilizers, we recommend that your soil be tested prior to fertilizing. With test results, you will know exactly how much fertilizer you should apply and will avoid the common problem of over-fertilizing.

## How to test

The University of Massachusetts Soil and Plant Tissue Testing Laboratory, located on the campus of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, tests soils, plant tissues, compost, and fertilizers and makes recommendations for the wise and economical use of soils and soil amendments. Tests range in cost from \$3 to \$45, depending on the type of test selected. Sampling can be done at any time, but if pH adjustments are necessary, test as early as possible prior to planting. Do not sample soils that have been fertilized very recently.

To obtain an order form and the exact cost of analyses, visit the soil lab's web site at <http://www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest/> or call (413) 545-2311. The web site can also provide an interpretation of results.

## More on Lawns...

**The Importance of Ecological Landscaping**  
**Thursday, Nov. 1; 7 to 9 pm.**  
**Broadmoor Sanctuary, 280 Eliot St., Natick**

Keynote speaker: Thomas Wirth, Landscape Architect and frequent guest on "This Old House" and "Victory Garden." A panel from the Environmental Landscaping Association will answer questions about lawns, native plants, fertilizers, and pesticides.

\$10 in advance; \$12 at the door. Refreshments and resource materials included. To register, call Broadmoor at (508) 655-2296.



*Dense vegetation in the Lakes District*

## Instructions for collecting a soil sample:

- 1 Soils that are distinctly different as judged by appearance, crop growth, or past treatment should be sampled separately.
- 2 Each sample submitted for testing should be a composite or mixture of 12-20 separate scattered samplings taken over a well-defined area.
- 3 Look your field or property over. Define a sample area based on uniformity of texture, slope, drainage, color, and past pest and fertility management.
- 4 Avoid sampling very wet soils. In soils where fertilizer has been placed in bands (rows), do not sample directly in a band. It is best not to obtain samples very near the edge of the field or plot.
- 5 Using a clean spade, auger, or sampling tube, obtain soil from the surface through the primary rooting zone of the crop. Rooting depth will vary with crop type. For most plants the top 6-8 inches is appropriate. For established grasses sample the top 3-4 inches.
- 6 Place each of the 6-12 randomly spaced samplings in a clean container (pail or bag) and mix thoroughly. Spread the mixture out on a clean paper to air-dry (do not place soil in an oven).
- 7 Mix the soil again. Obtain a one-cup measure of the soil mixture and place it in a zip-lock type bag.
- 8 Label the outside of the bag clearly with your name, address, and a sample ID.



## Flags Flying for Fourth Season



Following heavy rains, CRWA hoisted red water quality flags in the Charles River Basin on June 21<sup>st</sup> as a signal to boaters and others that conditions posed a health risk to boaters. Elevated bacteria levels, due to combined sewer overflows and stormwater runoff, caused most of the basin to fail the state's boating standard on the first day of summer and the official start of the flagging season. CRWA continues to test basin water regularly and fly blue or red flags, depending on bacteria levels, until mid-October.

Gaining national recognition, CRWA's flagging program will be featured in a film documentary on public uses of information generated by citizen monitoring groups. Produced by Emmy Award-winning Greenworks, an environmental documentary film company, the program is likely to be aired on the Public Broadcasting System next year.

The Discovery Channel and National Geographic also have expressed interest in the program, according to Deborah Arnold of Greenworks.

Now in its fourth season, CRWA's signaling system is based on water quality monitoring at four sites in the Charles River Basin, the most heavily-used stretch between Watertown Dam and Boston Harbor. Blue flags fly on days when water quality near testing sites meets boating standards for fecal coliform bacteria set by the state Department of Environmental Protection. Red flags warn that elevated bacteria levels violate state standards and pose health risks for boaters.

Water samples are tested mainly at CRWA's laboratory in Newton. Results are relayed back to seven boating centers where red or blue flags are hoisted. Flag colors are also reported daily on CRWA's website at [www.charlesriver.org](http://www.charlesriver.org), on our

water quality hotline (617) 965-5975 ext. 301, on WBZ-TV4's noon news, and in the TAB newspapers in Boston, Cambridge, and Allston-Brighton.

"We are grateful to Boston Water and Sewer Commission, US Environmental Protection Agency, Roy A. Hunt Foundation, Stop & Shop Supermarket Company, Triumvirate Environmental, Inc., and The William P. Wharton Trust for their generous support for our flagging program," said CRWA's Project Manager Kathy Baskin.

Baskin also acknowledged the important role that basin boating centers play in flying the color-coded flags. Flags are hoisted at Charles River Canoe and Kayak at Herter Park, Community Boating, Community Rowing, Henderson Boathouse (Northeastern University), Newton Yacht Club, Riverside Boat Club, and Weld Boathouse (Harvard University).

### River Activist Roger Frymire Honored by US EPA

Superstar water quality activist Roger Frymire of Cambridge was recognized once again for his significant contributions to the environment. On April 18, Roger received an Environmental Merit Award from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – New England. With this award, EPA honors citizens and businesses who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in working to protect public health and preserve New England's natural resources. Having honored Roger at CRWA's annual meeting last



*The ever-vigilant Roger Frymire*

fall, we agree that Roger is an excellent choice for this award.

Whether enjoying a sunny summer day, braving a downpour, or busting ice with his paddle, Roger is ever present on the

Charles and Mystic Rivers, kayaking along the rivers' banks and sniffing out sources of sewage pollution. Having collected hundreds of water samples for analyses by CRWA's lab, Roger has identified several pollution hot spots. He has poured over maps to determine how sewers are connected and where they discharge. He has even notified towns when discharge pipes are mislabeled in the field. His persistence in ensuring that municipal officials and regulators eliminate the offensive discharges is paying off.

# Run of the River

by Dudley Bonsal and Anna Eleria

## Upper Watershed

### Upper Charles River Modeling

CRWA, with the US Geological Survey, held a meeting on April 10 at Norfolk Town hall to discuss progress of the Upper Charles Groundwater Management Study. The meeting was attended by municipal officials and members of the Technical Advisory Committee. CRWA's Senior Engineer Nigel Pickering discussed the background of the study, including the effects of population growth, water withdrawals, impervious surface, and consequent summertime low flows. He asked the audience for input regarding the best scenarios to investigate using the groundwater model. The attendees concluded that the model could most simply be utilized to evaluate groundwater impacts by varying the amount of groundwater withdrawals and the extent of impervious area. Investigation of scenarios and report writing are expected to be completed by the end of this year.

### Evaluating Low Flow and Aquatic Habitat

This summer, CRWA will develop in-house capability to perform habitat assessments in partnership with the US Geological Survey (USGS). The project, funded by the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, will determine stream flow requirements at the most critical stream-habitats during low flow conditions for the maintenance of fish and wildlife habitat. CRWA will assist USGS in establishing monitoring sites,

conducting flow and habitat assessments, and monitoring water quality. In addition, CRWA will utilize the project information to educate the public about the relationship between low flow and aquatic habitat.

### Tree Removal at New Medway High School

The town of Medway is planning to build a new high school on a 51-acre site off of Summer Street. The project will result in the removal of 35 acres of trees. Approximately 400 parking spaces will be created, contributing to the net addition of 9.6 acres of impervious area.

CRWA has expressed concern that the removal of trees will greatly diminish the quality of wildlife habitat, and that their loss could also compromise local water quality. It seeks a mitigation plan to compensate for the loss of trees and a stormwater treatment plan to address the problems that arise from additional impervious surface and increased transportation. One stormwater pathway leads to an area classified as possible habitat for spotted turtles.

### Open Space Concerns in Milford Development

A 42-unit residential development has been proposed in Milford. The development, known as Swan Ridge at Milford, would provide housing with 25 acres of open space. CRWA has stated that four of the units should be moved out of an area that bisects a tract of open space, thereby reducing its habitat value. The four units are also located adjacent to a wetland area

that appears to contain a vernal pool. CRWA has also pointed out that the site falls within priority or estimated habitat delineated in the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas.

## Middle Watershed

### Barrier To Break Down Toxic Chemical

Construction began in mid-April of an underground reactive barrier on Central Avenue in Needham. Upon completion in mid-August, the barrier will break down a toxic plume of trichloroethylene, originating at Microwave Development Laboratories on Crescent Rd., into a non-toxic substance. To address residential safety concerns, a temporary fence was built around the site. During non-work hours, the open portions of the trench are covered with steel plates and a security guard monitors the area.

### Winter Street/I-95 Interchange Improvements

The Waltham Transportation Department has proposed improvements to the interchange of I-95 and Winter Street and the surrounding area. The project will include reconstruction of the Winter Street Bridge, road modifications to other intersections in the surrounding area, and improvements to the stormwater management system.

CRWA has proposed that the project's stormwater management plan be consistent with the MA Department of Environmental Protection's Stormwater

# Run of the River

Management Policy and that the diversion of stormwater from Prospect Hill to the Cambridge Reservoir be reviewed by the Cambridge Water Board. In addition, CRWA asked that structural inspection of the Hobbs Brook Dam be conducted by MassHighway to ensure that the dam can support increased vehicle capacity.

## Lower Watershed

### Tracking Down Oil Pollution

Immediately after a May storm, CRWA monitored stretches of the river and several

tributaries from Newton to Boston for oil pollution. Sites monitored included Cheesecake Brook in Newton, Laundry Brook in Watertown, Hyde Brook in Brighton, and several mid-river locations. Overall, oil pollution was not detected with the exception of low oil pollution levels at Hyde Brook. Monitoring began last November in the lower reaches of the Basin from Larz Anderson Bridge in Cambridge to Longfellow Bridge in Boston. Oil pollution levels were also low or not detected in the Lower Basin.



### Central Artery Corridor Plan

The Massachusetts Turnpike Authority presented to the public the master plan for the Central Artery Corridor in May. The plan is a culmination of work over one year from corridor meetings, district workshops, Mayor's Task Force reviews, program analyses, master planning, design testing, and plan resolution. Key recommendations of the plan include improving circulation of pedestrian traffic through lateral connections, offering harbor views, and increasing greenspace and seating. Next up is the final design phase that will also be open to the public for comments.

## Repaired Fish Ladders To Aid Herring Run



*At a May 2nd ribbon-cutting ceremony for the reopening of the Lower Charles River Fishway at Watertown Dam, Secretary of Environmental Affairs Bob Durand (left) thanked students from Tri-County Vocational School in Franklin for constructing new baffles for the fish ladder (right photo). Accepting a citation on behalf of the students were Nicole Sweet and Bill Zaremboricz, whose classmates also built new baffles for fishways at Cordingly Dam and Newton Lower Falls. When the remaining baffles are installed in July, the project will re-open nine miles of critical fish migration and spawning habitat for river herring.*

## Watershed Groups Prep for Planning

CRWA was given a foundation grant to upgrade the technical infrastructure and expertise of other watershed associations in the state. CRWA has distributed funds for computer and GIS equipment and training. CRWA and the other associations, collectively known as the Watershed Management Consortium (WMC), are now qualified as consultants for towns that wish to conduct environmental planning analyses as dictated by Executive Order 418.

The Technical Advisory Committee for the WMC is currently troubleshooting and testing the guidance document for the Executive Order 418 planning. The members of WMC will conduct an analysis for the town of Littleton as a pilot project and as a means to provide training to all members of the WMC. The consortium is presently working to become a non-profit corporation.

# Are Fish from the Charles Safe To Eat?

by Anna Eleria

**T**wo decades ago one would rarely see an individual fishing on the Charles River.

However, on any given day this year, anglers along the length of the Charles try their luck at catching at least one of 20 different species of fish that make the Charles River their home. While the return of largemouth bass, carp, pike, pickerel, sunfish and herring signal that the health of the river has steadily improved, most of the public is uncertain about whether fish from the Charles River are safe to eat.

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, in cooperation with the state Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement and the Department of Environmental Protection, have generated advisories for fish consumption in

Massachusetts surface waters and coastal waters. An advisory is issued if there is a significant level of contamination in fish samples analyzed in surveys. The advisory may suggest either limiting or refraining from consumption of fish. These advisories are updated on an annual basis.

In the Charles River there are currently two advisories. Based on the discovery of harmful PCBs in carp in the section of river between the South Natick Dam in Natick and the Museum of Science Dam in Boston, the first advisory recommends that children younger than 12 years, pregnant women, and nursing mothers should not eat any carp from this section of river. The general public should limit consumption of carp to two meals per month.

The second advisory, effective in the river from the Medway Dam in Franklin to the South

Natick Dam and Cedar Swamp Pond in Milford, warns that children younger than 12 years, pregnant women, and nursing mothers should not consume any largemouth bass. The general public should limit consumption of largemouth bass to two meals per month. Mercury was discovered in the fish tissues of largemouth bass located in the upper portion of the river.

With regard to other types of freshwater fish and fish located in uppermost portions of the river, CRWA errs on the cautious side and recommends following the same limitations of consumption. Finally, according to Phil Brady of the Division of Marine Fisheries, it is probably safe to eat blueback herring and alewife, the anadromous fish species that primarily live in saltwater but that migrate up the Charles in late spring to spawning grounds.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Many thanks for telling me about the State House hearing today (on the BU sailing pavilion) and for doing such a first-class job researching and presenting your case. I was able to stay for most of it.

I knew little about this issue beyond what you have mailed to me and what I've read in the Globe. I was appalled to see how the BU team is trying to railroad this decision.

I joined CRWA last year, and I'm really happy about your work. Thanks!

Bruce Henderson  
Newton

I am writing to express my support for the planned Boston University Sailing Pavilion. As a member of the Harvard Sailing team and the Cambridge community, I am a frequent and avid user of the Charles. I believe that the BU Sailing Pavilion would only add to the current attractions of the river. Collegiate sailing has had a long and distinguished history in Boston. The BU Sailing Pavilion would add to the prestige of the Charles River as one of the premier sailing venues in the nation and to the greater Boston area. Boston University has shown itself to be a responsible user of the Charles River and its

efforts to build a new pavilion should be encouraged.

Samuel Austin Sistare Clark  
Cambridge

I just got the CRWA recreational guide in the mail and am very impressed. You folks always do a terrific job with your materials, but this is even more outstanding than usual. It's really a model of what a map like this should be — attractive, easy to use, easy to carry. I hope EMCO printers made you a ton of them.

Sue Bass  
Belmont

# Two Oil Spills Taint the Charles

by Dudley Bonsal



Construction equipment at Rte 109 leaked diesel oil.

## Oil Spilled from Route 109 Construction Site

On Tuesday, May 1, CRWA received calls from Newton residents about an extensive oil sheen that covered the surface of the Charles River. CRWA, under contract with the EPA to field calls regarding news of spills, quickly contacted the municipalities of Boston, Dedham, Needham, and Newton. Water

samples taken by CRWA from the river near the footbridge off of Christina Street in Newton were found to contain diesel-range organics along with other oil and grease components.

According to Steven Ross of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the spill occurred on Monday, April 30 at 11:30 AM. Further investigation by the DEP found that the slick was the result of an unknown volume of hydraulic fluid from the site of Route 109 bridge reconstruction. The spill was attributed to too much pressure in a hydraulic unit due to a pinched line. The fuel traveled downstream as far as Newton Upper Falls, approximately five miles from the source of the spill.

When the towns of Needham and Newton were first alerted about the spill, their fire departments set up booms to prevent further downstream migration of the oil. Clean Harbors was hired to clean up the spill. The construction company NEL Corporation was cited as the responsible party.

**Join CRWA today.**



We're committed to cleaning up the Charles River and protecting its watershed. Won't you help us?

I enclose ( ) \$25 for a basic membership.

I enclose ( ) \$35 ( ) \$50 ( ) \$250 ( ) \$500 **and**

I ( ) want to receive a new *Charles River Canoe and Kayak Guide*.

I ( ) do not want a guide.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Payment method:

Please make checks payable to CRWA or charge to:

\_\_\_\_\_ VISA \_\_\_\_\_ Mastercard Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

Card # \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail to: CRWA, 2391 Commonwealth Ave.,  
Auburndale, MA 02466-1773.



Booms at Watertown public dock helped absorb fuel spill.

## High School Fuel Reaches the Charles

On Friday, June 22, a tank leak in the basement of the Watertown High School resulted in a 600-to-1000 gallon fuel spill into the Charles River between the Galen Street Bridge and the Watertown Square public dock. The Watertown Department of Public Works and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection responded to reports of the spill on Saturday by installing several booms around the storm culvert outlet and downstream of the site. CRWA staff investigated the spill, visiting the release site and the stretch of river just downstream on Monday, June 25. An oil sheen was observed down by the docks of Community Rowing, located downstream of the last boom. Further on, past the North Beacon Street Bridge, the oil appeared to dissipate.

## Visit Us at [www.charlesriver.org](http://www.charlesriver.org)

**N**ext time you're surfing the web, drop by [www.charlesriver.org](http://www.charlesriver.org) or [www.crwa.org](http://www.crwa.org) for a visit. After a major overhaul this spring, our web site is more eye-catching, user friendly, and informative about the Charles and CRWA. The new site was designed as a comprehensive resource for anyone who is affected by the quality and availability of water in the watershed — from students and scientists to planners and paddlers.

With grant support from The William P. Wharton Trust,

the web site was revamped to meet the growing need for a wide variety of information about the Charles.

New to the site is a brief history of the Charles, descriptions of CRWA watershed protection and outreach projects, river news articles, an "alert" section with



updates on threats to the river and tips for activists, a recreational map with a mileage chart of the

Basin, and a message board for river users to share information and experiences. Improvements also offer secure online transactions for purchasing CRWA's *Charles River Canoe and Kayak Guide* and other merchandise,

as well as for joining CRWA and making donations.

Developed by free-lance designer Jeremy Adams, [charlesriver.org](http://charlesriver.org) is visually enhanced by the work of nature photographers Stephen Maka of Sherborn and Eric Endlich of Needham. Endlich's photos explore the scenic variety of the Lower Charles, while the Maka series on the homepage cycles through a change of seasons, sunlight and activity from one vantage point in Dover.

The new site provides easier access to many of the useful features of the original site: extensive water quality mapping and data, daily reports showing water quality flags on the Basin, links to related web sites, Run of the Charles online registration and information, practical tips for helping the river, and, of course, organizational background.

CRWA staff members Kristin Finn and Anna Eleria coordinated the site redesign and provided content.

### Can You Canoe the Charles?

*CRWA, in partnership with Massachusetts Audubon Society's Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary, is pleased to offer its members discounted fees for selected programs at the sanctuary. Located along the Charles 1.8 miles west of South Natick Center, Broadmoor protects 624 acres of land including Indian Brook, a major tributary of the Charles. Several of Broadmoor's excellent recreational and educational programs for adults and children are river-focused, and we think our members would really enjoy getting to know this lovely stretch of the Charles. If you are currently a dues-paying member of CRWA, be sure to register at the discounted rate for either of the canoe trips listed below. (Your CRWA ID number is above your name and address on the back cover of this newsletter.)*

#### Charles River Canoe Trips

**Saturday, October 6**

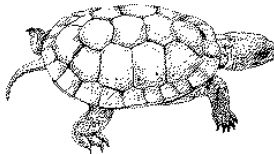
**8:00 to 10:30 am or**

**1:00 to 3:30 pm**

**Fee per trip:**

**\$32 non-members**

**\$27 members**



Explore the mid-river habitat by canoe and learn about riverine flora and fauna with leaders from Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary. Equipment provided; directions will be sent when you register. To register call the sanctuary at (508) 655-2296.

## CRWA Opposes Dismantling of Parkland Agency

CRWA is monitoring several bills that would transfer operation or control of the Metropolitan District Commission's (MDC) parkways to the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) and place the MDC metropolitan parkland under the Department of Environmental Management (DEM). Similar proposals have been submitted in past legislative sessions.

The attempt to dismantle the MDC comes at a time when there is widespread dissatisfaction by legislators and the public with the MDC's performance. CRWA believes that the solution lies in creating strong leadership, adequate funding and strict accountability of the MDC, rather than simply taking it apart.

CRWA and other groups opposing these bills believe that the parkways and parks should be kept together. The MDC parkways are an integral part of the adjacent parkland and serve as a buffer between parkland and development. There is concern that transfer to MHD would change the nature of the parkways over time, resulting in high-speed thoroughfares subject to state and federal highway regulations.

CRWA provided written testimony to the Joint Committee on Natural Resources opposing the MHD transfer bill, which would also transfer MDC skating rinks and golf courses to private ownership. A senate budget amendment seeking to implement the MDC-MHD "merger" was defeated in June due to the efforts of Sen. Marc Pacheco.

# CHARLES RIVER PROGRESS REPORT

## Percent of the Time CHARLES RIVER BASIN Met the State Water Quality Standards

Year	Boating Standard	Swimming Standard	EPA Grade
1995	39%	19%	D
1996	57%	21%	C-
1997	70%	34%	C
1998	83%	51%	B-
1999	90%	55%	B
2000	91%	52%	B

## Improvements Level Off ; Charles River Gets Another 'B'

For the second consecutive year, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced a report card grade of "B" for the Charles River, the same grade as last year. After five years of dramatic improvements in water quality, data collected by CRWA volunteers indicate that improvements in the Charles are leveling off. In 2000, the Charles was clean enough for boating 90 percent of the time, compared to 92 percent of the time in 1999, and met swimming standards 58 percent of the time, compared to 64 percent in 1999. Although last year's data were a disappointment, the river has seen tremendous gains since 1995 when EPA gave the Charles a grade of "D" for meeting bacteria boating standards only 39 percent of the time and swimming standards only 19 percent of the time.

Halfway through a 10-year effort to make the Charles River clean enough for swimming and fishing by Earth Day 2005, EPA and CRWA agree that the level grade means that a stronger emphasis must be placed on reducing stormwater pollution. "Our water quality monitoring from last year shows that we're heading into the toughest cleanup stage yet," CRWA Executive Director Bob Zimmerman said. "Stormwater runoff, the biggest polluter of the Charles, is ubiquitous. The good news is that everyone can do something to help clean it up. CRWA will be testing methods this summer that may allow each of us to have a hand in the effort."

## Watchdog for the River

CRWA tracks projects throughout the watershed, providing input to development and infrastructure proposals to make sure the river's best interests are taken into account.

Below is a list of the projects on which CRWA commented to the state, town, or developer between February 15, 2001 and June 15, 2001. Copies of comment letters are available at CRWA, 2391 Commonwealth Avenue, Auburndale (Newton) 02466.

Town	Project
Belmont	Expanded Environmental Notification Form for McLean Hospital Redevelopment
Franklin	Environmental Notification Form for the Senior Living Community
Medway	Environmental Notification Form for the new Medway High School
Milford	Environmental Notification Form for Swan Ridge at Milford residential development
Waltham	Environmental Notification Form for Winter St./Route I-95 Interchange Improvements

## Thank You!

Many thanks to those of you who have already responded to our spring membership renewal mailings. As of mid-June, we had received over \$69,400 from about a third of the membership. Gifts average about \$53 – more than double the basic membership rate. We appreciate your generosity, particularly at a time when we need your support for our campaign to protect the Esplanade from private development, an advocacy project not funded by grants.

Since the last *Streamer*, we gratefully received several leadership society contributions. Renewing at the Millennium Society level (\$2,500 or more) was Mrs. Sturtevant Hobbs. Contributing at the Headwaters Society Level (\$1000 to \$2,499) were Sierra Bright and Brian Austin, Lawrence and Nancy Myers Coolidge, Elizabeth Harper, and Havencraft.

Our water quality monitoring program will benefit from a \$15,000 grant from The Harold Whitworth Pierce Charitable Trust. A \$10,000 grant from The William P. Wharton Trust fully funded the redesign of CRWA's website, the printing costs of our new *Charles River Recreational Guide*, and is also helping to support this season's flagging program in the Charles River Basin. The flagging program also is underwritten by the Roy A. Hunt Foundation (\$5,000), Triumvirate Environmental, Inc. (\$5,000), and Boston Water and Sewer (\$10,000).

In-kind contributions also are important sources of support. We are grateful to the New New Orleans Jazz Band for providing lively entertainment at our riverboat appreciation party for leadership society members at the Run of the Charles, and to Jim and Cathy Stone for hosting a gracious reception for CRWA in their Beacon Hill home on May 22<sup>nd</sup>.



The New New Orleans Jazz Band provided a dixieland sound for our riverboat party at the Run of the Charles.

# C A L E N D A R

July 16

## **Walking Tour, Deer Island**

Join The Boston Harbor Association and MWRA staff for a tour around Deer Island, site of the Boston Harbor Project's sewage treatment facility. Visit the top of the egg-shaped digestors for one of the most breathtaking views of the Harbor Islands. To reserve a space, call 617- 482-1722.

August 4, Noon

## **Swim for Boston Harbor**

Meet on the beach in South Boston for a day of fun to celebrate the restoration of Boston Harbor. For more information call Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, 617-451-2860 ext. 103.

August 4, 10 AM - 2 PM

## **Charles River Canoe Trip**

Explore this beautiful natural resource. All equipment is provided and free of charge. Please call the MDC for reservations, 617-727-9650 ext. 445.

August 12, 9 AM - 1 PM

## **Identifying the 25 Most Common Trees in Boston**

Beginning in the classroom and then walking the grounds of the Arboretum, participants will learn to identify 90 trees. For more information call the Arnold Arboretum, 617-524-1718 ext. 162.

August 23, 9 AM - 1 PM

## **Marsh Ecology**

This workshop is open to teachers, home school parents and scout leaders to provide hands-on activities to take to your students. For more information, call Nicole Cave at the MDC, 617-727-5117 ext. 437.

September 1, 6 - 9 PM

## **Moonlight on the Charles**

Paddle off as the sun sets for an evening of relaxation. Watch the herons and other wildlife browse along the river bank. Trip fills fast. To register call Charles River Canoe and Kayak, 617-965-5110.

September 19, 26

Oct. 3, 10, 6:30 - 8:30 pm.

## **Basic Fresh Water Fishing**

A course with the Newton Workshop Group at Nahanton Park in Newton, open to the public. Contact Newton Parks & Recreation Department, 617-552-7120.

September 6, 6:30 - 9:30 PM

(12 Thursdays)

## **Land Use Development Course**

This course is taught by recognized experts in their fields from attorneys to environmental specialists, developers and municipal officials. Pre-registration is required. For program brochure or more information contact Joan Ligon at Framingham State College, 508-626-4926.

October 6, According to the tide

## **Tagging Stripers**

### **For Outdoorswomen**

Designed primarily for adult women, this workshop is open to anyone interested in not only fishing for striped bass, but assisting the Division of Marine Fisheries in tagging these fish for future data needs. Learn about the efforts to conserve this popular sport fish species. For registration information, contact 978-263-4347 or email: Mass.Wildlife@state.ma.us to receive registration materials.

## **The Streamer**

is published by the Charles River Watershed Association  
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or [www.crwa.org](http://www.crwa.org)

CRWA is a tax-exempt, nonprofit corporation established in 1965 to protect and enhance the health, beauty, and enjoyment of the Charles River and its tributaries. CRWA is a member of the Environmental Federation of New England and the Massachusetts Environmental Collaborative.

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Streamer Logo: Lou Mucci

Line Art: Carol R. Johnson, Associates

## *Business Group Cites CRWA's Leadership*



The Environmental Business Council of New England (EBC), at its June 19<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, presented CRWA one of four environmental leadership awards. CRWA Executive Director Bob Zimmerman (left) accepted the award from John DeVillars of Brownfields Recovery Corp., an EBC director and former regional administrator of US Environmental Protection Agency – New England. The award recognized CRWA's work in developing and implementing "a comprehensive watershed management program that has dramatically improved the quality of water in the watershed and approaches to water resource management." In presenting the award, DeVillars praised CRWA's groundbreaking work in the areas of environmental zoning and analysis of pollutant loads to the Charles.

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