

Winter 2017

THE VOICE OF THE RIVER



IPSWICH RIVER
WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

A Big Year Ahead! by Wayne Castonguay, Executive Director

To help commemorate our 40th anniversary, we have big plans for the river in 2017. Guided by our new Strategic Plan and galvanized by the tragic consequences of the 2016 drought and renewed development pressure, we hope to make significant progress on the major issues facing the river.

Chief among these issues is water withdrawals. Although we have made steady progress in this area, the drought showed us that we have much more work to do. Moreover, the State's 20-year water withdrawal permits are due to be renewed this year, giving us a once-in-a-generation opportunity to influence how much and under what conditions water can be taken by our cities, towns, and large private users. We will also work on several other avenues to keep more water in the river to help make it more resilient to climate change. We will tirelessly advocate for more effective regulations, promote new water conservation techniques, and identify alternative sources of water to supplement local supplies.

We are also poised to take major strides forward in our River Restoration Program. Now that our cutting edge assessment of more than 1,000 man-made barriers (dams, bridges, culverts, roads, etc.) is complete, we will work with owners and other partners to increase the pace

of removal and other improvements to reduce the impact that these structures have on flooding, water quality, and fish and wildlife. We will increase fish habitat monitoring and develop plans to restore the river's once-thriving



native fisheries. We will celebrate the 20th year of our Riverwatch citizen science water monitoring program by adding more sampling locations and pollution indicators to keep our drinking water clean and healthy, preventing anything like what happened in Flint, Michigan from happening here. We will redouble efforts to keep the river clean for everyone, including the 125 families that are dependent on a thriving clam industry, part of our regional economy that is most at risk from the impacts of pollution.

We will continue to get more people out on the river, especially new people. We will complete our 30-mile River Trail and its network of 20 boat landings and educational kiosks. Our new youth group outing program will expand during its second year. We will hold a bigger and better Paddle-a-thon at a more central location and will connect with more people than ever before, sharing this wonderful resource in our backyards. We hope you will all join us for a year-long celebration!





I am honored to be your third Executive Director. It's hard to believe that during the 40 years this organization has been working hard to protect our river there have only been three of us in this role. I think this longevity speaks volumes about the thousands of dedicated staff, board members, and volunteers who have worked tirelessly on behalf of the river over four decades. That community of people is what makes this the compelling and rewarding job that it is. As importantly, the mission of this organization, to protect such a critical resource, is so important that it drives us all to want to work for such a great cause. After all, what could be more essential than protecting water, the lifeblood of our society?

The recent past has demonstrated how essential it is for us to be here. Both nationally and locally, the issues we care most about have been front and center. Water contamination, drought, water supply security, development, climate change, and habitat loss are more relevant than ever. And, with the polarized and gridlocked political climate, it is more imperative than ever to work locally with each other in order to be effective at addressing the issues facing our communities.

We have big plans for the year. As outlined in this issue, our 40th anniversary, coupled with a rare convergence of issues, provides us an unparalleled opportunity to make lasting change for our river. With your help we are well poised to take full advantage of this time. Together, let's make 2017 the biggest year ever for the Ipswich River!

WAYNE

Wayne Castonguay
Executive Director

Celebrating 40 Years of Achievements!

- Grew from an all volunteer organization with zero budget to a highly effective and nationally-recognized watershed association with more than 1,000 members;
- Created one of the longest running citizen science water monitoring programs in the country, RiverWatch;
- Spearheaded a multitude of groundbreaking scientific studies on the impact of water withdrawals on the environment;
- Achieved a 100% success rate for legal actions to protect the river when necessary;
- Received national recognition for river protection including the River Network's River Hero and the Environmental Protection Agency's Merit Award, the two top national awards in our field;
- Convened the Parker-Ipswich-Essex Rivers Restoration Partnership (PIE-Rivers) which has become a model regional partnership network that helped to raise millions of dollars to restore our local watersheds;
- Developed our headquarters, Riverbend, into a model energy efficiency and low impact development site, as well as a beautiful riverside reservation for the public to enjoy nature;
- Helped create the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, which has become the leading river protection organization in the state, and played a leadership role in creating new laws and regulations to protect our rivers.

Join Us In Looking Ahead: Our Next 40 Years!

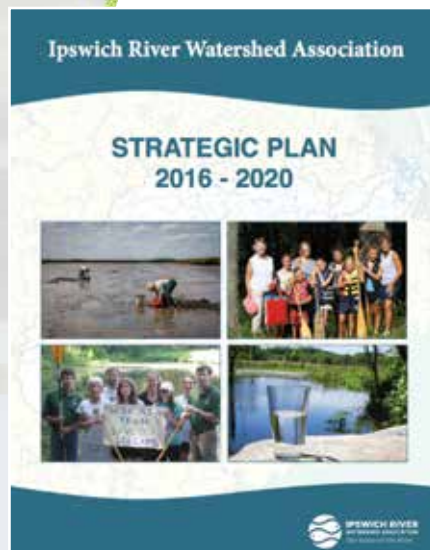
As we celebrate the successes and growth over the past 40 years, we also look to the future: What will the Ipswich River be like in 40 years?

Our vision is that in 40 years the river is healthy, beautiful, and flows year round. Streams, ponds, and coastal waters are clean and provide places where families can enjoy nature. Our drinking water is abundant and safe, and a diverse community of native fish and wildlife thrive throughout the region. Everyone treasures the river, viewing it as the lifeblood of our communities and local economy.

We will achieve this vision by working with many more partners: we will engage with communities, businesses, schools, other organizations, and all residents within the watershed. We will expand local support for protecting the river, with strong, community-wide conservation practices as the norm. More people, especially youth, will enjoy and learn about the river and will be involved with keeping it healthy.

We will continue and build upon our successes that document the river's condition and work with our communities to be water-wise. We will take action to address problems and always defend the river when necessary.

In 40 years, the Ipswich River will be fully restored to health and will have a sustainable vibrant future, in perpetuity. Please join us to achieve this vision!



The Ipswich River Watershed Association's Strategic Plan sets forth our vision for the next five years. Share your vision of the future with our online community by tagging your photos with #IpswichRiver40.

RiverWatch Still Going Strong in its 20th Year

During this big anniversary year, it's appropriate to recognize another one: the 20th anniversary of our longest-running and signature program, RiverWatch. The volunteer-powered monitoring program began in 1997 to collect science data about ongoing problems and to detect emerging threats to river health. Having just completed the 20th year of this citizen science program we should take a moment to consider the accomplishments and future goals of this valuable program.

The RiverWatch program began in response to the need for high quality data about how low flows were impacting river life. Low flows from water supply withdrawals have been an ongoing challenge for the river, since plenty of cool flowing water is necessary to support the kinds of aquatic life that should naturally occur in the Ipswich River. There have been several hundred volunteers who have participated in the program over the years, including many that have served for all or most of the program's 20 years. The data they have collected has been invaluable in identifying problems arising from low dissolved oxygen and poor habitat quality. This information is vital to identify what the problems are and to work on solutions.

Thanks to the dedication and commitment of many volunteers, the RiverWatch program has become a model citizen science program. There is a current trend for citizen science groups to play an increasingly important role in protecting our water resources and we are proud to be part of this movement. Many threats remain to be addressed, such as the impact of road salts, aquatic invasive plants, and nutrients. We are hopeful that with your continued support, we can generate the information needed to protect the river in many more ways.



Lucy Lockwood is one of many volunteers who have made the RiverWatch monitoring program a great success for the past 20 years.

Early Board Chair Keeps on "Caring for the River"

Ipswich resident Larry Eliot has been active in the Ipswich River Watershed Association since its early years and has witnessed many changes. We asked Larry if he would say a few words about his involvement over the last 40 years.



Former Chairman of the Board Larry Eliot and Executive Director Wayne Castonguay meet at Riverbend to discuss the history of the organization. Says Wayne, "It is inspirational to work with someone involved with the organization since its founding who has chosen to stay with us all these years. We are fortunate to have so many people like Larry willing to help the river every day."

Q: When did you get involved at IRWA? I became involved at the request of founders Fred Winthrop and Jack Peirce who were looking to bring people together to create an organization to address the river's problems. It was an all-volunteer organization back then and I became the chairman of the board shortly thereafter.

Q: Why did you get involved? I was intrigued with the idea of "caring for a river" and curious about what this involved. After a number of meetings, we realized that the organization being run by a part-time employee was not enough, and we grew from there.

Q: What were the big issues back then? The main issue was water withdrawals and the fact that withdrawals were not being adequately monitored by the state on a regular basis. We also determined that we needed to monitor the river on a regular basis due to water quality concerns.

Q: Where was the office back then? When I first became involved the office was in the basement of the Essex Aggie administration building. We then moved to the third floor of Mass Audubon's Ipswich River Sanctuary and many other locations around the region since then.

Q: What do you think about how the organization has grown? Tremendous! The best developments have been the permanent office in Ipswich on the river, the creation of a larger membership, gaining corporate support, and actively publicizing the activities and threats to the river to influence decision-making. All of this progress has really had a big impact.



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*Save
the Date:
June 17!*

Thank You for a Great 2016!

Just as every drop of water in our watershed counts, every gift counts, too! For 2016, you helped raise \$91,285 for your watershed with your year-end gifts. Thank you so much!

It's not too late to give. Every gift matters! Thank you for caring for the Ipswich River and its clean, wonderful water.

Then and Now



We've made a lot of progress over the last 40 years. The infamous stretch of the Ipswich River in the Reading Town Forest, which received national attention because it used to run dry most every summer (top), now stays wet every summer, even during the devastating drought of 2016. Progress!

Spring 2017

THE VOICE

OF THE RIVER

& 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



Shoring Up the River for 40 Years by Rachel Schneider, Outreach Manager

Have you heard the news today? (Oh, boy...) It seems anytime opening a newspaper, turning on the evening report, or daring a glance at a news-feed, you're met with bad news. Certainly so for anyone who concerns themselves with nature, science and the environment. Under a deluge of threats, catastrophes and uncertainties, it can be hard not to become numbed or paralyzed into inaction. As our sea level rises, this particular sea of challenges continues growing at an alarming rate. What, against an oncoming current of problems, can one person do? As it turns out, one person can do a great deal. We are now in our fortieth year of operation and we've seen firsthand an individual's power for change.

Our strength is in those who are out in the community spreading the mission, educating and investing time and energy to help the river. As our Herring Count volunteers know, every fish that makes its way against the river's flow to reach spawning grounds counts. So does every action by every person. We cannot heap an expectation of world-shifting change onto one set of shoulders, but we also know firsthand the tremendous difference one person can make.

The individuals whom we've chosen to highlight and honor in this edition of our newsletter are changemakers. All of them came to the river and the organization in their own unique ways and have made their presence felt with their personalities and their contributions. While recognizing these exemplary people, know that they also represent many more volunteers and supporters. At Ipswich River Watershed Association we rely on our members, our volunteers and our community to inspire each other.

Volunteers William Holton and Don Ruzecki build a kiosk for the Peatfield Street Landing in Ipswich. By Fall 2017, we will have a network of 15 informational kiosks covering the most popular lands along the Ipswich River.



Karen Sawyer, Kim Honetschlager, Chris Thompson and Ed Crowley do battle with logs during a River Clean Up.

Our accomplishments and all our work are fueled, and made possible, by all of you.

For forty years, you've fostered a love for the river and its wildlife by bringing others out on the water and into the woods. You've strengthened our base of knowledge by monitoring the river and its wildlife. More recently, when plans for a pipeline threatened, you raised your voices against it. You stepped up again when the drought brought the river low.

There is more to be done. Our waters continue to be at risk from pollution: through expanding the reach of the *Greenscapes North Shore* program we aim to help communities with controlling polluted runoff and unnecessary outdoor water use. The drought's effects were wide-reaching: we need to continue our monitoring efforts and persevere in maintaining the river's flow. The future of the EPA is uncertain and the MA Department of Environmental Protection is underfunded: advocacy in the coming years will be key to ensuring our natural resources are protected.

We are lucky to have grown from a base of support filled with generous, passionate and ingenuitive people. That the Ipswich River is viewed as a gem of the North Shore is because people like those in the articles to follow have treasured it like one. (We hope that their care and stewardship will be taken on and magnified.) To all of you who have shored us up over these forty years, thank you. Together we are the Voice of the River.





40 Cheers to Our Boots on the Ground

As a small organization with a big job to do, volunteers have always been the real strength of our organization. We are proud to dedicate this issue to the many volunteers who have been working tirelessly to protect the river. From our founding members whose foresight created our association forty years ago to the more than 40 RiverWatch monitors who, with great care, faithfully test the river every month come rain or shine, we thank you. Our very existence is owed to these committed individuals.

Indeed, more than 100 of you hold regular volunteer positions here at Ipswich River. You do so much: counting fish, patrolling the river for pollution, serving on committees, helping with mailings, maintaining trails at Riverbend and everything in between. Along with our regular volunteers, many more of you help out from time to time each year. Without you, we couldn't possibly do our jobs and the river would be far worse off.

Perhaps more than anything else, our growing community of river protectors provides inspiration. Being part of such a large group of river advocates moves us all to work even harder. Your dedication, year after year, drives us to keep protecting the river for future generations. Thanks largely to our many boots on the ground the river is in good hands.

WAYNE

Wayne Castonguay
Executive Director

Where There's a Will

Many volunteers come to organizations drawn by a particular program. In the case of Butch Conary, the program came with him. For the past 26 years, Butch has been organizing and participating in River Clean Ups in his home-town of Reading. The effort includes surveying the area to define the pollution hot-spots, deciding the distribution of volunteers and arranging for everything from tools to food. "Most of the time," Butch says, "I was paying for it out of my pocket." Inspired by his dedication and example, we've been happy to take over some of the financial and time burdens in the last few years. Now our Programs Coordinator, Ryan O'Donnell and Butch work together to plan the Clean Ups. "I have found that it's tough," says Butch, "to get people out on a Saturday morning to remove trash and logs out of a river." Keeping the river and landings clean is a full time effort and we thank Butch for recognizing that and doing more than his fair share. If anyone is interested in helping, please meet at the Ipswich River Park Gazebo on June 3 at 8 am. As Butch says, "Bring saws, gloves, boats and enthusiasm for a great time!"



Butch Conary has participated in and led River Clean Ups for the past 26 years. Thank you, Butch!

Dynamic Duo

Like all rivers, the Ipswich River begins at the confluence of several smaller creeks and brooks known as the headwaters. These headwater streams are the most important part of any watershed since anything that impacts these sensitive areas will affect the entire river. That the Ipswich River is so special today is due in large part to Suzanne Sullivan and Martha Stevenson of Wilmington. These two have steadfastly protected the headwaters for more than 25 years. Suzanne and Martha together are an unparalleled force and have done as much to protect our river as anyone else.

Considering their importance, it is unfortunate that the headwaters of the Ipswich River are located in the most developed area in the watershed. The towns of Burlington, Wilmington and Reading have a lot of residential and commercial development and the region is crisscrossed by numerous roads and highways. This development has had a clear negative impact on the river. This means the headwaters need people like Suzanne and Martha more than any other section of the watershed. Over the years, Suzanne and Martha have defended the river against powerful forces. They kept the state from disposing of millions of tons of contaminated soil from the Big Dig in the headwaters. While bringing polluters to justice, they continued striving to protect the last undeveloped areas. On numerous occasions they prevented needless impacts to the wetlands and streams that make the river whole. Almost single-handedly, they've helped to keep the river out of harm's way.

Martha and Suzanne know that to have maximum impact you need to become a decision maker. Both have served on countless local and statewide boards and committees where they enacted policies and regulations to protect the river. Suzanne served on the Wilmington Board of Selectmen where she was instrumental in getting restitution during the town's fight against the Olin Chemical Superfund site for contaminating the town's drinking water. When asked about her years of dedication to protect the river, Martha said, "It's great to take a look back and celebrate all our hard work. Let's hope we can inspire a new wave of volunteers to keep the river alive and thriving into the future." Without local advocates like these our river would be a very different place today. What a team!



Suzanne Sullivan and Martha Stevenson shown here at Woburn Street in Wilmington have been volunteer Riverwatch monitors since the program's inception more than 20 years ago! Thank you Martha and Suzanne for all you've done to protect our River!

Stream Teamer with Steam



Katharine Brown is a RiverWatcher and Stream Teamer from the town of Middleton. Sadly (for us), she'll soon be moving on to Rye, NH – leaving some very energetic shoes to fill.

Q: What first drew you to get involved with the Ipswich River and Middleton Stream Team?

Oddly enough, I saw a small ad in a local freebie newspaper, way back when such existed. It was a solicitation for the [RiverWatch] program. Then by chance I found out that Pike Messenger, my freshman high school biology teacher from Melrose High School, was also doing the monitoring, so that sealed it. I saw it as an opportunity to do something for an issue close to my heart that someone I valued was already involved in. It turned out to be a wonderful experience. It took very little time, got me outdoors in all weather and I felt like I was part of something important.

Q: What's something you volunteered on that you especially enjoyed?

I've enjoyed the creative aspect of lots of the Stream Team work. I think I enjoyed the first year of the Middleton Stream Team (MST) photo contest the most. Everything we did was new – contacting organizations, finding sponsors, finding judges. In addition, we had a fun paddle for people who wanted to get out to take pictures on the river.

The core MST group was unusual and perfect. If you had an idea they liked, they'd make it happen. Perfect from my point of view. I got the satisfaction without the work!

Q: What have you accomplished through your volunteer work that you're most proud of?

The MST offers creative opportunities. It is blessed with well-meaning, creative, committed, capable individuals. There's a lot that I'm proud of but not much I can claim for my own. I guess the display case in the [Middleton Post Office lobby] is the most physical evidence of my work. That project required negotiation with the building owner, raising money from local businesses, getting a good solid case built and designing a display which was the *raison-d'être* for the project. Greenbelt helped us get a National Geodetic Survey map delineating Middleton's subwatersheds [which required] hours of modifications. I put together a great display (in my humble opinion) illustrating how watersheds work and enabling anyone in Middleton to find their street on the map to see which stream was impacted by things they did on their property. The display case has continued to offer a place for the MST to make an impact on those passing through the lobby.

Q: Why would you recommend volunteering to others?

Volunteering can offer opportunities to be creative and to work with wonderful individuals.

Help the River

Make a life-time friend. Have an experience with nature that stirs you. Our 40th year will be full of great events and programs: and they're only made possible with your help! Whether you prefer going it on your own in the tranquility of nature, or being part of a group, there's something for everyone to try.

- Paddle-a-thon: volunteers needed for day-of!
- Herring Count: counters needed!
- Beginners' Paddles: paddle guides and instructors needed!
- Estuary paddle: paddle guides needed!
- Garden Clean Ups: gardeners needed!
- River Clean Ups: Help keep our river clean, beautiful and healthy. Grab a bag and walk a trail or hop in a boat. On the shore or in the water, let's keep the river garbage-free!
- Interested in volunteering? Contact Ryan O'Donnell rodonnell@ipswichriver.org or 978-412-8200.
- To learn about more volunteer opportunities visit our events page: ipswichriver.org/support/event-calendar

Every Fish & Counter Counts

Conservation efforts throughout the world have shown the impact the reintroduction or disappearance of one species can have. When the Ipswich was called the Agawam, runs of million of herring made their way up the river's course to spawn. Due to the blockage of dams and the repurposing of spawning grounds, those numbers have dropped to only hundreds today

We are working on restoring those numbers and the vitality that the herring give to the river, but to see where we're going we need to know where we are. That's where our Fish Counters come in. Lindsey Williams and other volunteers dedicate their time recording the herring's return to spawn. This offers valuable feedback on our efforts.

Lindsey has been with the program for the long haul, for which we are immensely grateful. The more watchful eyes we have out there, the more Lindsey, the more accurate our counts will be. As Lindsey says, "Doing fish counts is such a simple way to contribute to trying to keep the Ipswich River as healthy as possible. I really love doing fish counts because it's great to be outside and on the beautiful river and I get a bit of a thrill every time I see a fish come up the ladder." We are always looking for more counters to join us in this endeavor. Thank you to all our fish counters and may your time slots be blessed with sunny weather!


Former Executive Director Kerry Mackin presents the Golden Fish Award to Lindsey Williams for doing the most herring counts. Thank you, Lindsey!





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 Printed on FSC-certified paper containing 50% post-consumer waste, using vegetable-based inks.



Raise a Paddle for Clean Water!

Join us at the Ipswich River Watershed Association's second Paddle-a-thon, **Saturday, June 17th** at the Topsfield Fairgrounds. The event starts at 9 am with an 8-mile Social Paddle. Afterwards partake in lunch provided by Baja Taco Wagon and liquid refreshment provided by Ipswich Ale Tapmobile. After lunch there will be kayak races, with \$150 LL Bean gift cards for the winners. Enjoy music by the Orville Giddings Trio and socialize while raising funds and awareness for the river.

Visit ipswichriver.org/paddle-a-thon-2017 to learn more, register to paddle, or volunteer!



Upcoming Events

 Check our website for more event details: ipswichriver.org/support/event-calendar

APRIL 4/25 Boxford Earth Week
4/27 Annual Meeting
4/28 Riverbend Clean Up
4/29 Topsfield Arbor Day
4/30 Middleton Earth Day

MAY 5/13 Cask & Clam Fest
JUNE 6/3 River Clean Up
6/3 National Trails Day
6/22 Beginner Paddle

JULY 7/11 Beginner Paddle
7/25 Beginner Paddle
AUGUST 8/8 Beginner Paddle
8/22 Beginner Paddle

THE VOICE OF THE RIVER

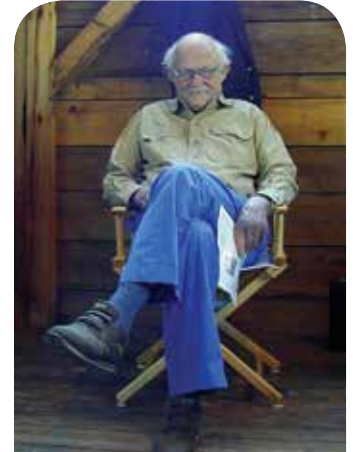


Protecting the River Together for 40 Years by Wayne Castonguay, Executive Director

In this issue, we are highlighting some of the long-standing partnerships that join with us to protect the river. With this theme in mind, one partner stands out: the Essex County Greenbelt Association. Greenbelt has done more than any other organization to protect the river. How? Simply put: land conservation. Conserving open spaces is the single most effective strategy to protecting the river and everyone and thing that depends on it. Having protected land in its natural state is one of the key reasons that the water quality of most of the Ipswich River is among the highest in Massachusetts. In no other area has Greenbelt been more successful at achieving its mission to conserve land than in the Ipswich River watershed. Thanks to Greenbelt's amazing work over the decades, we are fortunate to have one of the most protected watersheds in Massachusetts—despite being within an hour's drive of over four million people!

We will be forever grateful for Greenbelt's unparalleled work to protect our river, and are equally thankful for their role in our organization's creation. It was Greenbelt staff and supporters who created the Ipswich River Watershed Association, with the goal to focus more attention on the River. Then-president Jack Peirce, Frederic Winthrop Sr. and others founded the Ipswich River Watershed Association in 1977 and we have been partnering with Greenbelt ever since.

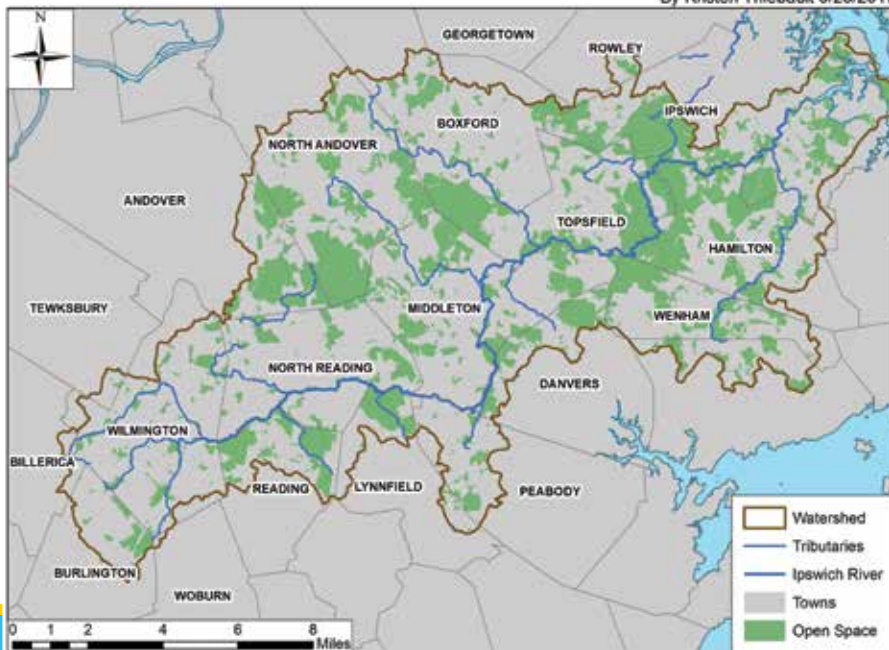
Says current Greenbelt President Ed Becker: "The Ipswich, like virtually all rivers, is alive with sights, sounds and smells to bedazzle those who would take the time to explore her friendly reaches. Greenbelt is proud to have had a hand in IRWA's formation, and assist in advancement of its mission, to protect one of the most vital natural assets in Essex County. We truly value our longstanding relationship."



Essex County Greenbelt and Ipswich River Watershed Association's founder Jack Peirce, working on one of several land conservation projects along the Ipswich River.

Protected Open Space in the Ipswich River Watershed

By Kristen Thiebault 6/28/2017



Fred Winthrop Jr. remembers: "My dad would go up and down the river in the 1960's, convincing landowners to join him in protecting their riverfront land with Greenbelt. He inspired me to continue to support the great work of Greenbelt and Ipswich River watershed to this day."

As a result of Greenbelt's efforts, the river can be paddled for miles without sight of developments. Our organization is now in our 40th year; please join us in recognizing Greenbelt for its foundational role and for helping to make the Ipswich River the special place it is for everyone, forever.

Thanks to the work of Greenbelt and generous landowners, nearly 40% of the land in the Ipswich River watershed is protected from development forever.



Power of Partnerships

As a small organization with a big job to do, we rely on our members, volunteers and partners to do the important work needed to protect the river. Thanks to these groups of people, we are able to multiply ourselves to have a much larger impact. During our 40th anniversary year, we are proud to highlight these important supporters in our newsletter. The Summer 2017 issue is dedicated to one of these special groups, our committed and hardworking partner organizations. While all of our partners are equally important, we selected a few of our longest running relationships to exemplify the power of joining forces.

Our partners consist of colleges and universities, non-profit organizations, citizen groups, businesses, municipalities, state and federal agencies who work collectively to meet the river's challenges. Simply put, without our dedicated partners we could not do our job. To further strengthen our collective efforts, our closest partners came together in 2011 to form the Parker-Essex-Ipswich Rivers Restoration Partnership (PIE-Rivers.org) with a goal to dramatically increase the pace of restoration in the Ipswich and neighboring watersheds. Now numbering 20 strong, PIE-Rivers is an example of how through working together we can accomplish far more than working alone.

WAYNE

Wayne Castonguay
Executive Director

Stream Teams Inspire

Stream Teams are groups of citizens that work in their communities to improve the river. Some communities are very active, while in others there is growing need to form new groups. Stream Teams can serve as the eyes and ears of the river and act as local stewards around issues important to them.

The landings along the Middleton stretch of the river are stellar. Mortalo, Farnsworth and Peabody St. landings are easy to access and beautiful. For this, we can thank the Middleton Stream Team (MST). In addition to their work on the Middleton landings, the MST accomplished the sizeable task of marking all the crossings and tributaries in their town. Outside of these physical accomplishments, the MST collaborates to bring us the excellent weekly Water Closet article which, if you haven't read, we highly recommend.

The Reading/North Reading Stream Team has been leading river cleanups along its stretch of river for many years. This three-mile section of river through Reading and North Reading has been kept clean of debris and trash so all can enjoy paddling through the woods and meadows of this scenic route. Both the Reading/North Reading Stream Team and the Headwaters Team in Wilmington have been admirably active on water conservation issues in their communities.

There are always opportunities for citizens to take inspiration from the Stream Teams and get involved in local stewardship. One such opportunity is our Weed Watchers Program. We are concerned about the threat posed to our ponds and streams by invasive aquatic plants. This program is new to our Monitoring Program and a great opportunity for groups of citizens to make a real difference, locally. If you are interested in any of our volunteer programs, contact Ryan at rodonnell@ipswichriver.org or 978-412-8200.

Businesses for Clean Water



We are truly fortunate to have the loyal and generous support of four strong corporate partners. Analog, Cell Signaling, EBSCO and New England Biolabs have each contributed \$5,000 or more for 10 years in a row, underwriting our science and clean water programs. As Executive Director Wayne Castonguay explains, "This support allows us to do wonderful things since we can count on them year after year." This year, these corporate donors are joined by the Institution for Savings who pledged \$30,000.

The Ipswich River is a big part of what makes this region a great place to live, work and do business. Huge thanks to all businesses that support clean water.

To see all our business supporters or join them, visit <http://www.ipswichriver.org/about/supporters/>.



Ipswich River Watershed Association's Executive Director Wayne Castonguay, Institution for Savings President/CEO Michael Jones, EVP/COO Kimberly Rock and Watershed Board Member David Comb at the Riverwalk in Ipswich. The Bank recently pledged \$30,000 to the Watershed Association.



Our 40th year of operation brought new additions to our annual Paddle-a-thon. In its second year, the event began with a morning Social Paddle. Most of the participants joined in, with a feeling of celebration that preceded the event festivities. Once the paddlers returned, guests and those who paddled another stretch of the river on their own arrived for lunch, beer and ice cream. The Orville Giddings Trio provided fantastic music to accompany the easy camaraderie. After tacos were eaten and beer quaffed, it was time for the event's other new program addition: the kayak (and canoe) race! Spectators lined the bridges over the water as the racers went by with bubbles in their wakes. The Ipswich River now has a king and two queens. If anyone would like to challenge their titles, meet us on the river for Paddle-a-thon 2018! Thanks once again to all our paddlers, sponsors and volunteers. Together, we raised awareness and \$35,500!

DER Helping the River on its Way

Our Monitoring and Restoration Programs encompass a large portion of the work we do to maintain a healthy Ipswich River. Many of the signature initiatives that form the backbone of this work stem from our long-running partnership with the MA Division of Ecological Restoration (DER). While DER has only existed in name since 2009, the state programs that merged to form the Division have been helping shape and support our Association's work since the 1980's. Take a moment to picture the early RiverWatch volunteers taking water samples in leg warmers!

Beginning in the late 1980's, when our staff was very small, the MA Riverways Program (now housed within DER) helped us mobilize a network of citizen scientists and river advocates that have helped shape and further our mission. The Stream Teams, RiverWatch program and the Herring Count all began with Riverways seed money and guidance.

These projects continue to be at the core of our Monitoring Program.

More recently, we have worked with Riverways and other partners to establish and maintain three river flow gauges in the watershed, and are partnering with them on projects ranging from river restoration to social marketing for water conservation. Within the watershed there are three active DER Priority Projects currently underway including one of the best river restoration opportunities in the Commonwealth at the South Middleton Dam. It sometimes seems as if their small, highly skilled staff is everywhere.

As we turn our heads and look toward the next 40 years in the Ipswich, we see a river that flows more freely, has more water and supports the fish, wildlife and people of the region. We are on our way, thanks, in large part, to partnerships like the one we have with DER.



Ryan O'Donnell and Michelle Craddock (DER) install a water level gauge at a flow monitoring site on the Ipswich River at Haverhill Street (2014).

Volunteers embark at Mill St. landing for the Reading/North Reading Stream Team's annual Clean Up (2017).



Name _____
 Address _____
 Town/City _____ Zip _____
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Celebrate our 40th Birthday with activities and games at Ipswich River Park in North Reading.

Bring the whole family to experience why we love the river.

Sunday, September 10th,
12 PM - 3 PM

Celebrating
40
YEARS
on the river

Calendar

The Ipswich River Watershed Association has watched over the river for 40 years. We'd love for you to come experience what makes it so special. Join us for our 40th anniversary events.

Summer

Beginners Paddle Series

- July 25th
- August 8th and 22nd
- September 24th

Mindfulness Paddle

- July 24th

Dance on the River

- August 24th

Kid's Bird Box Workshop

- August 26th

Fall

40th Birthday Party Picnic

- September 10th

Trails and Sails Events

- September 15th and 17th

Bird Walk

- September 30th

Images on the Water Photography Exhibit

- November 5th thru 11th

Thank you to our 40th Anniversary Events Sponsor.



Fall 2017

THE Voice OF THE RIVER



Ipswich River's 2020 Vision by Rachel Schneider, Outreach Manager

Imagine a river stretching from source to sea, its course unbroken, surrounded by green spaces. The river is alive with fish, thriving, spawning, journeying upstream to ponds and tributaries. Their presence creates an outward ripple of vitality in the watershed. Birds fill the air and trees and wade in the reeds. Here and there an otter dives below the surface or a beaver slaps its tail as a group of paddlers pass by. Anglers stand planted in the water, teaching a new generation the calming practice of catch and release.

This vision of the future as identified in our new Strategic Plan is not only attainable, but we have more opportunities than ever before to achieve it. Over the first 40 years of our organization's existence we have worked to create a base of membership, resources, knowledge and partnerships. We've built relationships with municipalities and worked to educate local communities about their river. These connections have given us a wide reaching system of support. They are not only responsible for all we have achieved so far, but are integral to everything we do moving forward.

In the next three years we plan to make critical strides forward that will have unprecedented and long-term effects on the river. We will be able make progress on several core components of our mission, reflected by four essential R's which capture our areas of focus: Represent, Research, Restore and Reach.

Represent: Over the next year, we will set into motion new policies that have the potential to prevent our river from ever going dry again. We have put together a top-notch advocacy and legal defense team to fight for better water management and fair water withdrawal restrictions, and we will take advantage of these unprecedented opportunities.

Research: To respond to more threats and increase the pace of improvement in our river, our signature RiverWatch water quality monitoring program is expanding to include 50 citizen scientists, allowing us to cover over 100 miles of river and streams. With more people involved and improved data in hand, our river will be well on the road to recovery.

Restore: With our PIE-Rivers Partners, we will work to secure funds to implement many more hands-on river restoration projects, including the re-establishment of native fisheries throughout the watershed, one of the best indicators of a river's health.

Reach: By expanding our Education Intern and Apprentice programs we will reach more youth than ever—the river stewards of tomorrow. Over the next few years, we will train 10 interns and apprentices, teach 2000 kids each year in our classroom-based water education program and get at least 750 kids out on the river each year through our summer youth programs.

Over these past 40 years, we have gained the knowledge, experience and enthusiastic support that together can make these aims into reality. With that foundation in place, that glittering vision of a river is not a fantasy, but a future that, to us, is crystal clear.



Looking Ahead to Another Big Year for the River

As we wind down our 40th anniversary year, a big thanks you to all of you for celebrating with us at our many events and outings – the most we've ever had. It was wonderful to see so many of you join us throughout the watershed. This is our final newsletter for the year and we are continuing this year's format of highlighting higher level themes in recognition of 40 years of caring for the river. Issue one focused on our 40-year history; issue two on our volunteers, who are the engine behind our organization; issue three on our many partners who allow us to multiply our efforts; and this issue which looks ahead to leveraging the strong foundation that we've built together.

Over the next few years, we have an unparalleled opportunity to make lasting change for the river. The confluence of opportunities highlighted in this issue set the stage for transformative improvements. Over the last 40 years we've accomplished great things. Slowly but surely we've created one of the strongest and most effective modest sized watershed organizations anywhere. We've had many successes and halted the ongoing degradation of the river. The river is cleaner than it's been in over a century and despite the setback of the terrible drought of 2016, river flows have finally begun to improve overall. Now that we've turned the corner, it's time for big improvements. Buoyed by these opportunities, guided by our new Strategic Plan and with your continued support, we are set to put in motion unstoppable progress. We are well on our way to achieving our vision of a fully recovered and thriving river.

WAYNE

Wayne Castonguay
Executive Director

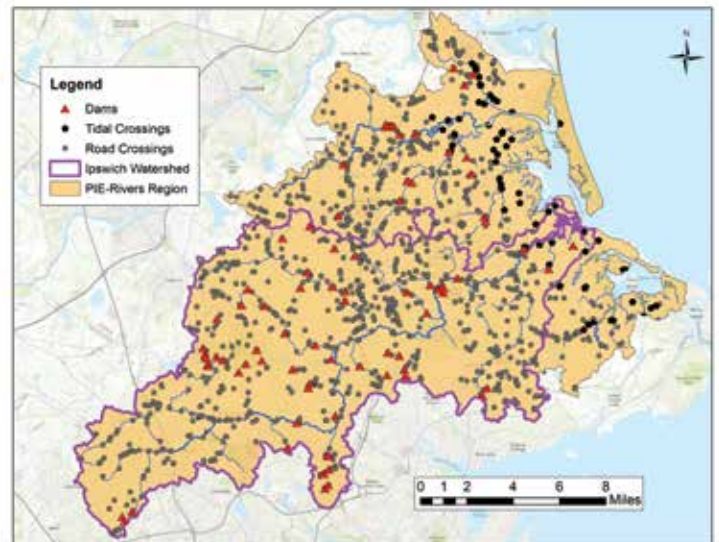


Restore: Removing Obstacles

The on-the-ground projects that are the focus of our Restoration Program strengthen our river. Barrier removal is one of the leading ways to restore rivers. Restoring connections in the river system and landscape improves conditions for native fish and wildlife. There are over 768 culverts, bridges and dams in the Ipswich River watershed and hundreds more in the neighboring Parker and Essex watersheds. These barriers not only sever the natural flow of the river, blocking the path of migratory fish, they also can increase the surrounding community's risk of flooding.

Upcoming is our biggest dam removal project to date. We have teamed up with dam owners Bostik and the MA Division of Ecological Restoration to remove the South Middleton Dam. This dam removal will reopen access for fish to reach Martins Pond in North Reading and 57 miles of stream and river habitat. Species like alewife will be able to return to places where they haven't been seen for over three centuries. We look forward to paddling from North Reading to Middleton, over the place where the dam now stands, greeting fish as they head upstream.

"What we have today is the death of a river by a thousand culverts," says Jim MacDougall, expert ecologist and naturalist from Topsfield. "To breath life back into our river, we need to fix the culverts and remove the dams that block the flow of life."



Research: Growing to Meet Challenges

Our vibrant citizen science monitoring program known as RiverWatch was begun in 1988 in response to low flow problems in the Ipswich River. This program has collected valuable information on the long-term health of the river; however, more work needs to be done. There is a need to monitor for additional pollutants including bacteria, nutrients from fertilizers and road salt. These and many more pollutants are carried by stormwater running off the landscape and paved surfaces, known as non-point source pollution. As one of the leading causes of water quality problems, non-point source pollution poses a threat to the long-term health of the Ipswich River. Volunteers have recently begun testing for chloride and nutrient pollution as part of their monthly testing. Next year, we will begin testing river samples for levels of bacteria pollution. *(cont. on next page)*

Monitors, like Mike DeAmario shown here, record water quality and invasive plant infestations along more than 100 miles of river and streams. As Weed Watchers Robi and Skip Tobin explain, "Our children grew up swimming, boating, skating and fishing [at Hood Pond]." Helping to prevent the spread of invasive plants means "we can continue to enjoy this beautiful pond."

("Research" cont.) Invasive aquatic plants are another threat that needs to be monitored and managed. These plants can infest ponds and streams, threatening aquatic life and recreation. Water chestnut, Eurasian water milfoil and fanwort are examples of alien plants that can spread rapidly in ponds and streams and can be difficult to control. Unfortunately, these invasive aquatic plants have been detected in places like Silver Lake in Wilmington and Martins Pond in North Reading. Hood Pond in Topsfield also has invasive plant problems. Volunteers have been actively pulling water chestnut and they have also reported a problem with variable milfoil, another invasive variety. These infestations have been treated, but maintaining ongoing early detection efforts will be essential to prevent further outbreaks.

We have begun a partnership with the Mass. Dept. of Conservation and Recreation's Weed Watchers Program that trains volunteers to identify aquatic plants, both native and invasive. With more effort and watching out for more problems, we will be able to address and eradicate more sources of the river's problems than ever before.

Represent: A Strong Voice for the River

Flow is what differentiates a river from other bodies of freshwater. Without adequate flow, a river simply cannot be healthy. Despite normal rainfall earlier in the year, the river went into critical low flow condition beginning in August and continuing to now. This typically happens during dry periods; our river is highly stressed by serving as the source of water for 14 communities while having little of that water returned to it.

"I think there's a growing realization that the Ipswich River can't possibly continue to meet the region's demand for water," says current Board President Chris Sandulli, "but persuading the state to come up with a real plan of action to solve the problem will require concerted action by all of us who care about the river." The time for such action is now. This year, the river's 20-year water withdrawal permits are up for renewal. We have filed a formal petition to regulate all municipal, industrial and private withdrawals for the first time. We have filed critical legislation at the State House and assembled an amazing team of lawyers, scientists and advocates. It's time to win this fight once and for all and ensure that the Ipswich River always flows.



Richard Howard, Chris Sandulli, Will Finch and others lobby for clean water at the Massachusetts State House in March, 2017. Our 40th anniversary was a big year for river and water advocacy, with our members supporting many legislative initiatives that will improve the river. Next year will present more opportunities for involvement.

Reach: Watering the Seeds of the Future

Out of sight, out of mind. Too often, that is the approach given to environmental issues. We are extremely lucky in this country to have reliable access to clean, safe water at the turn of a tap. This assurance creates a disconnection from concerns of keeping water clean and creates distance between people and the source of their water. We are working to rebuild and strengthen that connection.

In particular, we are trying to reach out to youth. At a time when children are spending only minutes outside per day on average, it is more important than ever to provide opportunities for them to connect with nature. They represent the future of our river and our world, so instilling a sense of responsibility and care for the environment in them is crucial to our mission. In the next few years we will be reaching more classrooms than ever before. We aim to expand our education program, taking on more interns and offering more opportunities to youth groups. Our hope is that among the kids we are able to reach with our programs is the next generation of conservationists, green engineers and environmental lawyers: the people who will be the voice of our river in the future.



Our Summer Youth Education Program reached over 260 kids, including this group from Mass Audubon's Joppa Flats camp. This year's Beginners Paddle series brought 80 people onto the Ipswich River, while more than 1000 visitors came to Riverbend to use our kayaks and canoes.



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Upcoming Events

Join us for these three big events:

Images on the Water Photo Show

Come to Riverbend to see a selection of images of the watershed's natural beauty by local photographers. 11/5

5th Annual Great Marsh Symposium

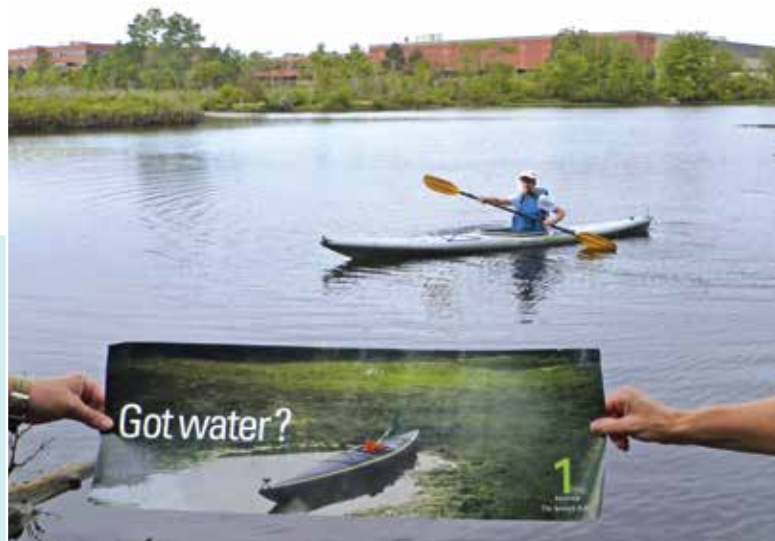
Join Ipswich River staff and the Great Marsh Coalition in Essex as they present this year's workshop, entitled: "Increasing the Resiliency of the Great Marsh: Putting the Plan into Action!" 11/9

3rd Annual PIE-Rivers Annual Meeting

Join us as we host the PIE-Rivers Partnership's annual gathering, a celebration of the restoration and resiliency work across the region over the past year and a look forward to the future. 12/5

Your Gift Creates a Better Future for the River

For 40 years, you have helped the Ipswich River Watershed Association succeed as the voice for our river. The annual Fall Appeal is our biggest and single most important fund-drive of the year. In the next three years we have tremendous opportunities to make lasting changes for the Ipswich River. Please give what you can to support the Ipswich River and protect it for future generations.



Kim Honetschlager paddles in a section of the watershed that once went dry every year (as shown in the "Got water?" image). Together, we will create more success stories such as the one shown here in Reading. Please include the Ipswich River in your year-end giving.