

THE Voice OF THE RIVER

Summer 2020 Newsletter



Huge thanks to the generous sponsors, ingenious Paddle Raisers, creative volunteer committee, and eager volunteers who helped net \$55,000 in support of our Clean Water Program and connected us with a vastly growing pool of river supporters. Paddle-a-thon could not succeed without you! Volunteers Russ Liebe, John Coulbourn, Jeremy Foster, Mark Hodgson, Brandon Boyd, and Nick Beaudoin stand ready to help.

Eager to spend time on the river? Share the joy! Bring a friend, have a great time in nature, and ask them to become an Ipswich River member. Members use boats for free, dawn to dusk. Check out the current boat use guidelines and online sign-in form at ipswichriver.org/riverbend



Your Stories are the River's Stories

Clean water, enough water, and habitat restoration together make up the foundation of our mission to protect the health and future of the Ipswich River. All three are crucial and support one another, much like you, as members, support the success of everything we do. Many of you came together (at a safe distance) for the June Paddle-a-thon to bring awareness to all three legs of our mission while raising funds for our Clean Water Program. In this issue we highlight Paddle Raisers whose fundraising journeys tell a story of the river's gifts and challenges. More than 80 Paddle Raisers turned out for the river. They paddled, pedaled, rowed, walked, rode horseback and tubed!

Paddle-a-thon co-chairs Amy MacNulty and Sally Heiter both explored on foot, gaining new insight and appreciation of the watershed. To plan her walk, Amy researched walkable areas in the towns the river runs through, as well as the 14 that depend on the river for their water. That number looks daunting as we pass out of a dry June and into summer. Sally Heiter, along with committee member Deb Fraize, walked along the river as closely as possible from the headwaters to the estuary. Definitely a challenge, with densely developed areas surrounding tributaries and crossing the river itself. As communities continue to grow, it's important to consider how behaviors and policies will impact the health of the river that links us, and whether we will be able to enjoy a pleasant walk in the shade.

Walking upstream, Joel Hariton set his sights down in the water. Along with his sidekick Harry the Herring, Joel walked an approximate path of the river, en route to Hood Pond where efforts are underway to restore herring and coldwater habitat. Those efforts depend not only on enough clean water, but also on the work of volunteers monitoring fish kills, invasive aquatic plants, and the state of the river, tributaries, and ponds. Bringing back spawning grounds is only part of the challenge, as Dan Heiter knows. His Herring Challenge had him paddling upstream and over the Ipswich Mills Dam. With his multi-day paddle, Dan showed (hilariously) that traveling from sea to river or pond is no easy feat, especially with barriers in your way.

The choice of who to highlight in this issue was difficult! Despite what is happening in the world, so many of you raised your paddles in support of the Ipswich River, and we are deeply grateful and inspired. There are uncertain times ahead, but we are confident the river will thrive with the help of so many passionate and informed friends ready to do what they can. For your continuing support, we are deeply grateful.



Revitalizing a Watershed

“The Howlett Brook watershed restoration project exemplifies our goal to significantly increase the pace of restoration and make our river more resilient. The presence of river herring and cool water are the best indicators of a healthy river. Even better, the project’s systematic approach could also be used as a model for the rest of the watershed,” says Executive Director Wayne Castonguay about the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funded project. Additional funding for the project was recently granted through the MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grants program. The increase will enable Trout Unlimited (TU) to produce eighteen 30% engineering design plans, rather than the six originally funded. By design, culverts that meet the Massachusetts Stream Crossing Standards are more resilient to flooding and therefore an important part of resiliency planning.

Already, twelve of the culverts critical to fish passage in the Howlett Brook region have been surveyed, with the plans and cost estimate for the others expected to be completed by early July. Programs Coordinator Ryan O’Donnell and volunteers are assessing herring habitat at Four Mile Pond in Boxford, as well as completing brook channel clearing in coordination with TU Nor’East. Partners at the Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries (MassDMF) are working both with the owner of Willowdale Dam to install a new Alaskan Steeppass fishway this year and the owners of Howlett Dam to restore the fishway at that key location. Geoffrey Day of Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition has completed one round of e-DNA sampling in Pye, Howlett and Potters Brooks for the presence of coldwater brook trout species, which had previously been found during a 1999 habitat assessment. Surveys also revealed plenty of American Eel, a few Silver Lamprey and an array of typical river species.

All of this is good news for our hopes of restoring healthy fisheries. Eventually, in partnership with MassDMF, we will stock Hood Pond with adult alewives whose offspring will be imprinted with the pond’s chemistry, enabling them to return when they are ready to spawn. Environmental Planner Patrick Lynch says, “Huge thanks to the dedicated town staff who continue to aid the progression of these important restoration and resiliency projects throughout the sub-watershed, particularly Ipswich, Topsfield and Boxford.” When complete, this project will open 8 miles of stream and 68 acres of historic pond spawning habitat for river herring.

The River That Sustains Us All

As we all struggle with and adapt to these tough times, this year’s horrible pandemic has emphasized just how important the Ipswich River is to our daily lives. Unbelievably, the wonderful river in our backyard and source of life-providing drinking water is often taken for granted. Not this year. With many of us staying local and working from home, including our young people who are usually far flung around the country and beyond, residential water use around the watershed is up by around 20% on average demonstrating just how important healthy, reliable clean water is. And perhaps just as importantly, our local river has been re-discovered as an incredible source of pleasure, relaxation and peaceful contemplation helping us all with our mental health which is needed as much as ever. Paddling, hiking, birdwatching, biking and other forms of outdoor activities in and along our river has increased dramatically this year as we seek out respite from the conditions around us. The river wonderfully provides, each and every time as it always has. We are all thankful for that, and I feel nothing in our lives, including our river, can be taken for granted anymore.

Nothing exemplifies this more than the incredible success of the Paddle-a-thon this year. We are humbled and overjoyed by the wonderful support you showed for the river, making this year’s event the most successful in terms of overall participation, new people and money raised – all records. In an era of uncertainty and closures, being able to pull this off is a testament to how important the river is to each of you and we couldn’t be more honored for this outpouring of appreciation for the river we love.

Despite the pandemic, work continues unabated to protect and restore the river. In this issue, some of our more exciting and impactful projects are detailed and 2020 will go down as a transformational year for the river. We’ve embarked on a new Strategic Planning effort to set the agenda for the organization’s next several years. The timing couldn’t be better as the crisis will force us to examine everything we do and want to do more carefully and critically than ever. We will seek to engage each of you in the plan to ensure the River’s bright future. We hope everyone will participate and stay tuned for opportunities to help us out with the plan this summer and fall. Thank you all for protecting and cherishing the river that sustains us all.

WAYNE

Wayne Castonguay
Executive Director



“Can you imagine a million herring coming up the Ipswich River every year? I can, and I want to see it!” says Dan Heiter who set himself a Herring Challenge for Paddle-a-thon. Dan headed upstream from Pavilion Beach to then go, “past the dam like the herring don’t, all the way to the spawning grounds.” With his adventures, Dan shared the story of river herring, and what can be done to bring them back. More at bit.ly/37AKTFR



“Since the herring cannot yet run, I will walk, following the path of the river upstream from its mouth by Pavilion Beach on public roads approximating the river’s path,” says Joel Hariton, who carried Harry the Herring and sported his Paddle-a-thon 2020 t-shirt while walking to raise awareness of the restoration efforts, “that in a few years [will allow] herring to once again run up the Ipswich River and past my home on Howlett Brook.” More at bit.ly/2BfzezQ

What Do Zero, Green, and PIE Have in Common?

No, this is not a riddle. These three things all point to interrelated ways our communities are coming together to ensure we have enough clean water here on the North Shore.

Many Ipswich River followers are familiar with the Parker-Ipswich-Essex River Restoration Partnership (PIE-Rivers). The Partnership is getting a new look in 2020, which includes the launch of our new Town Reps Program. The Program connects city planners, conservation agents, water administrators, town staff and volunteers across towns in all three watersheds.

Another alliance, the Greenscapes Coalition, brings together 28 communities on the North Shore. The Greenscapes team has adapted to the new normal by creating a Greenscapes 101 Playlist on Youtube. Learn about rain gardens, hear from experts on reducing water use, and discover how you can play a role getting your community to look forward in reducing water demand and limiting stormwater runoff.

Finally, Net Zero is our vision for how the Ipswich watershed, and basins throughout New England, can prepare for a rapidly changing future. Net Zero is a set of policies that allow towns to continue growing while living within state water limits known as Safe Yield. Both PIE-Rivers and Greenscapes communities can benefit from looking at Net Zero policies. A Net Zero toolkit has been developed in partnership with the Town of Ipswich, and we are excited about sharing this important work with other towns.

Healthy rivers need not only clean and plentiful water, but also a community of people who understand the importance of protecting both. As part of the Water Quality Restoration Program (WQRP) Pilot Project funded by DER, Ipswich River staff will perform residential surveys this summer, which are a great way to assess what residents know—and think—about water quality as it relates to lawn care practices. Taken together, partnerships like Greenscapes and PIE-Rivers and campaigns like Net Zero and the WQRP Project are doing just that. By connecting people and resources, and opening dialogues about what we can do better, we can all build a more resilient future for the North Shore.



"The trick with walking the entire length of the Ipswich River is that you can't do it," says Sally Heiter, who with Deb Fraize, explored from Wilmington to Ipswich for her Paddle-a-thon challenge. A River Watch monitor, Sally knows the importance of clean water, and that a "headwaters for the most part subsumed by Suburbia" poses a challenge even bigger than walking the length of the river. You can build a greener community at home, learn how at youtu.be/zrCAI7CSQhM

Here we go again! We're in a drought – again.

In 2016 the Ipswich River was devastated by the most severe drought in the river's history. Images of dry stream beds and fish kills are still vivid in residents' memories and the damage to the river's ecosystem was long lasting. But now, only four years later, the river's flow rate (a measure of river water) is even lower than it was at the same time in 2016 and Governor Baker declared a drought on June 25, as we go to press. Visit ipswichriver.org/droughtresponse to learn how you can help conserve water; create drought resistant and bird-friendly outdoor spaces or call for Net Zero (or Water Neutral Growth) in your town.

"For my Paddle-a-thon challenge, friend Gayle Richardson and I are walking at least 2 miles in each town 'the river runs through.' My plan is to walk a route as close to the Ipswich River as possible in 9 towns the river runs through plus 2 miles in one of the 13 towns that draw water from the river for a total of 20+ miles!" We're with Amy MacNulty! This summer, we're reaching out to 500 households within the watershed to understand what landscaping practices are being used and what alternative behaviors residents may be willing to adopt to protect the health of the Ipswich River! More at bit.ly/3hB2kdG



Donate Now at www.ipswichriver.org

Name _____
 Address _____
 Town/City _____ Zip _____
 Email _____ Phone _____

Enclosed is my tax deductible donation of:

- River Steward \$1000 Friend \$100 Individual \$40
 Patron \$250 Family \$50 Other _____

- For:** Where needed most Paddle-a-thon Membership

You may make check payable to IRWA and mail to: **IRWA, PO Box 576, Ipswich, MA 01938**

Thank you for your support!

Card # _____ Exp. Date: _____ Security Code: _____

Name on Card: _____

Signature _____






**IPSWICH RIVER
WATERSHED ASSOCIATION**
The Voice of the River

PO Box 576
Ipswich, MA 01938-0576
(tel) 978-412-8200
(fax) 978-412-9100
www.ipswichriver.org
irwainfo@ipswichriver.org

The river sustains us and
provides respite. Please see inside.

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

Keep Connecting With Us!



Thanks to everyone who made Paddle-a-thon a great success:

Paddle Raisers, Corporate Sponsors, volunteers and all who sponsored our inspiring Paddle Raisers. Together we raised more than \$55,000 for clean water — a new record! Visit ipswichriver.org/Paddle-a-thon to see more photos and a full list of sponsors. Find our Paddle-a-thon success story in this issue.

COVID-19 could not deter enthusiastic Paddle Raisers, including the team from the Orchestra on the Hill (right) and Chris Sandulli and Erica Fuller who rode on horseback for their Paddle-a-thon adventure.

Save the Date

PADDLE-A-THON 2021 **Saturday, June 19th**

Keep up-to-date on upcoming events at: www.ipswichriver.org

Subscribe to our blogs and Youtube Channel and follow us on: Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

Join Us for Virtual Guided Paddles!

Peabody St to High Street
July 16th, 4:00 PM

High St to Bradley Palmer
July 30, 4:00 PM

Winthrop St to Peatfield Street
August 13th, 4:00 PM

County Road to Pavilion Beach
August 27th, 4:00 PM

**Go to ipswichriver.org/calendar
to register**