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Huge thanks to the generous sponsors, ingenious Paddle Raisers, creative volunteer committee, and range volunteers who helped net $55,000 in support of our Clean Water Program and connected us with a newly growing pool of river supporters. Paddle-a-thon could not succeed without your Volunteer Race Lades, John Goldsmith, Jenny Foster, Hank Holinger, Brendan Boyd, and Nick Bousalian stood ready to help. Exeter to spaceship on the river? Share the joy! Bring a friend, have a great time in nature, and talk them to become an Ipswich River member. Abkhazi sea birds for fun, down to dock. Check out the current boat use guidelines and online sign-in form at Ipswichriver.org/riverbend

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**Your Stories are the River’s Stories**

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Revisiting 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. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation funded project. Additional funding for the project was recently granted through the MA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant program. The increase will enable Trout Unlimited 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 resistant 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, and have as much as 20% in the lower stretch just how important, healthy 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. Paddle-hiking, birdwatching, blooming and other forms of outdoor activities in and along our river has increased dramatically this year as we took our 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 feel for those in our town, including our river, can or be taken for granted anymore.

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All of this is good news for our hopes of restoring healthy fisheries. Eventually, in partnership with MassWDF, 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 progress 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.

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As we all struggle with and adapt to these tough times, this year’s horrid pandemic has emphasized just how important the Ipswich River is to our daily lives. Unlike the underground river or our backyard and source of life-giving drinking water in offers items for granted. Not this year. With many of us staying local and working from home, including our young people who are usually flying around the country and beyond, residential water use around the Ipswich River has increased dramatically. We took the opportunity to do a comprehensive review of 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 personal connection helping us all with our mental health which is needed as much as ever.

Paddling, birdwatching, biking and other forms of outdoor activities in and along our river has increased dramatically this year as we took our respite from the conditions around us. The river wonderfully provides, each and every time as it always does. We are all thankful for that, and feel even more in our lives, including our river, can be taken for granted anymore.

Nothing exemplifies this more than the incredible success of the Paddle 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 record. 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 most impactful and inspiring 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.

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.

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 town care practices. We are working together, partnered 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.

Donate Now at www.ipswichriver.org

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Enclosed is my tax deductible donation of:  

| River Steward | $100 |
| Patron | $250 |
| Friend | $100 |
| Individual | $40 |
| Family | $50 |
| $300 | Other |
| $400 | |
| $500 | Where needed most |
| $600 | Paddle-a-thon |

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

Thank you for your support!

“Can you imagine a million herring coming up the Ipswich River every year? I am, and I want to see it says Dan Holper, who is hosting a Paddle-a-thon for his Parker-Ipswich-Essex River Restoration Challenge for Paddle-a-thon. Dan is a long-time advocate for parks including how important healthy, reliable clean water is.

“Since the herring cannot yet run, I will walk, following the path of the river upstream to its mouth by Pavilion Beach on public roads approximating the river’s path,” says Jim Shannon, who has been trying for two years to build a 20 mile trail along the river. “But I saw the trail is not yet cut; just put a dam like the herring don’t do, all the way to the spawning ground.” With that in mind, Dan shared his story of river herring, and what can be done to bring them back. Watch it at bit.ly/3hB2kdG

“Toward the end of the month, I am walking at least 2 miles in each town ‘the river runs through.’ My plan is to walk a route close to the Ipswich River as possible in 9 towns on my river runs through plus 2 miles in the 13 towns that flow water from the river for a total of 20 miles!” says with Amy Marynth, 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! How to bit.ly/3hB2kdG

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The Voice of the River

Where needed most

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Signature

Membership

Enclosed is my tax deductible donation of:

River Steward $100
Patron $250
Friend $100
Individual $40
Family $50
$300 Other
$400 Where needed most
$500 Paddle-a-thon
$600

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Thank you for your support!

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