

# MATTABESSET MATTERS

Dedicated to the Protection and Preservation of the Mattabeset River Watershed

Please join us during the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Mattabeset River Weeks -  
June 6-13 (See attached schedule)

## Laying Out the Osprey Welcome Mat

By Dave Selger

Plans for the first osprey platform in Cromwell Meadows have been finalized! The platform will consist of a sixteen-foot wooden pole with wooden supports at the base and a platform at the top for the nest. The platform will be placed in an open tidal wetland area on the south side of Cromwell Meadows. It is expected to be an entertaining event to watch and participate in. Both activities have been scheduled to occur during Rivers Week. The MRWA needs volunteers for both the construction and installation of the platform. The construction of the platform will occur on June 11 beginning at 6:00 p.m. Installation of the platform will occur at Cromwell Meadows on Saturday, June 13 after the scheduled bird walk. Folks interested in watching or participating in this historic event can obtain directions from David Selger at 667-9233. A note of thanks goes out to Cashway Lumber of Newington who provided some of the materials at a generous discount ... and don't forget that this is all possible because of a grant from the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge. If you cannot make the scheduled activities for this platform -- Don't Worry!

MRWA plans to install two more platforms during the course of the summer and fall. Keep a lookout for these upcoming events or call Dave. He will put you on a phone list.

## City of Middletown Rolling Ahead to Acquire Trolley Line

By Jim Sipperly

The City of Middletown's Planning Department is actively taking the lead in acquiring the old abandoned trolley line, which winds along the Mattabeset River off Tuttle Road. William Warner, Planning Director and James Sipperly, Environmental Planner expect to apply for Federal ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act) funding this summer to obtain the necessary funds in order to develop the trolley line into a multi-use linear park.

Presently, the City is negotiating with the property owners to purchase the 13.42-acre strip of land formerly known as the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad. If the City purchases the property, it will not only provide unique recreational opportunities along a corridor through diverse landscapes, but will also preserve a significant portion of the state's

heritage. **Historic stone arch bridges and other architectural marvels dot the corridor. This multi-use trail will accommodate a range of users including walkers, bicyclists, joggers, cross-country skiers, roller bladers, wheel chair users, hikers, birders, parents with strollers, anglers, and more.**

**Look in local papers for the time and date to walk this historic landmark with town officials. For further information, contact James Sipperly at 860-344-3425.**

### **MRWA 2nd Annual Spring River Run By Richard Schmidt**

**A five-canoe flotilla forged down the Mattabeset on April 11, a warm and sunny spring day. Indicative of the MRWA's growth, this was five times the watercraft present at the first annual spring trip.**

**The canoeists assembled at the small grassy park in Berlin where Farmington Avenue and Mill Street intersect. The paddlers in each canoe were Jennifer and Steve Schiller, Laureen Buchowski and Dave McIntire, Barbara Wilson and Mrs. Goodman, Dave Selger and Jennifer Provost, Jim Creighton and Dick Schmidt, along with Herald photographer Chris Yarborough. The river was full but not at high levels, due to recent rains.**

**The section of the river from the launch point to the Berlin Turnpike was intentionally included in the trip to observe the most problematic part of the river. As featured in the Herald article on this trip, this section of the river is heavily littered, as the thick undergrowth and floodplain areas trap trash and do not seem to release it. The sight of so much plastic, bottles and other floating junk would make any caring person support a cleanup effort.**

**Progressing downstream, the river was more open although obstructed by an occasional strainer (canoeist lingo for trees that fall across the river and strain out canoes). A minor casualty occurred when a camera was briefly dipped in the water. The Mattabeset rapids were successfully run by all. Birds were plentiful and much beaver sign present. A flock of wild turkey was seen on the Cromwell side just before the portage around the StanChem dam. After a snack by the dam, the group continued downstream carried along by a moderate current. The eight-mile journey ended by the Whole Donut on Route 72 in Cromwell, and the canoes were hauled back to the starting point. The canoeists ended a bit weary and with a better appreciation for the challenges and the promise that the Mattabeset provides for the MRWA.**

**Please let us know if you'd like to be notified of the third annual spring trip.**

### **Connecticut River Watch Program To Continue Monitoring In Mattabeset Watershed By Jane Brawerman**

**This will be the seventh year that the Connecticut River Watch Program (CRWP) is monitoring water quality in the Mattabeset River watershed. CRWP is a volunteer water quality monitoring, protection and improvement program for the lower Connecticut River and its tributaries, sponsored by the Middlesex County Soil and Water Conservation District.**

**In the past six years the program has generated an extensive water quality database for the Mattabeset River and tributary streams. Volunteers have collected and analyzed water samples for a number of physical, chemical and biological indicators, and have collected**

and analyzed benthic macroinvertebrate samples (aquatic insects and other organisms that live in the stream bottom) and performed habitat assessments.

Unfortunately, we have learned that the Mattabeset River and many of its tributaries are not very healthy. We have found high levels of fecal coliform bacteria and phosphorus at most of the sites that we monitor. In general, the levels of these pollutants are even higher after heavy rains, indicating that some of the sources are chronic, while others are related to runoff.

We use fecal coliform bacteria as a general indicator of sanitary conditions, and to determine whether the rivers meet Connecticut's Water Quality Standards. While the bacteria are not necessarily harmful themselves, they indicate that other disease causing organisms may be present and that swimming may be a health risk. Sources of fecal coliform include animal waste or human sewage from failing on-site septic systems, wastewater treatment plants, and agricultural and urban runoff.

Phosphorus is a nutrient that occurs naturally in streams in very low concentrations. Excess phosphorus causes dramatic increases in plant growth; when these plants decompose, oxygen is consumed, lowering oxygen levels in the water and affecting the animals that live in the river.

Sources of phosphorus include wastewater treatment plants, runoff from fertilized lawns and crop land, failing on-site septic systems, runoff from animal manure storage areas, and disturbed land areas.

We study benthic macroinvertebrates because they are good water quality indicators for several reasons: many are sensitive to

pollution, the community is a good long-term indicator of stream health because they live their year-round, and they cannot escape pollution. In the Mattabeset, we have found a benthic macroinvertebrate community with poor representation among pollution sensitive organisms, even in our most upstream site, and increasing impairment upstream to downstream.

This summer we will monitor fourteen sites in the Mattabeset River watershed. Water sampling will begin on Wednesday July 8 and continue bi-weekly through Wednesday August 19. Mattabeset River sites include: Rte. 71A crossing; Lower Lane crossing; Berlin Street/Pasco Hill crossing; and Kirby Road crossing. Tributary stream sites include: John Hall Brook at Edgewood Road crossing; Belcher Brook at Norton Road crossing; Willow Brook (Berlin) at Christian Lane crossing; Webster Brook at Kelsey Street crossing; Little (Cold Spring) Brook at Bacon Lane crossing; Sawmill Brook at Aetna Fitness Trail parking lot; Coles Brook at Rte. 372 crossing; Miner Brook at Westlake Drive crossing; and Willow Brook (Cromwell) at Rte. 372 crossing. Once again, we are looking for volunteers to help out by collecting water samples and dropping them off at designated locations. A training session will be scheduled in early July to train volunteers in sample collection procedures and hand out sampling supplies.

Later in the summer we will be conducting Stream Walks on selected tributaries in the watershed to collect visual information about stream conditions and potential sources of pollution. Teams of volunteers will be organized to walk stream segments and fill out survey sheets. Volunteers will be trained at an evening session and actual walks will be scheduled depending on volunteer availability.

**In the fall we will again be collecting benthic macroinvertebrate samples. These samples will be preserved for later analysis in the lab. Volunteers will be trained in both field collection and lab analysis procedures in two separate workshops.**

**For more information about the Connecticut River Watch Program, including how you can get involved, please contact Program Director Jane Brawerman, 860-345-3219.**

### **DEP Commissioner Art Rocque Speaks at 2nd Annual Membership Meeting**

By Jim Creighton

**The DeKoven House in Middletown was the setting for the 2nd annual membership meeting of the Mattabesset River Watershed Association on April 2, 1998. Early season raging thunderstorms did their best to ward off attendees that evening, but the room was full of eager river lovers. Jim Creighton started the evening by recapping the glorious first year of incorporation and then attended to business. Middlesex County Conservation District Executive Director Ann Hadley then spoke and thanked volunteers who helped with the of the crowd attended to hear DEP Commissioner Arthur Rocque speak about pollution in Connecticut rivers. Rocque explained that most point sources of pollution emanating from factories or sewage treatment plants had been controlled. He then used the old Pogo comic strip refrain of "We have met the enemy... and he is us" to explain that polluted runoff from streets, parking lots, lawns, and leaking septic systems is now the main polluter of our rivers. At present, education is the solution. The evening ended with dessert and an opportunity for attendees to meet the commissioner and converse.**

### **Volunteers Needed to Help the Mattabesset River** By Jim Creighton

**We are proud of the work done so far to make residents of the watershed aware of the many benefits of the Mattabesset River and the problems that still besedge it. But more volunteers are still needed to continue the process. Physical work to clean the river banks or restore erosion is always helpful, but there are also many behind the scenes jobs necessary to prevent future degradation. Specific volunteers could help by attending the Inland Wetland meetings in their specific town and keeping the organization aware of important issues. Many important decisions are made at these meetings that have a direct impact on the health of the river and its feeder streams. Other volunteers are needed to help us apply for government grants that could allow us to purchase some canoes or repair eroded river banks. The opportunities are endless. Please volunteer some of your time to help the Mattabesset River by contacting Jim Creighton @ 860-667-9233. You'll feel good about the work you do and have fun doing it.**

**THANKS and WELCOME!**

**A special thank you goes to the outgoing MRWA's Board of Directors: James Barnes, Madelyn O'Brien, Rick Reibling, and Barbara Wilson. We appreciate all they have done to help the MRWA in its' first official year and hope they continue to be active in the association. Thanks also to Christian Bratina, who served as Secretary during the past year and who remains on the Board of Directors. Welcome, new Board of Directors: Lisa Gibson, Jennifer Provost, and Chris Sprague. Lisa will serve as Secretary for the first quarter of the year.**

## Learn How to Control Stormwater

You have a direct link from your property to nearby lakes and streams. The paths of water running off sidewalks and driveways goes through street gutters and storm sewers into a nearby stream, lake, or wetland. The muddy water runoff joins with other runoff, and at times results in damaging floods further downstream.

By-products of our everyday life, such as motor oil, antifreeze, road salt, soil, pet waste, fertilizers, and pesticides can get into water and affect its quality. Keeping Stormwater runoff clean reduces the pollutants that enter the public water supply. Here are things you can do:

Sweep fertilizers, soil, and lawn clippings off driveways and walks back onto the lawn.  
Dispose of pet wastes by burying or flushing down the toilet.  
Keep gutters and Stormwater inlets clear of trash, lawn clippings, and leaves.

Contact your municipality for proper disposal instructions for hazardous materials such as pesticides, auto fluids, and household cleaners.

Plant trees, shrubs, and groundcover to help rainwater soak into the ground.

Limit the amount of paved surfaces on your property. Instead, use porous pavements such as bricks, interlocking blocks, gravel, or porous asphalt. Building roofs, concrete, and blacktop have total runoff.

If concrete or blacktop are used, grade it so runoff flows to the lawn. Gravel filter strips and trenches may also be used along a driveway to increase infiltration, but will increase groundwater contamination if oil, salt, antifreeze, and other materials are left on the driveway.

## MEMBERSHIP

Please complete and mail to: Mattabeset River Watershed Association, P.O. BOX

Street:		0 Individual Membership - \$10 0
		Family Membership - \$15 0
Town:	State:	Sustaining Membership - \$35 0
		Patron Membership - \$100
Zip:	Phone:	0 Corporate Membership - \$250 0
		Life Membership - \$500
0 I would like information about protecting the watershed 0		

**If You See a Possible Pollution Problem**

**It's Saturday morning and you are walking next to your favorite stream. You happen to notice a small pipe leaking what you think might be sewage into the stream or you discover soil from a construction site eroding into a river. Perhaps you find illegal dumping or other threats to water quality. What should you do?**

- 1. Report the concern to your local municipal officials**  
**Many of these incidents can be investigated and corrected by town staff. The local health department, inland wetlands enforcement officer, or town engineer may be able to assist you.**
- 2. Call the DEP** Some problems may be referred to the DEP. Important numbers include:

**Water Bureau Inspectors (860) 424-3018**

**Wildlife / Fishing Violations 842-4357**

**Inland Water Resources 424-3019**  
**3. Still not sure?**

**Call the DEP Rivers Program at search out the proper authority.**

**MRWA's Newsletter Has a Name Thanks, Ruth Bergengren for suggesting Mattabesset Matters for the newsletter's new name. It was well received by the Board of Directors, who approved the name for the newsletter at a recent meeting. *Mattabesset Matters* is still looking for people who are interested in writing an article or contributing to the newsletter on a regular basis.**



**P.O. BOX 7174  
KENSINGTON, CT 06037**

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