

HIGH WATER MARKS: BITTERSWEET BRIGADE

Some determined young students at Wilton High School are tackling bitterweat and other invasives at 17-acre Schenck's Island near Wilton Center. They are part of a local chapter of Dr. Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots program, which is dedicated to improving the world through service and learning projects that promote care and concern for animals, the environment, and the human community. The chapter was recently founded by junior Sophie Broach. Sophie is an active environmentalist who, for example, has participated in the National Wildlife Federation's annual "frogwatch" program and frog and toad census. After participating in Wilton's '07 Spring Cleanup, Sophie was inspired to volunteer more of her time as a river steward and, with some labor-intensive help from fellow members of the Roots & Shoots club, became active in the habitat restoration project at Schenck's Island.

Said Sophie, "It was really interesting to spend so much time in that one area and begin to get to know it. We began to feel protective of it. There is so much life there on the banks and in the water. We want more than ever to keep it clean now, and to try to make some headway fighting the bitterweat."

So throughout September and October, the girls lopped their way through countless woody ropes of Asian bitterweat. Sophie explained, "You cut these things at the base and again at head height, but you can't really see how much vine you have killed for a few days until it withers. The whole experience really opened my eyes to the effects of invasive species and how completely difficult it is to combat them."

Yet the difficulty has only strengthened the girls' resolve. The Bittersweet Brigade wants to do more work this spring and has adopted that section of the Norwalk to try to keep it clear of litter, debris, and alien plants. They are NRWA's newest River Rangers helping the Wilton Land Conservation Trust, Trout Unlimited, and Town officials realize a dream meadow restoration.



Bittersweet Brigade regulars: Caroline Flanagan, Dani Gerard, Julia Broach, Sophie Broach, and Camille Basurto. Missing from picture are Joanna Valk, Claire Flanagan, Hollis Kennedy, Carly Shields, and Gillian Gamberdell.

NRWA IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

River Rangers, River Guides, Hike Leaders, Trail Workers, Board Members, Grant Writers, Environmental or Website Writers, Graphic Designers, Gardeners, Scientists...these are just some of the volunteer positions we'd like to fill. The more help we have, the more we can do; and you can make the difference! Let us know your interests, expertise, and where you'd like to help: contact info@norwalkriver.org. We'll get back to you and see how we can mesh our needs with your talents and availability. Every person counts, so please let us hear from you..

NRWA

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2) Use dishwashing, dishwasher, and laundry detergents that do not contain phosphates.

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