

In the Mainstream

Newsletter for Members of the Norwalk River Watershed Association [NRWA]
New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT, and Lewisboro, NY

www.norwalkriver.org

Fall/Winter 2010/2011

HOW PLANNED DEVELOPMENT ALONG ROUTE 7 WILL AFFECT THE NORWALK RIVER

By Kitsey Snow and Dick Weisberg

In August 2009, a planning study was tasked with developing a vision of what interested parties would like the Route 7 corridor to look like in 20 years. Fitzgerald and Halliday Inc, an engineering firm specializing in multimodal transportation planning, community/land-use planning, environmental planning and public involvement was hired to conduct the study. SWRPA (the Southwest Regional Planning Association), and HVCEO (Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials) have partnered with Fitzgerald and Halliday to sponsor several public forums in Ridgefield and Wilton over the last eight months to provide information on the Study and to get input from participants regarding potential development of the corridor.

The Study area encompasses a half-mile-wide swath of land along the length of Route 7, which includes areas of the Norwalk River. A report included on the Study website suggests that this area is ripe for additional residential and commercial development. It also suggests transportation options should be enhanced. Fitzgerald and Halliday created a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) made up of regional zoning board members, transportation agency representatives, and SWRPA and HVCEO members. Unfortunately no dedicated conservation agencies were included in the TAC; although some recreational environmental concerns--creating bike paths and setting aside some land as open space--have been raised by current members.

What happens to the Norwalk River if we add the housing units, businesses and acres of impervious cover associated with the massive development contemplated by the Study? Unfortunately, the Study fails to address this central question. The Norwalk River is already subject to intense development pressures. It has been listed by DEP (the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection) as "impaired" (i.e., not meeting DEP's water quality standards) for pathogens and aquatic life use. The level of development proposed by the Study could lead to a substantial increase in the amount of sewage effluent discharged into the River. Furthermore, the increased amount of impervious cover associated with development leads to increased storm water runoff

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VOLUNTEER ACTION: CUB SCOUTS CLEAN UP THE NORWALK RIVER

Cub Scouts from New Canaan Pack 70 teamed up with the NRWA and Connecticut Light & Power to clean the banks of the Norwalk River. The scouts signed up through NRWA's River Ranger program to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Scouting.

Twenty-three scouts and over 50 volunteers in all pulled what they estimated to be about 1000 pounds of garbage and debris from the river beginning at Broad Street off Rt 7 and continuing south to Rt 123 in Norwalk, an area owned by CL&P. "We moved A LOT of garbage out of there including a gigantic tire that served as the piece d' resistance," says Pack



Cub Scouts from New Canaan Pack 70 William D., Peter D. and Tom R. taking a break during their river clean-up. Photograph by Neil Boyd.

leader, Neil Boyd. "The river is truly beautiful and I hope the boys are feeling some sense of responsibility for their efforts. For them, they measure most things in terms of fun, and that day there were smiles all around without complaints."

HELP PROTECT THE RIVER JOIN THE NRWA RESPONSIBLE BUSINESS NETWORK



Route 7 Norwalk, CT

NRWA encourages businesses, particularly those located along Route 7 on the Norwalk River, to take the pledge for responsible environmental business practices and to help NRWA continue its mission of environmental education through the offering of free programs and publications. Benefits include a listing in our newsletter and on our website as a responsible business as well as a certificate of membership showcasing your pledge to your customers. To become a member, or to see businesses that have already joined the Network and taken the environmental pledge, visit our website at www.norwalkriver.org.

NRWA RECEIVES GRANT TO UPGRADE WILTON'S ALLEN'S MEADOW PARK

Next Spring visitors to Allen's Meadow in Wilton will enjoy newly refurbished hiking trails and 15 new shade trees to be planted and identified with signs along the edge of the playing fields. Volunteers organized by the NRWA will clear trails of invasive plants and connect and clear existing trails. Watch our website for announcements of upcoming trail maintenance volunteer work days.

The improvements to Allen's Meadow will follow the Allen's Meadow Master Plan commissioned by the Wilton Department of Parks and Recreation to enhance the quality of Allen's Meadow, an area used by 400 to 500 community members a day. In order to proceed with work on the Master Plan, NRWA in conjunction with the Town of Wilton has received a \$5425 grant from the America The Beautiful Grant Program made possible through the USDA Forest Service's program on Urban and Community Forestry.

2011 PHOTO EXHIBIT

Calling all photographers! NRWA will once again sponsor its traveling photo exhibit throughout the watershed towns. The opening reception will be held in February. We will post information in December. Check our website www.norwalkriver.org for further details and to download an Exhibit Form.



"Cold River" by Irwin Block

Rt 7 Development, Continued from page 1

which contains pathogens and pollutants as well as having adverse temperature impacts on the river. DEP has reported that no river segment in Connecticut with greater than 12% impervious cover upstream of the sampling location was able to meet DEP's water quality standard for aquatic life. A 2009 DEP study of the Norwalk River reported that the amount of impervious cover at the sites sampled already ranged from 14% to 19%.

Can development and environmental conservation co-exist? Yes, if we take certain steps. We can add trees, pedestrian and bike trails and riparian buffers which enhance the aesthetic and recreational values of the area while helping safeguard the watershed. We can encourage improvements in rail and bus travel over widening roads. We can limit development to a scope in which the volume of domestic sewage generated can be managed by less damaging, modern septic systems. We can minimize the impact of storm water discharges through the use of "best management practices" such as pervious paving, detention ponds and catch basins which divert storm water quickly into the ground where its pollutant load can be filtered out or biologically attenuated as the groundwater percolates towards the river. These measures will help maintain the River's aquatic life including its surprisingly still vibrant fisheries. As supporters of the river, we can make sure the health of the river is a priority in this process by going to the meetings (the next one will be this fall), visiting the website (www.route7study.org/j/), making comments and keeping up with latest developments of the study.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

- I would like to learn more about the needs of the region and ways we can all help.
- I would also like information about opportunities to **volunteer**.
- Enclosed is my tax-deductible, annual membership contribution.

I would prefer to receive the semi-annual newsletter, *In the Mainstream*, via:

- The name and address written below, or
- The email address listed below.

<i>Riparian Society</i>	Benefactor	\$500-\$749	<i>Basic Membership</i>
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Protector \$750-\$999	Contributor	\$100-\$249	Donor \$25-\$49

Please make check payable to: NRWA, Inc., and mail to the Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc., P.O. Box 197, Georgetown, CT 06829

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Attention Hikers and Bikers: Norwalk River Valley Trail Update

By David Park

Imagine hiking from Calf Pasture Beach all the way to Danbury along the Norwalk River. The Norwalk River Valley Trail Committee is working to make such a pathway a reality. Plans for the Trail call for extending the pathway from the trail head at Calf Pasture Beach, north along the river and Route 7 through Norwalk, Wilton, and Ridgefield into Danbury.

In Norwalk, the trail has been completed from the Maritime Aquarium north through the Heritage Park system and up to Union Park behind the Norwalk Library, while another section of trail has been completed between New Canaan Avenue and Broad Street. Wilton, calling the trail a green-way, is in the planning stages of extending the pathway through town. The trail is well-used by bicyclers, for both recreation and transportation, as well as hikers, joggers and roller-bladers. "The NRVT, beginning at Calf Pasture Beach, could become a 28-mile-long mostly off-road trail, terminating in Danbury," says Dan Landau of the NRVT Committee. "It is very exciting to see that the NRVT Steering Committee has gained the support of local and state officials, along with many local organizations."

Indeed, completion of the trail will involve the cooperation of several local organizations. The Norwalk River Valley Trail Committee includes representatives from all the towns involved, the NRWA, several municipal departments, the State DOT, Northeast Utilities and other organizations such as REI, the outdoor adventure retailer. The new Norwalk REI store awarded a grant to the NRWA for trail improvements. According to Trevor Chabinsky, store manager of the Norwalk REI, "REI is excited about joining the Norwalk community and being able to support this project helping promote outdoor recreation and conservation awareness along the Norwalk River." See our Schedule of Events and website for public volunteer trail maintenance days funded by the grant from REI.

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Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.

The mission of the Norwalk River Watershed Association is to improve the water quality and the quality of life in the region by fostering education, cooperation, and action on the part of individuals, businesses, community groups, and governmental agencies in the seven Norwalk River Watershed Towns.

Officers of NRWA Board of Directors

Kristen Begor, Interim President (Wilton)

Mark Riser, Treasurer (Ridgefield)

Louise Washer, Secretary (Norwalk)

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

NRWA programs highlight the importance and features of the river and its watershed and ways people collectively and individually can improve the region. Programs are free, unless specified, but space may be limited; reservations are suggested. Call the leader listed or **NRWA toll free at 877-NRWA-INFO (877-679-2463)** for information, directions, and reservations. Hikers should always wear hiking shoes and bring water.

September 10-12, Friday-Sunday. Norwalk Oyster Festival. At Norwalk's Veteran's Park. Visit www.seaport.org for more info.

September 11, Saturday, 10:30AM-1PM. Songbirds of the Eastern United States, Highstead Barn Exhibition. Artists of the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators-Greater New York Chapter will discuss their work on display; at 1pm Robert Askins, Ph. D., Professor of Biology at Connecticut College and international authority on the ecology of birds will discuss the history, biology and conservation of forest birds in New England. Songbird Exhibit runs until October 29, M-F 9am-4pm at the Highstead Barn, 127 Lonetown Road (Route 107) Redding, CT. Info at www.highstead.net. Call 203-938-8809 for lecture reservations.

September 20, Monday 9:15AM - 11AM. River Study Adult Training. Veteran's Park School in Ridgefield. Contact Donna Roscoe for more info at donna@roscoe.cc.

September 25, Saturday 3PM-6PM. International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) – Norwalk River. Join the Maritime Rowing Association & NRWA to help clean up the Norwalk River. Wear work gloves and appropriate footwear. Meet at Veteran's Memorial Park entrance parking lot, Norwalk. For more info, contact Louise Washer at 203-840-9008, lwmcf@optonline.net.

September 25, Saturday, 9AM-2PM (rain date 9/26). Norwalk River Trail Maintenance. Join NRWA, the Norwalk River Valley Trail Committee and staff of the Norwalk

outdoor store REI for a trail maintenance day as part of the continuing efforts to complete the Norwalk River Valley Trail system. Meet at Mathews Park, 295 West Avenue for further directions. Bring tools for clearing tall grass and brush. Lunch and tee shirts provided by REI. For more info contact David Park at 203-866-7555, davidpark66@att.net.

October 2, Saturday. Water Quality Training & Testing Day in Ridgefield. Help Ridgefield monitor the quality of its waterways. Join us for this one day event in which volunteers will be trained on how to collect vital water quality information and test the water quality at several water bodies in Ridgefield. Sponsored by the Ridgefield Conservation Commission. To sign up contact Kitsey Snow at 1-877-NRWA-INFO.

October 9-10, Saturday-Sunday, 11AM-5PM. Audubon Greenwich's Hawk Watch Weekend & Green Festival. Come celebrate the annual hawk migration over Audubon Greenwich's "Quaker Ridge Hawk Watch" – an official raptor counting site. Rain or shine, there will also be several eco-friendly vendors on-site, environmental exhibits (including NRWA!) and activities for all ages. For further information visit http://greenwich.audubon.org/Programs_SpecialEvents.html

October 21, Thursday, 7:00PM. Kayaking In and Around The Norwalk Islands Presentation. NRWA Board Member, David Park, will discuss his book at the new Norwalk REI store, 189 Connecticut Ave, Norwalk. For reservations and info, contact David Park at (203) 866-7555, davidpark66@att.net.

October 31, Sunday 2PM. Best Views Hike: Norwalk Meets Saugatuck. Dramatic Topstone Park is the divide between the Norwalk and Saugatuck watersheds and offers amazing views over both watersheds! The open spaces also link two long trail systems and feature four Scout award projects, an old stone causeway, woodlands, floodplain, and the Ridgefield River Study site. Saugatuck hikers may meet us at the overlooks. Wear hiking shoes for this fairly strenuous hike, bring water.

Meet on the east side of Route 7 just north of the traffic light at the intersection of Route 7 and Topstone Road in Ridgefield. Led by NRWA Board Member Mark Riser. For reservations and directions, contact Mark Riser at 203-470-6453.

November 1-29, Wilton Tree-Art Exhibition. Wilton Tree Committee and Wilton Garden Club are co-sponsoring a Wilton Tree Art Exhibit to raise awareness of the beauty and importance of trees in our environment. Regional artists of at least high school age are invited to submit works October 30-31st 10am-4pm at the Wilton Library. Entry forms at Wilton Garden Club website. For info contact Kristen Begor 203-762-3902, kbegor3@optonline.net.

November 6, Saturday, 9:30AM-12:30PM. Annual Aldrich Park Invasive Workday. Wear work shoes and gloves for this continued attempt to control Japanese Barberry at an important Ridgefield open space with town trails that are also part of the Norwalk River Valley Trail system. Adults and students ages 9 and up are encouraged to bring shovels. Weed wrenches welcome! Meet at the Aldrich parking area on the north side of New Road, just one mile west of Route 7 in Ridgefield. To register call 1-877-NRWA-INFO.

February. Snowshoe Hike at Lake Windwing. Join us for a snowshoe hike on the trails around beautiful Lake Windwing in Ridgefield. This program is weather permitting and for ages 8 and up. Parking is available near the ball fields off South Shore Drive, Ridgefield, CT. Check our website for the date. For more info and to register, contact NRWA at 1-877-NRWA-INFO.

March. Spring Amphibian Walk. Dave Havens of NRWA will give a short introduction on amphibians and how to spot them. Then we'll go on a woodland walk to visit vernal ponds coming to life with salamanders, newts, frogs and toads. Meet at St. Luke's School in New Canaan at the 1st parking lot on the right, behind the ball field. Bring tall waterproof boots. All ages welcome. Check our website for the date. For more info call 1-877-NRWA-INFO.



**NORWALK RIVER WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION, INC.**

www.norwalkriver.org

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Change Service Requested

Fall is Leaf Time! Compost your leaves, mow them into your lawn as fertilizer, or bag them for curbside pickup. Download our “Four-Season Tip Sheet” for more year-round landscaping tips.

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HIGH WATER MARKS: SARA DA SILVA QUINTAL

Sara joined the NRWA Board of Directors in 2007 shortly after moving to the Silvermine area of Norwalk. She became President of NRWA in January 2009, succeeding long-time president Lillian Willis, and enjoyed the role until May 2010. Under her leadership, the organization brought in many new members as well as new board members, received important grants for conservation in the watershed area, oversaw improvements to the watershed trails systems, launched a website and much more! We at the NRWA will miss her, but will continue to be inspired by the enthusiasm and energy she brought to our organization.



“I enjoy promoting environmental awareness within the community and getting people excited about the natural world around them,” says da Silva. Sara possesses a diverse scientific background with expertise in wetlands ecology, watershed nutrient modeling and invasive plant species. She obtained a Bachelor’s Degree in Marine Biology from Roger Williams University and a Master’s Degree in Environmental Science from the University of Rhode Island. During that time, she spent several years working with the U.S. EPA and State of RI conducting stream research and becoming a local expert in assessment of the state’s watersheds and stream health. Sara continues to actively publish research papers with U.S. EPA regarding her stream research and riparian invasive plant studies.



She is presently the Senior Environmental Scientist with Nelson, Pope & Voorhis in Melville, NY and works on projects throughout the NY-CT region, ranging from performing wetland delineations to preparing watershed management plans and environmental impact statements. She has served as a volunteer field botanist for the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England since 2002 and became a plant conservation volunteer in Fairfield County for the New England Wild Flower Society in 2007.

Sara married Chris Quintal of Darien, CT in June 2010. They currently live in Rye, NY. Sara continues to function as an advisory board member for NRWA and has just finished designing NRWA’s new pocket-size trail map for the Norwalk River Valley which will be available this Fall. We will greatly miss her boundless energy and cheerful leadership, and we wish her all the best!