

French River Log

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Welcome to this edition of the French River Log, the newsletter of the French River Connection.

Good Neighbor Award

At the annual meeting of the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor May 11, The Green Valley Institute presented the French River Connection a 2007 Green Neighbor Award, for “treasuring, respecting, and protecting the French River.....and helping to keep the Last Green Valley green.” Thanks to our many volunteers, members, donors, and grantors for making this possible.

Blueway Study Complete

The Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning department of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, has completed their work on the Blueway Study commissioned by the Oxford Open Space Committee, funded by a Partnership Grant from the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor. The study was conducted under the direction of Professor Robert Ryan. The French River Connection provided the student team with tours and information about the river and

reviewed some of their preliminary products. The final products consist of a study report, a PowerPoint presentation intended for selectmen, and a draft canoe and kayak guide, which will serve as a template for a guide which can evolve as car-top access points are implemented.

This study was meant to address the fact that the French River offers some excellent paddling opportunities, but there are no formal public access points between Hodges Village and the Connecticut Border. The study examines possible sites that could be made available for public use and evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of each.

The study also outlines the principles that should be considered in a successful blueway plan, which have been developed by the National Park Service:

Partnership-- governmental agencies, land owners, user groups, and businesses partner to develop and promote the blueway

Stewardship--locally organized stewards manage and maintain blueway sections, access points, and signage

Volunteerism--local volunteers develop the stewardship program , promote the blueway,

and ensure continued support by local government

Education--blueway guides, maps, signage, and public outreach support a positive, informative experience for users.

Conservation--blueway activities support the conservation and restoration of the river ecosystem and the river corridor

Community Vitality--blueway connections to other resources build a sense of community within and among river communities, and provide an opportunity for families and groups to experience the river

Diversity--blueways are open to anyone, and benefit people of all ages, abilities, and economic circumstances.

Wellness and well-being--with appropriate water safety information and training, blueways offer an avenue for healthy exercise

The Dam Trail Race *by John Grenier*

The Dam Trail Race is a footrace held in the French River Watershed area. It starts and ends at the

Hodges Village Parking Lot. This is an almost annual event held on the second weekend in August. This year's date is Saturday, August 11, 2007 starting at 9am. Last year was my first year as Race Director and I chose to donate all race proceeds to the French River Connection, as will be the case this year.

Trail races usually attract between 50 to 100 participants. Last year we had 70 racers. The race is about 11 miles and it covers most of the trail network on both sides of the French River in Oxford.

The Corps of Engineers has done a great job of maintaining a very nice multi-use watershed area right in our back yard. I use the area at least 100 times a year either running, hiking, or skiing and I certainly welcome anyone to participate in the race. Otherwise, I can use volunteers to help do trail clean-up, trail marking before the race and volunteers the day of the race. You can reach me at JohnGrenier1@aol.com.

Other members of the French River Connection and I envision similar events held on and around the River in the future.

John Grenier is a Director of the French River Connection

2007 WQM Campaign

We have begun our third year of water quality monitoring. New this year:

We (and the Webster Lake Association) will use the In-situ TROLL 9500 device obtained by the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor, under a DEP grant, instead of one rented by the WLA. This means we need to take on the task of calibrating it, but it also means more schedule flexibility.

We will monitor monthly instead of bi-monthly, but extend the season to November.

We have turned monitoring of the Webster Lake tributaries over to WLA, and we will monitor more river sites, still for a total of 15.

We have included nutrient (nitrate and phosphate) monitoring in our Quality Assurance Program Plan submitted for DEP approval, and will be monitoring those quantities at more sites.

We have added continuous temperature logging at five sites, using loggers purchased with our grant from the Norcross Wildlife Foundation. Previous monitoring indicates that some streams we monitor may qualify for greater protection as cold-water habitat.

Those Dam Beavers

Beavers are of course natural inhabitants of our rivers and streams, and we all marvel at

their ingenuity, persistence, and admirable family life. However, there can be too much of a good thing. Beavers don't just cut small trees for their projects; they eat all the bark they can reach from some of the largest trees, ringing them completely and killing the tree very quickly. There are many large dead trees along the river now, and many more being gnawed upon. About the only way to stop this is to surround the trees with wire fence. We have done some of this and would like to do more. If you are interested in participating in this project, please let us know.

River Cleanups

Thanks to the teams who worked on Webster and Dudley Earth days. We cleaned up around south dam in Webster and on streets near the river in Dudley. Watch for an August clean-up announcement.

Please Join Us

We have a lot going on, and we can use the help of anyone interested in the welfare of the French River as we work to make it a valuable community resource for our towns. If you lack the time but agree with our goals, please consider a tax deductible membership or donation. Meetings are the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm, at rotating locations.