

French River Log

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

How dry is it?

According to the USGS gage in downtown Webster, the French River was recently flowing at less than 8 cfs (cubic feet per second). That's not even a bathtub. The average for August 2007 is less than 15 cfs. This is less than one-third of the discharge rate last August. Brooks and streams are dry too. One unfortunate result is that some of our temperature data loggers are high and dry. Here's a question: The maximum discharge rate so far in 2007 was:

- (a) 112 cfs
- (b) 289 cfs
- (c) 762 cfs
- (d) 1118 cfs

Answer at the end of the Newsletter

Dam Trail Race Results

The Dam Trail Race, an eleven mile run at Hodges Village presented by the Central Massachusetts Striders, was held August 11 under warm sunny skies, with proceeds to benefit the French River Connection. The winner in the men's open division was Greg Hammett of Chesterfield NH with a time of 1:15:53.

Tops among the women was Heather Arsenault of Leominster at 1:29:20. Sixty-eight runners completed the race. Other Division winners included Prentice Zinn of Boston, Bob Sharkey of Newport, Vin Revard and Kris Gleason of Leominster, and Kat Fetteroll of Medfield.

Prizes and supplies for the race were donated by:

Walmart
Shaw's Supermarket
DeeBas Restaurant
Pizza Post
Coffee Hop
Shop and Taste
EMS
Colonial Restaurant
Buster's Rivers Edge
Point Breeze
GNC
Southbridge Savings Bank

Thanks to all the many volunteers and these sponsors, and of course especially to the participating runners, the Central Massachusetts Striders, and race director John Grenier, this was a very successful event enjoyed by all. If you might be able to volunteer next year, put the second Saturday of August on your calendar.

Cleanup--the Next Phase

We knew when we started cleaning up the river we would be dragging out the accumulated trash of decades, and we thought by cleaning up the popular dumping spots they

would be less likely to attract more of the same. Perhaps there has been an improvement, but there is still plenty of dumping of furniture, appliances, tires, and just plain garbage in the familiar places accessible to the road but out of sight. It's not just the riverside either; there is a continual stream of trash flying out of cars onto the roadside. It's all unsightly and unhealthy. It's not inevitable though. In many areas of the country one must look pretty hard to find a bottle by the side of the road.

Communities who have addressed this problem usually point to the need for a multi-faceted approach. Cleanups need to be broad-based community efforts that make it easy for volunteers to participate. Towns should remove funding or administrative obstacles to volunteer efforts. There should be partnerships developed among property owners, community officials, and volunteers for surveillance, enforcement, and education. Penalties should be sufficient for deterrence. There should be methods for disposal that are economical alternatives to dumping.

Accumulating trash has obviously been tolerated in our communities for many years. It takes more than just a few cleanups by a few people to change the situation. It takes a community that wants it to happen. Do we have that?

Walking the River

By Tom Ryzewski

Recently, I've had a chance to explore the French River in an interesting way; by walking right along the middle of the stream. It affords a chance for new perspectives of a river we may have seen many times from the shore or from a kayak. I've seen new and unexpected views and have had the unique experience of being in the middle of the stream, feeling the force of the water, smelling the fresh river water scent, seeing fish unafraid of me, and hearing the rush of water all around me.

The low rainfall levels of this summer have dropped the river level quite a bit, to below 10 cubic feet/second which makes the river about knee deep or less in unimpounded areas.

The area below the Perryville dam is one such location. It is a beautiful part of the river, wide and rocky, wooded on both sides, and easily accessible by foot. It is easy enough to walk into and walk down along the middle of the river. The scenery on a

summer's day is breathtakingly beautiful. The sound of the water rushing along the rocks is accompanied by the calls of a variety of birds and the rush of the breezes through the trees. Oddly, fish seemed undisturbed by my presence, especially small schools of young fry. It was wonderful to stand still in the middle of the flow and just absorb the wondrous beauty all around. I highly recommend the adventure.

One serious word of caution...you must dress for the occasion! I wore the new type of lightweight chest waders, very flexible and comfortable. But most importantly, because you will walk on slippery rocks, proper footwear is critical. A new type of aquatic shoe with a felt sole, available now in sporting goods stores, gives amazing gripping ability and is highly recommended. Don't try this adventure with sneakers! A stout walking stick to help with balance and a pair of polarized sunglasses to see through surface glare are highly advisable also.

But do try this new way of exploring our beautiful French River! A more comprehensive article on this topic will appear on the French River Connection website soon.

French River Greenway

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission has recently completed a contract to map the length of the greenway at a conceptual level, and to identify all the abutting

parcels. Members of the steering committee spent a pleasant August evening on the Wachusett Greenway, which might be a good model for what we would like to achieve here.

French River Day Planned

Last year's French River Day at Hodges Village was such a success that we're doing it again, so mark your calendar for Saturday September 15, 3-6 pm, and please, if you haven't already, RSVP to elaine.parker@charter.net or call (508) 943-2698. We'll have a picnic, paddle a bit, and celebrate another year of hard work and accomplishment. Watch for more announcements of this member's event.

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.

Answer: On April 19, the average discharge rate was 762 cubic feet per second, 100 times greater than in recent days.