



French River Log

Volume 3, Number 2

June 1, 2008

Welcome to the June 1, 2008 edition of the French River Log, the Newsletter of the French River Connection. You are receiving this newsletter because at some point you gave us your email address and we have been sending you meeting announcements, minutes, and other information. At the bottom of this newsletter there is information about how to unsubscribe if you wish.

Earth Day Cleanup

Volunteers from the French River Connection turned out once again for Dudley and Webster town cleanup events. During Dudley Earth Day April 26, we cleaned the "loosestrife island" at Perryville and the riverbank along the closed Lower Perryville Road. On Webster Earth Day May 3, we cleaned Collins Cove, Mill Brook at Bigelow Road, the Webster riverbank upstream from Perryville, and part of the area around Peter Street. Participants in one or both events included Tom Ayau, Ernie Benoit, John Healy, Tom Ryzewski, Sheila and Paige Veideman, Alan and Korey Dabrowski, Luann Lafountain, Robert Jacobsen, Jean Hixson, and Ken and Elaine Parker.

It's difficult to see in the photo at right of Mill Brook, but these young anglers are fishing next to tires, broken bottles, and other junk of every description on Mill Brook.



Water Quality Monitoring: three down, six to go

We have completed three of our nine water quality monitoring events for the year. In 2007, we were using the TROLL 9500 purchased by the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor for the first time, and were plagued by a faulty cable and conductivity sensor, which took up a lot of time and sapped our confidence. In 2008, with those items replaced, we have had no problems calibrating the device and have achieved excellent results in all our quality control measures. MASS DEP has approved our Quality Assurance Program Plan for the year, and we're looking forward to finishing our best season. It's difficult to believe it will be our fourth.

In June, we will deploy our HOBO temperature sensors in potential cold-water streams, and hope they don't dry up as they did last year.

Monitors visit some beautiful places that are often passed unnoticed, such as the French River at Clara Barton Road in Oxford.



The Trail is Open !!

Take a short one-mile round trip walk on the "Perryville Trace." A "trace" is a trail made by the passage of animals or people, which pretty well describes what we have running north from Perryville Dam on the Webster side. The owners granted us a license to clear the trail to a six foot width, mark it, and invite the public. In April, a work crew did most of the clearing, and it's now ready for use.

Watch for an announcement of a formal trail opening, but enjoy it anytime.



Beaver Busting



Our beaver friends continue to multiply and chew their way along the riverbanks. The biggest threat is that they can and do rapidly ring specimen trees, killing them for a couple of nights gnawing pleasure. Loss of these large trees not only leaves the riverbank unattractive, it removes shade upon which fish and other aquatic life depends. One might argue that this is what beavers do naturally, but remember, we have effectively eliminated their predators and they now exist in unnatural numbers. Until their populations are better managed by responsible officials, we can save trees by surrounding them with a loose woven wire cage. Using wire donated by Home Depot in Oxford, we have protected about 25 trees so far this spring and have enough wire to do that many again.

At left, Bruce Gobi and Tom Ayau remove a tree from the menu.

Upcoming Events

- General meeting 7pm June 11 at the Dudley Senior Center
- Dam Trail Race 8:00am August 9 at Hodges Village
- River Cleanup 8:00am August 16, starting location to be announced
- French River Day picnic 3pm September 13 or 20 at Hodges Village
- Walktober Paddle 9am October 4 (rain date Oct 5), meet at Hodges Village
- Walktober Dark of the Moon Celebration 6pm October 18 (rain date Oct 25) at Buffumville Park

Volunteers are needed for these events. For more information and contacts, [click here](#)

Watch for more details and announcements.

Our Valuable French River Dams

Kayaking down the French River from the northern part of Oxford, MA, southwards to the Connecticut state line, one encounters an interesting variety of river scenery. From calm stretches of cool water flowing under tall trees, to narrow rocky sections with near white water conditions to serene, wide areas, with a barely perceptible flow, teeming with wildlife, such as the area behind the Perryville dam shown in the photo, the river



changes its personality in fascinating ways. The features responsible for these many different habitats are, of course, the major dams constructed over the last 150 years.



The dams produce large, long and wide impoundments of water that have created productive and diverse wildlife habitats, niches for many fish, waterfowl and other fauna that would be rarely seen in the narrower, more shaded and faster flowing parts of the French. Plants adapted to shallow slow moving waters abound and provide food and shelter for the abundant wildlife. The natural beauty of these areas is striking, whether one kayaks there for the first time, or has been paddling for a lifetime. These wide areas attract boaters, anglers, photographers, naturalists and many just wanting to have their breath taken away by nature's beauty. Great blue herons, ducks and geese of many species, and beautiful white mute swans are frequently seen and the bass fishing is terrific. Every floating log in the placid waters seems to have at least one painted turtle sunning on it. These wide areas also function in flood control. Excess rainfall and stream inflow spreads out behind the dam and prevents flooding and erosion in the regions below the dams.

Below the dams, the river resumes a narrower, faster flowing habitat with wildlife varieties of a different nature. Microorganisms adapted to the faster moving waters dominate and support a different ecosystem. Different kinds of fish and birds are common here and the keen observer or photographer delights in the variety. In the spring when river waters are high and fast, kayakers thrill in the near white water conditions. Why travel to Maine when a river like this flows in our own community?

Given proper care and maintenance, the dams of the French River will continue to provide a rich variety of wildlife habitats and wonderful recreational boating areas for many generations to come.

Tom Ryzewski

Editors Note: In our last edition we published an article favoring removal of dams to restore a natural, sustainable habitat and indicated it was a controversial subject. This is a different point of view- - KP

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Coming soon: French River Connection logo gear!!

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