



# Mystic Messenger

A Publication of the Mystic River Watershed Association  
Winter 2005

## Flood Studies Update

*Alison Field-Juma*  
Chairman, MyRWA Policy Committee

Flooding is a longstanding problem throughout the watershed. There are a number of innovative projects underway to characterize the problem and investigate ways to reduce flooding and limit damages to homeowners, businesses and our waterways. This article reports on the status of four such efforts.

**Winchester plans.** Starting at the top of the watershed, the town of Winchester is considering a number of flood control engineering projects in the Upper Mystic/Aberjona River. First, the consulting firm ENSR is preparing an Environmental Impact Review (EIR) for 15 individual projects, most of which deal with the Aberjona River. The EIR to be filed under MEPA will use updated flood data prepared for FEMA (see below), and will address concerns about project sequencing. An informational public hearing on the EIR is planned for February, as is a stakeholders' meeting, in which MyRWA will participate. The draft EIR will be available in February, and is expected to be complete by early Summer 2005. Second, the Army Corps of Engineers is preparing a proposal to widen the Aberjona River from Waterfield Street to Bacon Street. This proposal will likely be presented to the Winchester Board of Selectmen at the end of January, and will subsequently go through MEPA review. The third project is a small bridge project over Vernon Street that is still in the design phase.

Winchester also plans to convene a group of representatives from neighboring towns (planners and conservation administrators as well as town engineers) to look at options for regional land-use approaches to flooding, based on a broader watershed-based analysis. This effort is expected to get going in the next one to two months. MyRWA strongly favors efforts like this that consider land-use and low impact development approaches to flooding problems on an equal footing with more traditional engineering approaches.

**Regional solutions to flooding.** The Tri-Community Flooding Work Group includes municipal officials, community groups (including MyRWA) and residents from Belmont, Arlington and Cambridge, and is investigating causes and regional solutions to flooding in the Alewife sub-basin. The group's report was released in draft form in June 2004 and presented at a public forum in Arlington last November. The three communities are now working to implement the report's recommendations. A formal Tri-Community Flooding Board has been established and

approved by the state – the second such board established under the state's Environmental Joint Powers framework. The group's report is available at: [www.town.belmont.ma.us/PublicDocuments/BelmontMA Documents/index](http://www.town.belmont.ma.us/PublicDocuments/BelmontMA%20Documents/index) (scroll down to Tri-Community Working Group).

**Map updates.** The official FEMA Floodplain Maps for the Mystic River are being updated by the consulting firm ENSR. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) expects to receive a draft from ENSR in the next few months. The drafts will be reviewed by FEMA and then preliminary maps will be released for public comment. Significantly, the maps are based on higher rainfall values (known as the Cornell Study data) than have been used in the past. Use of the older rainfall data would have underestimated flood levels and the size of the floodplain. Flood levels are calculated primarily using land use, topography and precipitation data, which are then modeled to produce mapped elevations. These maps will replace the current maps that were prepared based on National Weather Service data some 40 years ago, and will reflect current land use patterns. You can find out more about FEMA's flood hazard mapping process on their web site (<http://www.fema.gov/fhm/>).

**Action plans for natural disasters.** Finally, a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Project is underway in seven communities in the middle and lower watershed: Cambridge, Somerville, Chelsea, Everett, Medford, Malden and Melrose. Funded by the FEMA and coordinated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the project works with communities to identify areas that may be most affected by floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters. The project will then develop action plans to address the impacts of natural disasters. Actions may include non-structural measures, such as regulation of land use and increasing rainwater infiltration through low impact development techniques, or structural projects, such as pumping systems. A similar project has just been completed for North Coastal cities and towns, and MAPC hopes to begin projects in other areas as well. MyRWA will be participating in the project's region-wide meetings. For more information, contact Heidi Samokar (Cambridge) and Joan Blaustein (other six communities) at MAPC (617-451-2770, [www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org)). You can find a useful related resource, *Natural Hazards Mitigation Guidebook: A Community Guide*, at: [www.mass.gov/dem/programs/mitigate/guide.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dem/programs/mitigate/guide.htm)

## Mystic River Watershed Association

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The **Mystic Messenger** is a publication of the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), a community-based, private nonprofit, Section 501(c)(3) organization, established in 1970 to protect and restore the natural resources of the Mystic River watershed.

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## Business Donor Program

The Mystic River Watershed Association recently initiated a business donor program. We want to take this opportunity to thank some of our new donors for their generous contributions and support for the organization.

### Guardians

Cityside Subaru • Genzyme  
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### Sponsors

Jay Cashman, Inc • Winchester Savings Bank

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We are always looking for support from the business community. If you own, work for, or know of any businesses interested in contributing to MyRWA, let us know. We look forward to telling you about our business membership options.

## VOLUNTEER TODAY!

Contact [janet@mysticriver.org](mailto:janet@mysticriver.org) or  
call Janet at 781-316-3438.

**Get your feet wet!**

## Message from the President

We are publishing an abbreviated newsletter this winter, as we focus our efforts on restructuring MyRWA to reflect current funding realities. In fact, we have Jane Sauer to thank for volunteering to do the layout for this newsletter. MyRWA is working hard on capacity building and establishing a strong foundation for future growth. Many people are part of this effort, including our Directors and Officers (listed elsewhere), our Executive Committee (the Officers, John Reinhardt, and Susan Altman), and our very effective Committees. I want to share with you some of the work that is underway, and urge you to join us with your time, talent, and donations.

Susan Altman, Gene Benson, Rachel Evans, John Reinhardt, and Jane Sauer, as members of a special planning group, provide thoughtful recommendations on fundraising, budget projections and allocation of staff time to priority areas. Alison Field-Juma, as the new Chair, Matt Shuman, as former Chair, & Todd Callaghan, another active member of the Policy Committee, keep up MyRWA's thorough reviewing of development proposals affecting the Mystic Watershed. Experts on the Committee on Water Quality are making excellent use of our monitoring data, collected by dedicated volunteers every month, to advocate for real improvements in water quality.

Janey Tallarida, as Chair of the Outreach Committee, and a number of hard working members have ably assisted Janet Kovner in the Annual Appeal that to date has realized over \$30,000 during December 2004 and January 2005. John Reinhardt, as Chair of the Corporate Committee, and Sue Bass and Rachael Evans, as Co-chairs of the Large Donor Committee, have begun significant new fundraising efforts. Lisa Brukilacchio and Janey Tallarida co-chair the Herring Run Committee that is planning our annual event for May 1st. Last, as government sources of revenue decline, the volunteers highlighted above, and others not named, have enabled MyRWA to sustain its high level of commitment to improve the watershed. If you want to help with any of the activities referred to in this newsletter, please call me at 617-484-1965.

I wish to express my appreciation to our able staff, Nancy, Janet, and Julie, for their diligent work, and to our Board of Directors, who just completed a successful day long retreat, as we refocus MyRWA's efforts and expand our private sources of funding.



Fred Paulsen, President

## Thanks for continuing support to:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
National Fish & Wildlife Foundation  
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Massachusetts Environmental Trust  
Massachusetts Water Resources Authority  
Fields Pond Foundation, Inc • City of Everett • Town of Arlington  
Mystic Watershed Collaborative • Tufts Institute of the Environment  
University College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts  
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All the photographers and authors contributing to this issue.

## Local Watershed Group Profile: The Friends of the Upper Mystic Lake

The Friends of the Upper Mystic Lake (FUML) is a citizen-run neighborhood organization that was created in 1994 in response to a deterioration in the water quality of the Upper Mystic Lake. Patricia Harte, Hilda Perlitsh, Agnes Sarmanian, and Janet Burke formulated a plan to restore this natural resource to its original clean and healthy condition. These pioneers organized abutters and other interested residents and, in 1994, formed a non-profit corporation with the stated purpose to facilitate the restoration of the water quality of the Upper Mystic Lake.




Photo by Stuart Rudolph

The Metropolitan District Commission had regularly maintained the lake until the early 1980's. When funding for this maintenance ended, the water quality rapidly deteriorated, due largely to the overgrowth of aquatic vegetation that choked shallow forebays, making them almost unnavigable. Some members recall the number of dead fish that washed onto their property because the lake was so choked that the oxygen was insufficient to sustain marine life.

The organization's first project was to obtain a permit from the Winchester Conservation Commission to begin the restoration. The permit allowed Aquatic Control Technology Inc. to begin a treatment to actively restore the ecological health and balance of the lake. The company guaranteed an 80% reduction in nuisance vegetation. Funding was undertaken jointly with the Winchester Boat Club to finance the first treatment program. Each abutter of the lake was asked to contribute \$400, and contributions from others were encouraged.

The organization requested our legislative team, Representative Paul Casey and Senator Charles Shannon, to introduce legislation that would fund the annual treatment and address the restoration and repair of the dam between the lakes. The organization is appreciative of their continued efforts on our behalf.

FUML has come a long way over the past decade. We owe our success to our members and the great community that we all share. Although we have improved the ecological state of the Upper Mystic Lake, we still have a long way to go to ensure ongoing maintenance and further improvement of this wonderful natural resource. 

### The Role of the Urban Forest in the Mystic River Watershed

Wednesday, March 16, 2005, 7:00 PM

Community Room, Medford Public Library, 111 High Street

Tom Brady will present a talk entitled "The Role of the Urban Forest in the Mystic River Watershed." Mr. Brady will discuss how much of the construction activities which take place each day have an adverse impact on our 'Urban Forest' and our watershed, and how some simple steps can be taken to ensure the 'Urban Forest' is here and in good health for the next generation.

Tom Brady is the Conservation Administrator and Tree Warden for the Town of Brookline and Past President of the MA Tree Wardens and Foresters Association, Eastern Extension Center.

This talk is part of the Mystic River Watershed Association's annual Winter Speaker Series. Our talks are free and open to the public. Voluntary donations are welcome. For information or directions: 781-316-3438, [janet@mysticriver.org](mailto:janet@mysticriver.org) or check our website at: [www.mysticriver.org](http://www.mysticriver.org)

## Support the Mystic River Watershed Association. Together, we'll get the job done.

YES! I'd like to help MyRWA protect, conserve, and restore the natural resources of the Mystic River Watershed.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution.

- |  |   |  |   |
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You will receive our newsletter and an invitation to member events. May we thank you in our newsletter? Yes  No

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## Members Make A Difference!

The work of the Mystic River Watershed Association would not be possible without the generous contributions from the many individuals, organizations and businesses. The following are a small sampling of the members who recently renewed their commitment to the Mystic River watershed. We deeply appreciate the support of everyone listed here, as well as all those who have supported our work throughout the years.

Gillian Aguilar • Eric Hall Anderson • Mairgrid Anderson • Vanessa Rule & Eric Becker • Jack Beusmans & Sharon Guzik • Anton Boghossian • Chuck & Lisa Bohner • Alice & Nelson Bolen • M. Brooks • Webb & Jeff Brown • Katie & Paul Buppenwieser • Rep. Paul C. Casey • Carol & Robert Cashion • Ela Chapin • Benjamin Cline • Sheila G. Cook • Mark D'Andrea • Beth Debski • David Dettinger • Lilla Rogers & Andy Dewitz • Elizabeth Wyld & Lance Drane • Richard A. Duffy • Winslow Duke • The Durney Family • Paul Elwood & Lucy Edmondson • Edie & David Engel • Kathy Foley & Michael Fager • Bo Fauth • Kelly Fellner & Mary Raczko • Jackie & Jim Fesler • Friends of the Mystic River • Alice M. Fuller • Stella & Bob Gallant • Whitney & Claudia Gay • Julie Graessle • Andrew Griswold • Mr. & Mrs. Peter K. Gunness • Johanna Gurland • Paul & Heather Haaga • Jennifer Hill • Mark Hodgson & Judi Nierenberg • Gertrude Hoffenberg • Jean Hopkins • Cheryl Howard • Frederick & Dorothy Irving • Susan Mintz & Bill Jaeger • Mary & David Johanson • Rosie & Sajed Kamal • Craig Kelley • Ernest Kirwan • Stephen & Lisa Knight • Kenneth Krause • Elisabeth & Peter Krautscheid • Alex Lacroix • Ellen & Richard Lacroix • Ann LeRoy • Howard LeVaux • Jeff Levine & Kristin Blum • Thomas Lisco • Arvy Mackevicius & Anne-Marie Lambert • Jennifer Page & Joe Mayer • John & Lucile McIntosh • Margaret McNamara • Edward Merrill • Natalie Mulford • David Mussina • Marya Axner & Mark Niedergang • Jennifer Norris • Carol Phipps & Keith O'Boyle • Arleen O'Donnell • Mary Frances Owens • Fred & Anne Paulsen • William Pisano • Patricia Magee & Oakes Plimpton • Marjorie Polster • Ephraim Radner • Thomas Raphael • Adrienne & Hartley Rogers • Maggie & John Russell • Rusty Russell • David & Betsy Ryder • Hannia Campos & Frank Sacks • Maryann & Joseph Scali • Bob & Penny Schafer • Carl Sciortino • Nan Donald & Nancy Shilepsky • Richard & Joyce Shortt • Stephen & Randee Shuman • Jocelyn Siegel • Julia Blatt & Ken Siskind • Steve & Sandy Smith • Richard Spencer • Kenneth Stalberg • James H. & Brigitte Steele • Nathaniel Stevens • Steve Stodola • Nan & William Stone • Barbara Strell • Charlotte Swartz • Jeff & Christine Thielman • Adorna Walia • Bruce Wheltle • Mary Gilbert & David White



Photo by The Menotomy Journal

## Put Your Paddle in the Mystic

The 2005 Mystic Herring Run Festival is scheduled for Sunday, May 1. Not only will the alewives and blueback herring be 'running' in the Mystic, but runners will be running along the banks of the river to compete in our annual 5k road race, and kayaking and canoeing enthusiasts will compete in a paddle race. Join in the preparations for this annual event. Contact: 781-316-3438 or [janet@mysticriver.org](mailto:janet@mysticriver.org) to get involved.

**EXTRA! EXTRA!**

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Sign up now.

Call 781-316-3438 or email:  
[janet@mysticriver.org](mailto:janet@mysticriver.org) to sign up.

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