

CURRENTS

working together For the health of the white river watershed

Fall 2007

mission

The White River Partnership (WRP) brings together people and local communities to improve the long-term health of the White River watershed.

contact us

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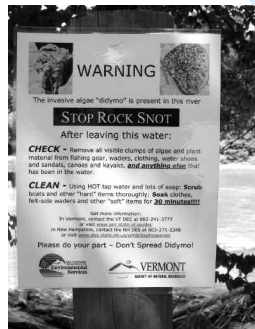
Mary Russ, Executive Director

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Didymo Alert

—Mary Russ, Executive Director



Volunteers helped the WRP post didymo information signs along the White River.

As you may know, the invasive alga didymo — nicknamed “rock snot” — was found in the Connecticut River in June, the White River in July, and the Battenkill River in August. Native to northern Europe and Asia, this is the first time didymo has been found in the Northeast. It is cause for concern because didymo can form thick mats along the bottom of the river, smothering aquatic life and fouling the water for recreation. For more information about didymo in the White River, read the articles in the *News and Events* section of our website.

Since July, the WRP has worked closely with state and local partners to raise awareness about didymo. Within weeks of finding didymo on the White River, WRP volunteers posted nearly 200 informational signs along the river to educate recreational users while the WRP spread

the word through email alerts, newspaper articles, and educational events. At the same time, the NH Department of Environmental Services created a regional didymo information website and the VT Agency of Natural Resources developed a radio ad campaign to raise awareness about how to “Stop Rock Snot.” In addition, state and federal agency biologists have implemented rigorous cleaning protocols to prevent the spread of didymo during routine field work.

Late this summer, state biologists attended an international didymo conference in Montreal, and learned that public education is the most effective response method since eradication is not feasible. As a result, the WRP plans to continue our efforts to raise awareness about didymo by developing outreach materials; partnering with local guides and outfitters to spread the word to targeted users; and installing permanent signs at public access points.

The jury is still out about the long-term impacts that didymo will have in the Northeast. With any luck, didymo will not become a nuisance species in the White River watershed. Regardless, didymo is just one species on a long list of current or potential non-native invasive species that can threaten the health of the White River.

As a result, we encourage everyone who uses the White River to “check, clean, and dry” all equipment after every outing to stop didymo from spreading and also to prevent new invasive species from taking hold. For more information about decontaminating specific types of equipment, visit www.biosecurity.govt.nz/ and follow links to “Didymo” and “Cleaning Methods.” ●●

calendar

Monthly Work Group Meetings:

- First Tuesday:** Forestry Work Group, 7pm at Whitcomb High School in Bethel
- Second Wednesday:** Upper River Stream Team, 6pm at Ranger Station in Rochester
- Second Thursday:** Board of Directors, 7pm at Fish Hatchery in Bethel
- Last Wednesday:** Down Stream Team, 7pm at Old Sharon Academy in Sharon

Upcoming Events and Volunteer Opportunities:

September 29–30: Northeast Animal-Power Field Days.

Conservation, stewardship, small farms, healthy forests, and the roles they play in vital rural communities will be emphasized during this two-day trade fair and conference that will present resources for farmers, loggers, and forest landowners pursuing the use of draft animals as part of their land-based livelihoods. This event is being held at the Tunbridge Fair Grounds. For more information, contact Carl Russell or Lisa McCrory at 802/234-5524 or lmccrory@together.net.

September/October, date TBD: The Status of Vermont's Current Use Program. What is Current Use and how does it work? What are the goals of this fall's study set up by the legislature last year? Bill Snow, Chief of Current Use for the VT Tax Department and Rep. Alison Clarkson, sponsor of the legislation, have been invited to answer these questions at an evening information session. Stay tuned for event specifics.

November 3: WRP Annual Meeting. Mark your calendars for this year's annual celebration! Stay tuned for event specifics.

Contact the WRP at (802) 767-4600 or visit the website at www.whiteriverpartnership.org for more information.

Partner updates:

2008 Municipal Planning Grants from Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission are due September 28. For more information, visit www.trorc.org/events.html.

Did you know the Green Mountain National Forest is providing the 2007 U.S. Capitol Christmas Tree? Learn more at www.fs.fed.us/r9/gmfl/green_mountain/75th/capitoltree.htm.

Read a couple of our partners' newsletters online:

VT Water Quality Division:
anr.state.vt.us/dec/waterq/htm/wq_outoftheblue.htm

Vital Communities:
www.vitalcommunities.org/Fall2007newsletter.pdf

Water Quality Monitoring

—by Matt LaMothe



Matt LaMothe shows volunteers how to use a turbidity tube.

Over the past 14 weeks I worked as the WRP's water quality intern, helping Melissa Sharkis coordinate the citizen-based Water Quality Monitoring Program. Originally from just north of Boston, MA, I was a water quality monitor for the Saugus River Watershed Council before moving to Vermont. This experience inspired me to seek similar work during the summer after my first year at Vermont Law School.

A typical day this summer involved coordinating the *E. coli* sampling. I spent Wednesday mornings driving around the watershed to pick up volunteers' water samples. Then I processed each sample in the office, which involved dissolving a solution in each sample; transferring the sample to a clear, welled tray; then sealing and placing the trays in an incubator. After 24 hours, we emptied the incubator and looked at each tray under UV light. The solution reacts with the *E. coli* to become fluorescent under UV light. The number of fluorescent wells

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Three Summer Fundraisers

The WRP benefited from 3 unique fundraising events this summer:

On Sunday, May 27, **Yellow House Media** and the **Hartford Department of Parks & Recreation** co-hosted **Rhythms on the River**, the first of four summer concerts at Lyman Point Park in White River Junction. The concert featured two local bands — Wise Rockabilli and Brotherhood Blues Band — and benefited the WRP. Concert goers enjoyed local food from the Farmer's Diner and Blue Moon Sorbet and had the opportunity to purchase custom-bagged compost from Vermont Compost — all proceeds were donated to the WRP. In addition, concert goers had the opportunity to win an acoustic guitar donated by Blue Mountain Guitar. The concert was made possible by generous sponsorship from Chittenden Bank, Blue Mountain Guitar, and The Point.

On Tuesday, June 12, the **Farmer's Diner** in Quechee hosted a "**Fat Tuesday**" dinner to benefit the WRP. One of the Farmer's Diner Community Partnerships, the "Fat Tuesday" program gives local nonprofits the chance to earn 15% of all food sales during lunch or dinner.

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Project News

Broad Brook Fish Passage Enhancement Project

In 2007, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service, Trout Unlimited and the WRP entered a cooperative agreement to restore aquatic habitats that have been previously altered and degraded by human activities in tributaries to the White River. The first project will enhance fish passage at the mouth of Broad Brook following the completion of an archaeology assessment in fall 2007. The project involves installing a rock weir to raise the water surface elevation about 1 foot above the culvert outlet, which will allow trout and sea-run Atlantic salmon to access spawning and rearing habitats on Broad Brook at all water levels.

Trees for Streams Program

This spring, the WRP planted over 2,300 native trees and shrubs behind the Short Hills Ski Club in Granville and nearly 500 native trees and shrubs at 4 additional sites throughout the watershed. Almost 240 volunteers donated their time to make the plantings a success, including landowners, students from 8 schools, and WRP Stream Team members. Thanks to all of our volunteers, to Mike Bald for coordinating the volunteers, and to the National Forestry Foundation, the Fish America Foundation, and the CREP for funding our 2007 Program!

New Partnership for WRP

To implement the Ayers Brook Corridor Plan that was completed in June, the WRP is working with a new partner — the Vermont River Conservancy (VRC). Over the past year, the VT River Management Program, Vermont Law School's Land Use Institute, and VRC have been developing a new type of conservation easement to protect the river corridor. By purchasing a landowner's channel management rights, this permanent easement will allow the river to re-establish stable conditions naturally. The easement provides for a vegetation zone along the river, but otherwise the landowner retains the right to use the land for agricultural, forestry or recreational uses. The WRP project sites on Ayers Brook will be the first applications of this new easement in Vermont.

A Model Management Plan

With grant funding from the VT Clean and Clear Program, WRP worked with Redstart Forestry to develop a community-based river corridor management plan (RCMP) in the Upper White River this summer. As one of the first plans developed using the 2007 River Corridor Planning Guide, the Upper White River RCMP is available on the VT River Management Program website as a model for other watershed groups. Redstart consultants are continuing their good work in the watershed by developing a Tweed River RCMP this winter.

Three Summer Fundraisers, cont.

Following this successful model, the **Peavine Restaurant in Stockbridge** cooked a **special bbq dinner** for the WRP on Thursday, August 16. The dinner immediately followed the WRP's first didymo identification event at the mouth of Stony Brook, helping raise money for ongoing outreach and education about didymo. ●●

A New Approach to Knotweed

Japanese knotweed, a non-native invasive plant, grows along the banks of the White River, but does not provide the same habitat and water quality benefits as native vegetation. Attempts to control knotweed by cutting it regularly can weaken the plant, but rarely eradicate it where it is established. Because knotweed thrives in sunny, non-forested areas, the Down Stream Team is trying a new control method. In 2006, the DST planted fast-growing, native trees in a large patch of knotweed on the Balla Machree Farm in Royalton. DST members cut the knotweed three times each summer to provide plenty of sun for the native trees to grow and to re-establish a healthy, native riparian buffer over time.



DST members smile after cutting knotweed.

Thank you!

Our seventh year of water quality monitoring would not have been possible without the help of our 24 dedicated volunteers:

Jim Martin
Steve Collins
Ron Rhodes
Jon Bouton
Beth Herzog
Tammy Henry
Chris Brooks
Don Faulkner
Carol Jones
Wanda Knudsen
Rod Van Houten
Kathy Leonard

Mary Pavone
Lynn McNamara
Tom MacNair
Debbie Price
Kevin Hall
Mark Heckman
Lloyd Rudolph
Tony Velturo
Betsy Shands
Karen Waterworth
Karin Furman
Richard Harvey



Get Involved!

The WRP is a nationally recognized and award-winning watershed organization because of the involvement and strong commitment of our devoted community members and partners. We depend on hundreds of volunteers each year to accomplish much of our important work. Here are a few ways that you too can get involved with the WRP this year — no experience necessary!

- Volunteer in the office — We need help with a range of office tasks on a regular basis.
- Become a town liaison — We are recruiting volunteers to distribute newsletters and other outreach materials around their towns as well as to communicate about WRP programs and events with their town governments.
- Join a stewardship group — Get involved in your “sub-watershed” by joining a local Stream Team or working group.

To find out more about how you can get involved and support the work of the WRP, please call us at (802) 767-4600 or email info@whiteriverpartnership.org.

Join the White River Partnership

The WRP depends on contributions to support our good work in the watershed. Please become a member today by making a tax-deductible donation.

Yes, I would like to join the WRP. Enclosed is my contribution of:

\$30: Individual \$40: Family \$50: Business

Sweat Equity: 2 hours volunteering equals a 1-year membership!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Please make checks payable to the “White River Partnership” and mail to: 99 Ranger Road, Rochester, VT 05767.

Water Quality Monitoring, cont.

corresponds to the number of *E. coli* colonies in the water.

I enjoyed the work immensely, especially meeting and working with the volunteers who make this program successful. They truly care about the river and take time every Wednesday morning to get their feet wet. This year’s volunteers were both reliable and consistent; the data they collected will help the WRP identify potential threats to water quality and prioritize restoration efforts over the coming year.

Another highlight of my summer was exploring the watershed. I found a number of swimming holes and scenic spots that reinforced my love for the river and my desire to protect it. And, with Melissa’s guidance, I know a lot more about the science behind water quality testing now than I did 3 months ago. All in all, overseeing the Water Quality Monitoring Program was a wonderful experience for me, thanks to everyone involved.

For more information about the 2007 Program results, visit the *News and Events* link on our website. ●●

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WHITE RIVER
PARTNERSHIP



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