

BLACKSTONE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL / FRIENDS OF THE BLACKSTONE

WWW.BLACKSTONERIVER.ORG

FALL 2017

Mission: To restore, enhance, and preserve the physical, historical, and cultural integrity of the Blackstone River, its watershed and its eco-system, through public advocacy, education, recreation, stewardship and the promotion of our unique Blackstone Valley resource.

JOHN MARSLAND, PRESIDENT
BRYCE JACKSON, VICE-PRESIDENT
ERIC LISTENFELT, TREASURER
SUZANNE MATTA, SECRETARY
FRANK MATTA, PAST PRESIDENT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: KEVIN BURNS, ROBERT
CHARPENTIER, ALICE CLEMENTE, EDWARD FERREIRA,
FRANK GEARY, JUDY HADLEY, KEITH HAINLEY,
RAYMOND PADO, ARTHUR PLITT, PAUL ROSELLI,
MICHAEL SCALZI, RANDY TUOMISTO

Dear Member/Supporter,

Today the Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone has achieved a major milestone with an 832 sq. ft. educational-meeting room addition to the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center. The BRWC/FOB hopes to use this room to introduce nature and its benefits to the family. This achievement would not have happened without partnerships with the town of Lincoln, with a 30-year easement on the land, and RIDEM with capital appropriation funding. Since 1993, RIDEM and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor have been part of this partnership to get things done. Our first partnership with RIDEM was at the Blackstone River State Park and the Wilbur Kelly house, clearing dumpsters of debris with hundreds of volunteers. In 1993, the VIP program with the National Park service began and a grant was received from the Heritage Corridor to purchase 24 canoes that are still used today to clean the Blackstone River and canal.

In 1990, the BRWC/FOB also raffled off a canoe to raise money to stock the Blackstone River with trout for the first time. Working in partnership with RIDEM Fish and Wildlife, \$1,000 dollars was donated and matched 3-1 for a total of \$4,000 towards the stocking. This new interest in fisheries also led to an anadromous fish study to see if river herring could spawn in the Valley Falls marsh. Herring from the Charles River were introduced to the marsh and herring fingerlings were found. The success started the design of four fish ladders from Pawtucket to the Valley Falls marsh.

In the early 1990s, the Valley Falls marsh was loaded with old tires and junk. A major Earth Day cleanup was held and partnerships played a huge role. Using heavy equipment and dump trucks donated by local contractors, in partnership with the town of Cumberland and RIDEM, tons of trash was removed from the new Fanning Wilderness area. This two-year project removed and recycled thousands of tires with the help of the Valley Boys, and the project was celebrated with a picture that was included in the national report of Keep America Beautiful.

This core group of Valley Boy volunteers would not stop there, moving up river to the old Lonsdale Drive-in, then to the tree debris in the Blackstone River Canal. Over the years, working in partnership again with RIDEM and the Heritage Corridor, much needed river access points were installed. While working on river access, another major project was undertaken to remove a ton of the old steel gates that fell into the river below the Ashton dam. Call in the Valley Boys, project done. All our cleanup projects up and down the Blackstone River could not be accomplished without partnerships and hard-working volunteers.

In 2017, when it looked like the capital funds would be reclaimed, our partnership with RIDEM and the Heritage Corridor helped keep that money at work in the Blackstone River with 3 huge projects. Restoration and reuse of The Landing in Central Falls; construction of the replica barn at the Kelly House; and converting the old Dunkin Donuts and Outback space in the 295 Visitor Center into offices that we hope will house the administrative functions of the new National Historical Park are all possible because of these relationships.

With 27 years of stewardship, the Blackstone River is now a viable aquatic and recreational resource for future generations to enjoy. Let's use the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center to educate local residents on what is in their back yards. Help us organize volunteer opportunities to make our community a better place to live. Most importantly, get today's youth and families involved in this positive attitude of making a difference in the world. Please join the BRWC/FOB today and live a better tomorrow.

John Marsland, President

WE HAVE A ROOF!

Taking shape. The Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone has grown over the years. Our mandate is the protection of the Blackstone River. We do this through advocacy, education and community involvement. Our new addition is a result of our work in the Corridor. As we give to those around us, those around us give back by supporting our efforts. Cheers to all the volunteers who make our work meaningful and possible.



Our new education addition is part of our mission. We need more volunteers to help spread the word about the wonders and beauty of the River that we so love. Come join us!



TRANSITION

By Suzanne Matta

We are pleased to welcome two new Board members this year. Eric Listenfelt, Treasurer, succeeds Joe Pailthorpe. Eric currently resides in Woonsocket and is a lifelong Blackstone Valley resident, having grown up in Central Falls and Lincoln. He works for Navigant Credit Union in the Manville branch and has a B.A in Economics from RIC. In addition to serving as Treasurer for BRWC/FOB, he is also a member of the Cumberland Library Fund Board of Directors. In his spare time, he enjoys hiking, camping, snowboarding, and spending time with his wife and stepdaughter.

Suzanne Matta assumed the Secretary's position formerly held by Alice Clemente. Suzanne is an investment compliance consultant in Boston and has a B.A from Boston College. She is an avid nature enthusiast and enjoys kayaking, skiing and snowshoeing. She and her husband reside in Cumberland.

Alice will remain with BRWC and continue to contribute her talents in several areas, including grant management, newsletter editor, and TAG project manager for the Petersen Puritan Superfund Site. All of us are eternally grateful for the opportunity to have worked with Joe and Alice and are privileged to be able to carry on their efforts.

CENTRAL FALLS LANDING AND OTHER CAPITAL PROJECTS ALONG THE BLACKSTONE

By Megan DiPrete, Executive Director, Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor

It has been a busy year with cleanups and volunteering but BRWC/FOB committed to a few capital funds projects that haven't gotten a lot of airtime yet. That will change soon!

One project is the redevelopment of The Landing at Central Falls. Back in 2012, BRWC /FOB purchased the site for the City of Central Falls with the idea that it would be redeveloped in a way that reflected the history of the site and the character of the National Heritage Corridor. Working under a task force that included the City of Central Falls, DEM, DOT and Blackstone Heritage Corridor, the project has been moving forward. DEM and DOT have both provided grants to do the environmental cleanup and reclamation of the site. Given its history, it, like nearly all other previously-industrial parcels along the Blackstone, did have contaminated soils. But the strong partnership we developed helped set the stage to clean the site so it could be redeveloped.



And it is in the process of being redeveloped, indeed! Two companies responded to the City's request for proposals for redevelopment of the site. After review by the task force, local developers Tai-O Group were selected to rehab the building in a manner generally consistent with its current form. The ground floor would have a public-oriented shop and restaurant focus, the second floor might be a function facility, and the top floor would include the new home of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. (The Tourism Council was originally part of the task force as well but that changed to avoid the obvious conflict of interest when it became clear that they would be an end-user of the site.) The outdoors would retain the public boat ramp and parking, and would include elements that would provide information about the history of the site and ecology of the river system.

During the design process, Tai-O decided to add another small building at the corner of Madeira Ave. It will have a couple of small shops in it. Maybe even an ice cream shop.

A second project that BRWC / FOB's capital funding is supporting is the long-awaited construction of the replica barn at the Kelly House site. The barn will complete the historical landscape of this part of the Blackstone River State Park. In addition to supporting the Captain Wilbur Kelly House and Transportation Museum, this section of the park is also expected to play a significant role in the newly established Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. Al Klyberg was a huge proponent of the project, and we are sad he is not around to see the construction that is underway. Blackstone Heritage Corridor, Inc. (BHC) is operating this project through an agreement with BRWC / FOB and RI DEM. It will be completed in early 2018. Look for the ribbon cutting ceremony, hopefully in late January!

Lastly, BRWC/FOB also committed capital funding to help DEM upgrade part of the Blackstone River State Park visitor center building off of I-295 northbound. This building is along the highway, but is actually located within the state park. The portion of the building that formerly housed Dunkin Donuts, and briefly, The Outpost is being converted to administrative offices through another great partnership BRWC / FOB enjoys with BHC. While nothing has been finalized, it is possible that this office area will serve as the administrative offices for the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park staff. The building's lobby serves as an information distribution area, and is sometimes staffed by volunteers of the Tourism Council. The Volunteers in Parks program is already robust throughout the Valley; our volunteers have been signed up as VIPs for years. This new use of the visitor center facility will hopefully encourage the Tourism Council to join the ranks of that incredible program and also expand the presence of visitor services. Volunteers help support the important tourism component of our National Historical Park.

This is expected to open before Summer 2018.

PETERSON PURITAN SUPERFUND SITE

By Alice Clemente

Like many others in the Blackstone Valley, BRWC/FOB began 2017 on a high note, with the long-awaited announcement by EPA, RIDEM and the US Department of Justice (DOJ) that the Consent Decree for the remediation of Operable Unit 2, Peterson Puritan Superfund Site (PPSS) had been signed by a Federal Judge. The settlement for the cleanup of the site was for \$40 million to be paid for primarily by 22 settling companies, with additional monies to be paid into a trust fund by the other companies that together with the 22 make up a total of approximately 100 identified as potential polluters of the site.

BRWC/FOB officially became a part of the lengthy remediation process through an EPA Technical Assistance Grant in 2010 based on the fact that the PPSS lies within the Blackstone River floodplain. That grant allowed us to hire an engineering firm to help us interpret relevant data and submit comments and questions to the EPA. A letter from us to the Assistant Attorney General in the DOJ in February of 2017, which is now part of the official documentation, reviews our major requests for the remediation:

1. *Additional testing and characterization* of the wastes currently on the Site
2. *Leachate assessment and control*, including shallow leachate
3. *Flood assessment and protection* for the cap and the banks of the Blackstone River
4. *Restoration and stabilization* of natural riparian habitat
5. *Access to the Pratt Dam* for the Town of Cumberland's first responders

The first three will presumably begin during the current Pre-Design Investigation while the remaining will be planned and executed in later phases. BRWC/FOB appreciates EPA's acknowledgment of our sustained involvement, knowledge and commitment to river restoration and water quality improvement and looks forward to continued involvement in the Remedial Design and Remedial Action phases of this critical project that has been on the National Priorities List since 1983.

BLACKSTONE RIVER COALITION AND WATER QUALITY MONITORING

By Alice Clemente

As a member of the bi-state Blackstone Valley Coalition, BRWC/FOB continues to support and participate in its fine Water Quality Monitoring program which has just completed its 14th year of water quality testing. 88 volunteers monitor more than 70 sites in the main stem of the Blackstone River and its tributaries in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Water samples are collected from April to November, turned in at designated locations in the two states and then lab tested in accordance with pre-established criteria. The results of that testing give the two states and other interested parties significant data on such matters as bacteria and nutrient levels present in the water samples and on its turbidity. The data can then be analyzed to determine the over-all health of the river, the impacts of all these bacterial and nutrient loads on aquatic plants and fish species, for example. The over-all health of the river in turn tells us how near, or how far we are from reaching the decades-long goal of restoring the Blackstone to a "fishable/swimmable" river.

Though funding for this program is tight, it remains one of the Coalition's top priorities. This year the program's director, Susan Thomas, created town-specific mailings for every town planner and chief executive in each of the 20 towns sampled. The mailings included a general overview of the program's structure and objectives and a summary of site-specific data for each waterway. For those who are interested, specific data can be found on BRC's website zaptheblackstone.org. To get the annual "report cards," click on "What We're Doing". To find ways to improve the existing conditions, click on "What You Should Know".

2017 SPEAKER SERIES

By Judy Hadley

Three talks were planned for the 2017 speaker series. The first was a stargazing talk originally scheduled for Friday March 31st, but rescheduled to Wednesday April 26th due to an unpleasant, cold, rain. Francine Jackson, staff astronomer at Brown University's Ladd Observatory, was scheduled to speak about stars and planets observable in the spring night sky, and bring telescopes for viewing. All preparations were made for the reschedule date, but unfortunately, due to clouds, attendance was sparse.




The second talk on Sunday, April 23, 2017 about Fossils and Geology of the Blackstone River Basin was very well attended. Thirty people showed up to hear Steve Emma, former Adjunct Professor of Botany at the University of Rhode Island, speak on the local geology of the Blackstone River watershed. Steve brought along some beautiful examples of fern fossils from the area and passed them around for all to see. He even gave out some small samples.

Master Gardener and local bird expert Roseann Sherry was the featured speaker for the third and final talk of the series. On a sunny and warm Sunday, May 6th, 15 people showed up to hear Roseann talk about all the different types of wildflowers in the area and what birds and butterflies are attracted to each one. Did you know that if you want to attract hummingbirds to your yard, you should plant some bee balm, peonias, or wild columbine?

2018 will bring new opportunities for another season of talks. Our new classroom/educational addition is due to be completed and will allow for more space for talks. What topics would you like to hear about?


E-mail brwatershed@cox.net with your ideas.




Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone present

Natural History on the Blackstone


Programs on the natural wonders of the Blackstone Valley



Spring Stargazing
Friday, March 31, 2017 • 8:00 P.M.
A stargazing talk with telescopes available for viewing afterwards. Francine Jackson staff astronomer at Brown University's Ladd Observatory will speak about stars and planets observable in the spring night sky.



Fossils and Geology of the Blackstone River Basin
Sunday, April 23, 2017 • 3:00 P.M.
Steve Emma former adjunct professor of Botany at URI. Steve will bring along several examples of fossils from the area.



Birds of the Blackstone River
Sunday, May 7, 2017 • 2:00 P.M.
Roseanne Sherry, Master Gardener and local bird expert. Talk will be followed by a brief walk for those who are able.

All programs at
Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center
100 New River Road • Lincoln, RI
For more information and to register
contact Judy Hadley at 401-724-5292 or Treelady@cox.net

CVS GREEN EXPO

By Frank Geary and Judy Hadley

On June 7th, CVS invited local environmental groups to a Green Expo at their corporate headquarters in Woonsocket. The event featured many organizations, some involved in saving our planet and dedicated to reversing countless years of environmental misuse. Frank Geary and Judy Hadley attended and were very busy throughout the day talking to the attendees about our projects such as river clean-ups, the fish ladder project, the River Rat project, and many other programs we sponsor. Our booth was busy all day long. CVS employees and visitors were amazed at the amount of work we do and the number of members in our organization. A number of CVS employees even expressed interest in becoming more involved. The day was enjoyable; we spoke to many people, and both of us claimed it to be a great success.



MEMBERSHIP

By Judy Hadley

Membership continues to be an area of our organization that needs work. Membership numbers prior to 2010 are not available, but since 2010 the numbers have fluctuated between a low of 15 to a high of 66, with an average of 38. The BRWC/FOB maintains a database with over 300 names. The use of the new e-mail service Constant Contact has made sending e-mails much easier. With the completion of the new building addition, new member outreach and membership retention will be even more important than ever, given the increased costs of running the building.

FUNDRAISING

By Judy Hadley

One fundraising event was held this year. The Boys and Girls Club of Cumberland/Lincoln holds its annual fundraising Duck Race; however, due to the unpredictable nature of the Blackstone River, it was decided this year to create a new event. They chose instead to drop the ducks onto a large bullseye on the baseball field. The Boys and Girls Club graciously allows us to keep the entire profit from the sale of each "duck" ticket. This year the BRWC/FOB sold \$1,150 worth of tickets. Fundraisers proposed for next year include a return of the Savers clothing drive, a yard sale and a carwash. Start saving your gently used clothing.

RIVER RESTORATION 2017

By Keith Hainley, River Restoration Coordinator

"Dream Realized"

This year a dream that Frank Matta and I had for creating an area where Boy Scouts or other groups could camp overnight near the river and then have a river experience and do some conservation work was realized. In late March, the troop from Woonsocket brought 25 Scouts and leaders to the Sycamore Landing area and camped for two nights. They used the facilities of the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center and camped in the flats by the river. On Saturday, Frank Matta, Randy Tuomisto and I led them on a 6 mile paddle down the Blackstone to Central Falls. This is a pretty strenuous paddle not made easier by the rainy weather. We weren't able to spend as much time as we would have liked gathering trash but we still filled about 10 trash bags along the way. They returned to camp and that evening did some clearing of brush at Sycamore Landing.

About a month later the troop from Millville MA, 14 leaders and scouts, led by me did the run again. This time the weather was better and we managed to clean up some sites with trash I had spotted 3 years before but hadn't had the manpower to remove. Two very successful outings.

"Earth Day" and general river cleanup.

In April, as part of Earth Day, we had groups working in Cumberland by the Albion Dam doing some trail restoration and our "Valley Boys" cleared a lot of trash from the Lonsdale Marsh where some homeless people had left quite a bit of debris.



Pawtucket, RI - April 22, 2017

Later in the Summer I lead two outings. One trip worked from River Island Park in Woonsocket to the Rivers Edge Recreation area and we were able to pull two completely full canoes of trash. Bonnie and Chris Combs accompanied me on this trip. I discovered that the river had been lowered above Thundermist Dam and we got one day to pull some of the trash that is usually under 4 feet of water. About 6 of us were in canoes and went to the worst area. We pulled three heavy canoes with old steel tires etc. 5 more volunteers came and helped us unload the haul and get the boats back to shore. We went back on land and got the full motorcycle out.



Woonsocket, RI - September 2, 2017

Plans and new commitment

Working with the town of Cumberland and the Land Trust we have committed to maintaining the Valley Falls Heritage Park. On Nov 18th, we had between 12-18 volunteers and did quite a bit of brush cutting and worked with Jonathan Stevens, Cumberland Town Planner, to restore this park. We will be going back in the spring for the next step.

By the first of the year I will publish a schedule of planned days for cleanup for 2018. We have areas that need continued attention. If there are any problem areas someone knows of, please keep me informed (KeithHainley@BlackstoneRiver.org).

Blackstone River Watershed Council /
Friends of the Blackstone
P.O. Box 8068
Cumberland, RI 02864



Find us on Facebook
Blackstone River Watershed Council

Membership

☐ New

☐ Renewal

Date_____

Mail checks to: Blackstone River Watershed Council / Friends of the Blackstone
or (BRWC/FOB)
P.O. Box 8068, Cumberland, RI 02864

Name_____ Telephone_____

Address_____ Email_____

City/State_____ Zip_____

Your annual dues and contribution may be tax deductible.

- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|------|
| <input type="radio"/> Protector | \$1000 | <input type="radio"/> Sponsor | \$250 | <input type="radio"/> Family | \$30 |
| <input type="radio"/> Conservator | \$750 | <input type="radio"/> Steward | \$100 | <input type="radio"/> Individual | \$20 |
| <input type="radio"/> Benefactor | \$500 | <input type="radio"/> Friend | \$50 | | |

☐ I would like to make an additional donation for River Stewardship \$____

☐ I would like to make an additional donation for the Fish Ladder Project \$____

☐ I would like to donate some of my time for volunteer work

MEMBERSHIPS CAN NOW BE PAID THROUGH OUR WEBSITE

www.blackstoneriver.org

Thanks to Jesse Costa (layout) and to B & M Printing for their fine service.
Alice Clemente, Editor