

# BLACKSTONE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL / FRIENDS OF THE BLACKSTONE

**WWW.BLACKSTONERIVER.ORG**

**FALL 2018**

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.

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Dear Member,

As the despair and shorter days of winter approach, now may be a good time to reflect on what the future holds for the Blackstone River Valley. But first let's think about the past, and how dirty and filthy the Blackstone River once was. The Blackstone River was once considered a "Dead River" with an oxygen level too low to support aquatic life. Man ecologically destroyed this river once pristine and full of Atlantic salmon, a source of food and a means of travel to the Nipmuc tribe that inhabited this valley. The birth of the American Industrial Revolution, with the use of the Blackstone River as its power source and industrial waste remover, in fact killed the Blackstone. Well now, that is some winter despair... the Blackstone River was once considered DEAD by the federal government. In the 1960s local citizens fought back and spoke up to stop this pollution and dumping of toxic waste into our backyards, our Blackstone River. Laws were passed and gradually the river and the life it supports have improved. The Blackstone River Watershed Council has led this effort over the last 28 years, removing over 25,000 tires and tons of debris from the river and its wetlands. With the help of partnerships with local, state, federal governments and the hard work of local volunteers, the Blackstone River has made a huge comeback as far as water quality that supports aquatic life is concerned. Let's be proud of this fact and what the work of volunteers can accomplish.

The work is not done yet. We need more help to finish the "Riverlution" that was started 28 years ago and that to this day has no completion in sight. The Blackstone River Fish Ladder Project was started 26 years ago to bring herring and shad back to spawn in the river. This river was once teeming with these fish, a primary source of food for the native people. Herring is a food source for Cod, Striped Bass and other fish that we depend on as a food source. The industrial revolution also destroyed this asset to our food chain. We need to offer more reproductive habitat to these species before the human food chain is altered and our way of life with it. Nature has a way of coming back if you allow it to and the Blackstone River is living proof of that.

This spring the Blackstone River Watershed Council/ Friends of the Blackstone will dedicate its new 832 sq. foot addition to the Friends of the Blackstone Environmental Center. With this dedication we plan to build our membership and support from the 9 communities that make up the Blackstone River Watershed and to continue our accomplishments and new ideas for the future. Some of our main goals are to teach today's youth about the diversity of wildlife that the Blackstone River supports, while building future leaders of the BRWC/ FOB, and to get people on the river to understand this beauty and the relaxation that Mother Nature can offer one's soul. The BRWC/FOB will offer monthly canoe trips from Manville to an overlook in Albion to introduce residents to this beauty.

Now is the time to step forward and help us accomplish our goals, help your community and enjoy Mother Nature. I promise you will have fun. This "Riverlution" started in the 60s and it took 50 years to get to where we are today. Please embrace this effort to improve our backyards and our quality of life.

JOIN THE RIVERLUTION.

John Marsland

## BRWC WELCOMES 2 NEW SPONSORS!

By Suzanne Matta

We are very pleased to announce the addition of new sponsors: Hope Global has generously donated financial support to help us with our annual Pratt Dam clean-up. We've been cleaning 'the Tubes' as they are called, for over 18 years. This helps prevent upstream flooding, something Hope Global knows all too well. This year, due to heavy rains, the dam is particularly packed with heavy trees and debris. We are planning the clean-up in early October assuming Mother Nature cooperates. We also want to thank Navigant Credit Union for supporting our buoy line at the Pratt dam. We installed buoys a few years ago after a local boy, who was canoeing with his father, drowned at Pratt Dam. The buoys along with signage warn paddlers of the dangers ahead.



This photo of Pratt Dam taken in July 2018 shows the debris blocking the dam



October 2018

Unfortunately, Mother Nature did not cooperate. The cleanup of the Pratt Dam will take place early next year, again with nature cooperating.

## VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY

April 18, 2018, Kelly House barn

Sponsored by the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, Inc.

The Kelly House barn was another collaborative project partially funded by BRWC/FOB's capital funds. Our Board members, seen in the photo, stood in for the many volunteers so crucial to the success of all the work we do. They are all truly appreciated.





## BRWC REACHES OUT TO THE YOUTH IN OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

By Suzanne Matta

This year we partnered with the Mayor's Office of Children, Youth and Learning (OCYL) which offers year-round educational opportunities for children and youth to learn and achieve in Cumberland. We asked OCYL students to help us design a youth-oriented program that involved the river. Through a series of presentations and meetings we outlined our desired program requirements and the students went off to design a solution. One of our high priority requirements? It must be FUN! Over the course of 6 weeks, the students visited our site, toured the river area and learned about the history of BRWC. They then came up with a plan to help us achieve our goals. Their suggestions ranged from totally fun activities such as games geared especially toward kids, youth-friendly improvements to our website and community outreach. We had a great time working with them and have already begun implementing their ideas. Thank you OCYL!



### More OCYL ...

Dovetailing on the above learning adventures, we were able to get the students on the river. We provided canoes, paddles and safety equipment and they provided the fun. It's obvious by the smiles on their faces that they had a great time on the river. Special thanks to Sue Varela, Denise Mudge, Connor Enstvedt, Keith Hainley, Frank Matta, Matt Putnam and Randy Tuomisto for helping coordinate the activities and ensure everyone was safe on the water.





## STEWARDSHIP 2018

By Keith Hainley

### EARTH DAY 2018

This year the BRWC/FOB carried out cleanups at two locations on Earth Day. We had one group of our members, partnering with the Town of Cumberland, clean the Heritage Park on the river in Cumberland. Twelve of our members worked from 8:30 until 2:30 clearing the over growth that strangles this area and acts as a trash magnet. This work helps the town to be able to maintain this historic mill site which still has many structures to demonstrate the mill heritage along the river. BRWC/FOB has made a commitment with the town to keep this park as a pleasant place for people to come and enjoy being along the Blackstone.

Total hours of In-Kind Service amounted to 60 hours.



We also had volunteers come to the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center at Sycamore Landing. There different groups of people separated and completed many activities. Volunteers from Navigant Credit Union went North on the Bikeway and removed the growth around the river access above the Manville dam. They also picked up a couple of trash bags of litter along the bikeway. They then spent about an hour down the bank below the



bridge. There they pulled 4 contractor size trash bags of the flotsam left behind by the spring rains. Others spent time servicing our equipment and organizing the Environmental Center as well as cutting the brush around the Center and invasive plants in the area closer to the river.

This was an additional 100 hours of in kind service.

## RIVER ISLAND PARK IN JULY

On a Sunny Saturday in July, Bonnie and Chris and Keith and Adrian took a couple of canoes and went to River Island Park in Woonsocket and drifted and paddled our way down to the River's Edge Recreation Area below Hamlet Avenue.

We had done this same area the year before but unfortunately there always seems to be new trash. We were able to gather a good deal of trash. We found a couple of bicycles that had been thrown into the river from the bridges.

There was quite a bit of trash from an abandoned homeless camp. We cleaned it as best as we could and then carried the trash to the ramp at Rivers Edge so that the City of Woonsocket employees could properly dispose of it.

## STEWARDSHIP GOALS FOR 2019:

- DEBRIS REMOVAL FROM PRATT DAM IN JUNE OR JULY
- REMOVAL OF TREES THAT HAVE FALLEN INTO THE CANAL
- CONTINUED WORK ON THE HERITAGE PARK
- FLOTSAM REMOVAL BELOW EACH DAM AFTER HIGH WATER EVENTS
- KEEPING THE RIVER ACCESS POINTS OPEN
- CONTROL OF INVASIVE SPECIES

The Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone is pleased to announce that we are PRE-PLANNING a springtime "Event" in honor of our new "Classroom Style Addition" to the Environmental Center at 100 New River Road, Lincoln RI.



Stay tuned to our Sycamore Landing message board and to our website for the event date.



## SCOUT OUTING September 1 and 2, 2018

By Keith Hainley

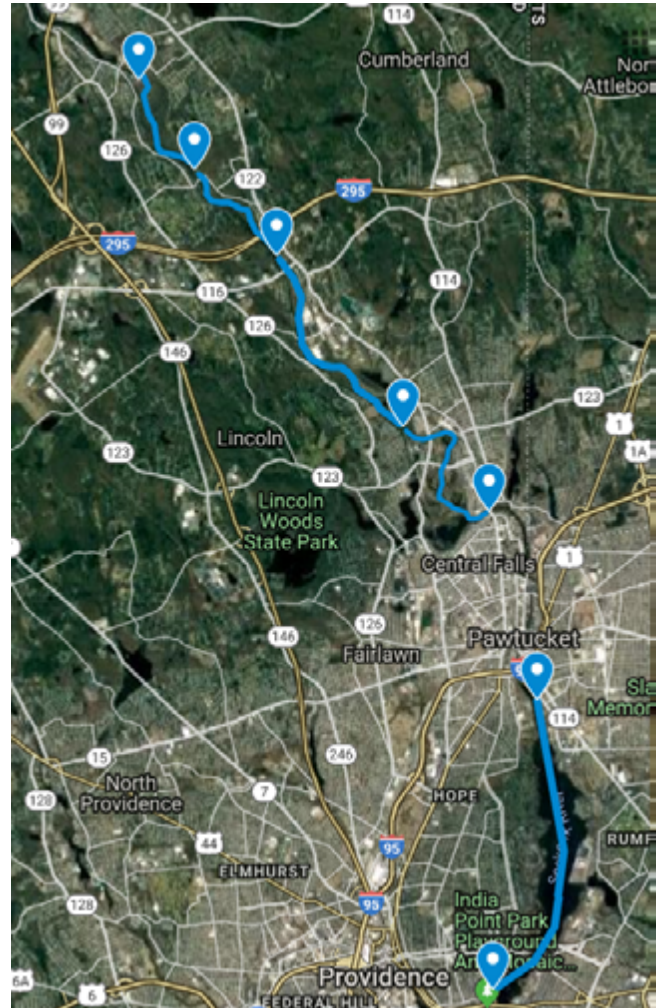
TROOP 13 FROM NEWTON MA CAME TO RHODE ISLAND TO PADDLE THE BLACKSTONE. Eric Listenfelt, Keith Hainley and 24 Boy Scouts and Leaders took a 2 day paddle from Manville to India Point on the Seekonk River in Providence.

The scouts and leaders arrived right on time at 8:30 at the Environmental Center. Everyone chose a PFD and a paddle and took them down to the beach access. We had already "staged" the canoes at the beach. Keith did his best to explain the basics of paddling and canoe safety. Then everyone got in their canoes to start our trip.

The first segment is a good place for everyone to get comfortable with paddling as this area has a gentle current and is just long enough to get comfortable. After paddling the first 1.5 miles which brought us to Albion we portaged and then paddled the next segment to the Ashton Dam. After we got back into the canoes, we took the short paddle to just below the bridge, got out at the Kelly House and went to the new barn and enjoyed our lunches.

It was a lot for some of the less experienced paddlers but we were able to do the portage at Pratt Dam and then paddle down to Central Falls Landing. We stored the canoes at a member's house and the Scouts went to River Island Park in Central Falls and camped for the night.

The next morning Keith and Eric met the group and took them to the boat landing in Pawtucket. We paddled about 3 hours on the open water to the Narragansett rowing club boat house in East Providence and that proved to be all the scouts were up for doing that day.



We welcome the scouts or any such group and have some different opportunities available, as well as camping at Sycamore Landing. I hope to have a couple of groups each year.

Keith Hainley,  
River Restoration Coordinator



## 2018 SAVERS CLOTHING DRIVE COLLECTION

Dates: Saturday June 16 and 23, 2018

By Judy Hadley

The June 2018 Savers clothing drive was the largest one to date! Thanks to the help of many, the BRWC made a grand total of \$563.75! Many of our dedicated board members came down to lend a hand with loading and unloading of countless heavy bags filled with clothing. Who knew shirts and pants could weigh so much? A special thanks goes out to our resident artist, Frank Geary who made some beautiful signs advertising the clothing drive, which were posted out on the road, and caught the attention of many passersby.

This year's total profit of \$563.75 surpassed all previous years' past totals of: 2014: \$409.20, 2015: \$355.00, and 2016: \$483.10. This year's collection was run on two days, Saturday June 16th and Saturday June 23rd. On the 23rd we even had a very successful clean-up day around the building at the same time as the clothing drive. Bonnie and Chris Combs and Randy Tuomisto spent hours cutting brush and pulling weeds. The environmental center was just humming with activity!

At the end of the day a grand total of 2,483 pounds (that's over a TON!) was delivered to the North Attleboro Savers in one pick-up truck and four Subarus, with the help of Keith Hainley, John Marsland, Bob Charpentier, Eric Listenfelt and Judy Hadley. It was a long, but successful day.



**Keith's truck was filled to overflowing!**



**George Hadley, Alice Clemente and Keith Hainley supervising.**



**Bob Charpentier even found a new jacket!**



**Just one of the large metal carts we filled.**



Some facts:

- Total weight collected and delivered: 103 pounds of hard goods and 2,380 pounds of clothing/soft goods. 2,483 pounds!
- Total dollars earned: \$563.75
- Number of volunteer hours: 90
- Value of volunteer hours: \$2,222
- Number of vehicles used to transport clothing to Attleboro Savers: 1 truck and 4 Subarus
- Number of people donating: Approx. 25

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



## BRWC/FOB Membership

☐ New ☐ Renewal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*BRWC/FOB is an all-volunteer non-profit 501(c)(3). Your contributions may be tax deductible*

*Thank you*

☐ Individual \$20    ☐ Family \$30    ☐ Friend \$50    ☐ Steward \$100  
☐ Sponsor \$250    ☐ Benefactor \$500    ☐ Conservator \$750    ☐ Protector \$1000

☐ I would like to help BRWC/FOB by getting involved  
☐ I would like to donate to your ongoing river clean-up projects: \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ I would like to donate toward educational activities and programs: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Make checks payable to: BRWC/FOB  
PO Box 8068, Cumberland RI 02864  
[www.blackstoneriver.org](http://www.blackstoneriver.org)*

