

# BLACKSTONE RIVER WATERSHED COUNCIL / FRIENDS OF THE BLACKSTONE

**WWW.BLACKSTONERIVER.ORG**

**FALL 2019**

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  
MICHAEL SCALZI, VICE-PRESIDENT  
ERIC LISTENFELT, TREASURER  
SUZANNE MATTA, SECRETARY  
FRANK MATTA, PAST PRESIDENT

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: KEVIN BURNS,  
ROBERT CHARPENTIER, ALICE CLEMENTE,  
JUDY HADLEY, KEITH HAINLEY, VINCENT MANCINI,  
JOHN OBRIEN, ARTHUR PLITT, JOSHUA PONTBRIANT,  
FRED RUGO, RANDY TUOMISTO, NICHOLAS WENTZELL,  
ED FERREIRA (ADVISOR)

Dear Member,

On May 18th, the Blackstone River Watershed Council / Friends of the Blackstone (BRWC/FOB) opened our new addition to the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center at Sycamore Landing. The Eastern Medicine Singers, a Native American drum group, was featured as they blessed the day with great music and the spirit of Mother Earth. This center will be one of our main tools in educating local residents on the values of the Blackstone River and the positive role this river can play in our everyday lives, both recreationally and spiritually.

Human health is intimately linked to environmental health. If our food, air and water aren't well, neither are we. The BRWC/FOB would like to use our assets at Sycamore Landing to bring residents from Red Mind characterized by stress, anxiety, fear and maybe a little bit of anger or despair to Blue Mind, a much healthier state of being. Blue Mind is a mildly meditative state characterized by calm, peace, unity and a sense of general happiness and satisfaction with life at the moment.

A 2017 American Psychological Association report on stress and technology noted that just under half of all adults and 90% of young adults have become "Constant Checkers," spending much of their time engaging with screens and social media. This has vastly increased levels of stress both when technology works and when it doesn't. Studies have also proven that nature has a calming effect on the human mind and that water helps amplify nature's soothing, healing qualities. We are working with members of our local American Indian tribes to learn how to use their spirituality and sacred practices to heal the natural world and ourselves. Their age-old understanding of nature and humankind's place in the natural world is integral to making positive and sustained change for each other and the earth.



People tend to take for granted things they see everyday, like stuff in our back yards. We are lucky enough to have the Blackstone River in our back yard. Almost 30 years of stewardship by the volunteers of the BRWC/FOB has created a backyard that is worth playing in again. Most residents do not realize this. YES, our backyard, the Blackstone River, is on a healthy recovery, which can lead to a healthier community. Please join the BRWC/FOB and find out for yourselves how Blue Mind can change your lives.

JOHN MARSLAND  
President

## GRAND OPENING OF OUR NEW MEETING ROOM

By John Marsland

The grand opening of our new meeting room was held at the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center on May 18th. Featured were the Eastern Medicine Singers, an Algonquin Drum group dedicated to keeping the eastern woodlands American culture alive. The spirit of Mother Earth was felt by all in attendance, as the beat of the drum brought us together as one. Many commented later on how they felt the drum inside as a soothing and natural moment. Also on hand was the Director of RIDEM, Janet Coit, who spoke about the partnership with the Blackstone River Watershed Council/Friends of the Blackstone. She described how the BRWC/FOB is the go to group and how our continued work in the watershed could not have happened on a government level. We the people, the hard working volunteers of the BRWC/FOB, are truly making a significant difference.



As mentioned in the president's message, this center at Sycamore Landing is a special place and will only get better over time. Take some time and smell the outdoors. Open your ears to the sounds of nature and feel Mother Earth warm your soul.

## LECTURE SERIES 2019

By Judy Hadley

MOTH MINGLE - Saturday, July 20

The BRWC/FOB had another busy summer season of lectures and demonstrations. Our first event was an evening moth mingle. On a hot and humid July evening, twenty-eight people came out to celebrate National Moth Week and learn about moths and other nocturnal insects with Dr. David Gregg, director of the Rhode Island Natural History Survey. Special moth lights and fermented moth bait were set out in the area around the building, including a large white bedsheet hung up to attract moths.





As we waited for the elusive and ephemeral creatures to appear, Dr. Gregg gave a fascinating and informative talk about moths and the role they play in our environment. He told us that moth species are numerous where the plant community is diverse and healthy and where there is limited pesticide use and little or no light pollution. Moths (and their caterpillars) are important food for many species of birds so a healthy moth population helps bring us birds of all types.

One of the highlights of the evening was when a URI entomology student brought in a box of neon green Luna moths that he raised himself from caterpillars. He later released them outside in hopes that they would find the area hospitable and stay and later reproduce.

There are more than 800 species of moths in Rhode Island but as the evening progressed, it became clear that due to the limited diversity of trees, shrubs and plants around our environmental center, the variety of moth and insect species that showed up was quite limited. Some of the moth species that were spotted were the: slug, skiff, banded tussock and maple spanworm.

#### MILL VILLAGES TALK: ERIK ECKILSON - Wednesday September 18th

Local river enthusiast and blogger Erik Eckilson presented a talk on the history of Rhode Island mill villages along the Blackstone River. He told stories of the old mill buildings and how the river played a role in their manufacturing and also the history of Woonsocket and its villages of Globe, Bernon, Hamlet, and Woonsocket Falls; Manville, Albion, Ashton, Berkley, Lonsdale, and Valley Falls. He gave a PowerPoint with lots of then and now pictures.

#### PAPERMAKING WITH INVASIVE PLANTS - Saturday September 14th

As part of the Blackstone Heritage Corridor's 2019 "GO!" program, the BRWC/FOB hosted internationally renowned local paper artist May Babcock. May has come up with a unique and creative use for the invasive plant *Fallopia japonica*, otherwise known as Japanese knotweed. She makes paper out of it! May took us through the entire papermaking process from start to finish. She demonstrated how she takes small pieces of the plant, chops it up in a blender and creates the liquid paper pulp. Then the participants each got to try



their hand at making their own piece of paper from the gooey, liquid pulp. The crowd ooo'd and ahh'd as the first person dipped the mould and deckle (screen and frame) into the liquid pulp then turned over his very own piece of handmade paper. There was a good turnout and each person got to make at least one piece of paper.

#### RHODE ISLAND TREE COUNCIL TREE STEWARD CLASS - Tuesdays from September 10 – October 1

This year the BRWC's educational center was home to the Rhode Island Tree Council's annual Tree Steward Class. In the four week class participants learned things like: how to identify and recognize different species of trees, tree biology and health, proper planting and pruning methods, insect and disease diagnosis, invasive plants and more. Instructors for the class were: John Campanini, technical director, and Craig Hotchkiss, Project Coordinator. This class is approved for International Society of Arboriculture and Master Gardener continuing education credits.

The tree council generously donated approximately twenty-five trees for us to plant around the building. Some of the species donated were: Redbud, Dogwood, Tulip Poplar, Bald Cypress, Cherry and more. On Wednesday November 6th, many volunteers from the Underwriters Laboratory came to clear out some knotweed and plant the trees. Next spring, the area will be blooming with new life.

## STEWARDSHIP – 2019 A VERY PRODUCTIVE YEAR

By Keith Hainley, River Restoration Coordinator

*Our members and especially The Valley Boys anchored the big cleanups this year.*

*Ray Pado, the director we lost this year, was at the first two in body and spirit and at the last leading all of us in spirit.*



**Scott Pond:** This area had not been addressed in a number of years and, as it has no outlet and has some dead-end areas, there was an extreme amount of trash to be collected. This was our primary Earth Day cleanup with many members of the public joining us to clean the environment.

**Pratt Dam:** This was a monumental feat of removing two years' accumulation of trees and trash that were blocking the bypass tubes at Pratt Dam. We have some great photos and videos of this event on our website and YouTube.



**Fanning Wilderness Area:** This is an area where we have done a lot of work in the past. In May, I discovered that someone had dumped a dozen Lowe's shopping carts down the hill. We finally were able to get in there and pulled the carts from the hillside along with 72 tires and at least ½ ton of other stuff that didn't belong in a wilderness area.

### **Sycamore Landing, home of the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center**

Our thanks go out to Frank Matta who came down on a couple of occasions with his loader and a couple more with his mower and helped us remove some heavy or buried debris, cut a couple of new trails and kept the already cleared areas mown to keep the knotweed from coming back.

*Ray Pado will be remembered whenever we are at the landing for all he did for all of us.*



Our group, with the help of many volunteers, has also spent a lot of time on the property at Sycamore Landing fighting the invasive Japanese Knotweed, Asian Bittersweet and Tree of Heaven. This work is ongoing and will keep us busy for a few years. This year we put a major dent in it and hopefully we will be able to check the growth of these invaders.

Underwriter Laboratory supported us by allowing 9 of their employees to spend the day with us planting trees and clearing Knotweed. We had 6 of our members there and again it made a big difference.



### **Blackstone River Bikeway**

Steve Emma leads the way assisting DEM by replacing the rails and poles along the path.

We now have about 6 of us who work with him and we have replaced rails and poles from John Street in Cumberland all the way to Woonsocket 12-13 miles to the north. I lost count after 100 rails and about 35 posts. Digging post holes in the frozen ground plus the rocks was really hard in January, but it was brutal in the heat of July.



We also partnered with the Blackstone River Heritage Corridor, Friends of the Ten Mile River and other groups



## Keith Hainley and Paul Swack

I retired at the end of last year and on Jan 2nd went out with Steve to replace poles and rails.

I loved the freedom of being able to work outside. I worked along the Bikeway and was able to pull a lot of trash from the riverbank in the winter while the vegetation was dormant. I worked on my own as well as planning and working the events with our group.

A few days before we did the cleanout at Pratt Dam, I met Paul Swack fishing. I invited him to join us when we did that cleanout. He was there and pitched in to help. The next week Randy T and I did a run from River Island Park to Manville Landing filling our boat to the limit and we again saw Paul at the landing. He unloaded our boat while we retrieved the truck. As they say, the rest is history.

Paul is a retired veteran and is happy when spending his time in service to us all. We have worked on many segments of the Blackstone from Mammoth Mills in North Smithfield to Slater Mill in Pawtucket. Having someone to work with, I was able to hit many of the trouble spots along the Blackstone.

We did 4 outings while the river was lowered in Woonsocket for work on the dam there. We removed what I call historical trash, discovering beat up hubcaps from the 40's and 50's. Also, this gave us access to the bypass channel at Mammoth Mills.

Please contact Keith Hainley if you would like to help us along the river.

Keith Hainley 401-996-1542

## IN LOVING MEMORY OF RAY PADO

On August 1st the Blackstone River and many people of Valley Falls lost a true friend in Ray Pado. A member of the Valley Boys, Ray led and inspired all who worked around him and by his side. If there was a difficult job like operating a cutoff saw in the middle of whitewater, running the chain saw on a dangerous cut, or building an informational box out of mahogany, Ray was our go to man. During the \$100,000 restoration of Scott Brook with the Cumberland Land Trust, Ray, with his knowledge of demolition and scrap metal removal, was instrumental in the success of the project. When a steel structure fell into the Blackstone below Ashton Dam, Ray led the way, cutting and hooking the steel for removal. The tree removal at Pratt Dam was another one of Ray's projects and ended up being his final one. In the video of that cleanup, you can see Ray overlooking the trees and the volunteers below perched on the middle of the pile.



Ray was proud of BRWC/FOB accomplishments, knowing that the Bald Eagle soaring overhead and the bass on the end of his line were directly related to his hard work restoring the Valley Falls marsh. Ray loved the marsh; it was his playground and he found this place of solitude hanging out at Ray's Landing. A whopping ten thousand tires were removed from the marsh with the help of the Valley Boys. Ray's final hours were spent on the marsh, fishing the Blackstone, doing what he loved. Ray, I think of you every day and how much fun it was to work side by side to improve the place where we lived and played. Until we meet again, soar with the eagles and look down upon us as we continue to build upon your dreams. I miss you, my friend.

John Marsland

## PETERSON PURITAN SUPERFUND SITE – OU2

By Alice Clemente

Since the 2017 approval by a federal judge of the \$40 million settlement agreement between the EPA, RIDEM and the potentially responsible parties, the remediation project has been in its Pre-Design phase. Additional field work has included testing for gasses, characterization of existing wastes and their containment within the footprint of the contaminated areas, and the ongoing assessment of leachate on the site. The Pre-Design Investigation (PDI) report has now been finalized and reviewed by BRWC/FOB and our technical advisors.

Leachate continues to be one of BRWC/FOB's major concerns. We believe that scheduled inspections for leachate breakout should continue throughout the Remedial Design phase and beyond, if necessary. BRWC/FOB is particularly concerned about the possibility of migration of impacted ground water into the Blackstone River. Both BRWC/FOB and our technical advisors also believe that further testing of landfill gasses is warranted and have requested that this testing be conducted. Finally, we have also urged the EPA to continue to study the potential shifting of wastes in several locations and to sample for emerging contaminants such as Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

Before the Design phase can begin, a second report on the exact nature of the mandated cap must be completed. Hoshiah Barzynski, already known to us for her oversight of OU1, has taken over as EPA's Project Manager for OU2, upon the retirement of her predecessor. Additional information on the history and nature of the site, as well as BRWC/FOB's involvement with it, can be found on our website [www.blackstoneriver.org](http://www.blackstoneriver.org).

## WATER QUALITY MONITORING OF THE BLACKSTONE RIVER

By Nick Wentzell

The BRC is a joint organization comprised of the Blackstone Headwaters Coalition, the Blackstone River Watershed Association, and the BRWC / FOB. The BRC monitors 75 sites throughout the Blackstone River Watershed with a dedicated team of nearly 90 volunteers, stretching from Worcester to Pawtucket. Here in Rhode Island we monitor 17 of those sites.

Water samples are gathered once a month on the second Saturday, from April through November. The samples are brought to a team of lab volunteers who perform a variety of chemical tests. Thanks to the BRWC / FOB, the Rhode Island Water Quality Lab has found a beautiful new home at the Friends of the Blackstone River Environmental Center.

We are able to use the data to identify problem areas and address them as soon as possible. The data is also used to monitor overall trends from each site to see just how much the Blackstone is improving each year, and what areas would benefit from additional protections.

If you are interested in volunteering your time, either in the lab or in the field, you can contact the Rhode Island Field Coordinator, Nick Wentzell, at [nickwentzell.wqm@gmail.com](mailto:nickwentzell.wqm@gmail.com).



## FISH PASSAGES ON THE BLACKSTONE

By Nick Wentzell

In April 2019, RIDEM held a discussion about the future of Fish Ladders on the Blackstone. The concept has been discussed for the past 30 years, and came closest to fruition in 2012 with a plan to create fish ladders on Main Street Dam and Slater Mill Dam in Pawtucket. When the plans were drafted and the costs were realized, the momentum was lost. In this recent round of discussions, new methods of fish passage are being entertained in an effort to save on overall cost. Three plans were unveiled:

The first plan would be to construct two separate Denil style fish ladders on Main Street and Slater Mill dams. This plan would mimic the plan from 2012, with a slight adjustment to the Main Street Dam to make the fish ladder straight rather than cut back towards the dam. Keeping it straight would put the start of the ladder in a pool that is favored by Shad, Herring, and even Salmon. The next plan would be to construct one continuous Denil style ladder from the base of Main Street Dam that would climb all the way above Slater Mill Dam. There are concerns, however, that the climb would be too much for the weaker fish species.

For both of these options, this would only get fish above Slater Mill. In order to reach the restored Lonsdale Marsh, there will need to be ladders at both Elizabeth Webbing and Valley Falls dams. The third plan would combat costs by creating a catch basin at the base of Main Street Bridge with an elevator to a storage tank. Specialized trucks would transport fish to any point along the Blackstone River watershed. The concern is operating the system and maintaining funding for trucks and drivers. The engineers left the meeting with recommendations and concerns to adjust their plans. In the meantime, funding will continue to be pursued.

## WINE ON THE BLACKSTONE

By Vincent Mancini

On September 7th BRWC/FOB held a unique fundraiser at Sycamore Landing. Over forty people took part and enjoyed a leisurely paddle or stroll along the river followed by a wine tasting, hosted by Wine to Vine Spirits and Tours. The event was a success with over \$1200 being raised. More importantly, we were able to highlight the beauty, wildlife and recovery of the Blackstone River and encouraged people to support and get involved in the work of BRWC/FOB. We are already organizing next year's Water 2 Wine event.

## PARTNERSHIP WORK CELEBRATED WITH BBQ

By Vincent Mancini

BRWC/FOB has been working in partnership with Franklin Farm and with the Cumberland Land Trust for many years. Franklin Farm has historically donated over 100 tons of food to the RI Community Food Bank (they reached that total in July of this year) and the Cumberland Land Trust has so far protected over 641 acres of land. Members of the three organizations have worked together on historic cleanups such as the restoration of the Scott Brook pig farm in Cumberland, spearheaded by BRWC/FOB.

The second annual joint cookout was held on August 16 at Sycamore Landing. The cookout is a social event as much as a celebration of the work that has taken place over the past year. It's also an opportunity to discuss plans and ideas for future partnership activities. But by far, the cookout is about the food and being with great people. Foods of all variety were brought, including homegrown and homemade delights. We're looking forward to next year's cookout.

## CANOE TOURS: WHERE RECREATION AND FUNDRAISING MEET

By Bob Charpentier

The final Canoe Tour for 2019 took place on September 14 with eleven people enjoying the natural beauty of the Blackstone River. The program as a whole was held on four different Saturdays over the summer months and the first year of fundraising in this way was a success! We now have many new "Friends of the Blackstone River". The feedback from the paddlers was very positive, and we look to include a short hike midway through the tour to "lookout point" during the 2020 paddling season (optional). All the funds collected this year will help to plan our program for next spring.

Many volunteers worked long hours, a big thank you to all the volunteers who helped make this program a success. See you next spring on the Blackstone River.

## ARTHUR PLITT - PAWTUCKET HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

One of our long time Board members, Arthur Plitt, was honored recently with induction into the Pawtucket Hall of Fame. This award was presented at a banquet on November 1st at the beautiful Pawtucket Armory, and is given to those who have made a lasting impact on the quality of life of the citizens of the City of Pawtucket. Arthur's generous gifts of his time and talents have extended well beyond just the City of Pawtucket. He has been on our Board of Directors for many years and has organized many Earth Day clean-ups in Pawtucket. He also serves as President to one of our "sister" watershed councils, The Friends of the Moshassuck. Arthur has also attended many meetings when issues impacting the quality of the Blackstone River have come up.

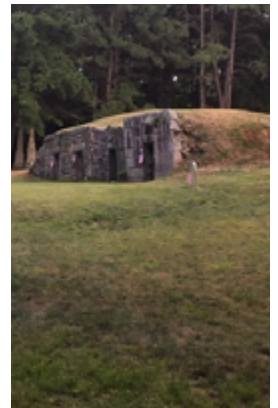
In medical circles throughout the state, Arthur Plitt, a Reiki Master in addition to being a community organizer, is known for "countless hours bringing comfort to patients and their families as a group support volunteer"...from terminally ill veterans to newborns at The Women and Infants Hospital's Oncology Program and Neonatal ICU. Congratulations, Arthur, on your well-deserved award!



## ELDER BALLOU CEMETERY

By Keith Hainley

BRWC/FOB is continuing to take care of this historic cemetery. Keith Hainley and Paul Swack have worked on Elder Ballou Cemetery for roughly 250 hours this year. This is where it was especially great to have some help. It is the type of work that goes a lot easier with two people. May and early June were spent removing the dense covering of leaves that had accumulated. Being surrounded by woods there are a lot of leaves and pine needles. We went deep not just taking the surface layer but getting down and removing the deep thatch that had built up. I think we could say we had mowed it all by mid-August. We are still working on getting all of the deep pockets of leaves moved, as this year's leaves are now accumulating. BRWC/FOB bought a powerful leaf blower which allows us to work on a whole new level. Just to give you an idea of how many leaves there are just along the road between the rock wall and the road, we recently hauled 6 pickup truckloads away. Here as with any of the work we do, anyone is welcome. If you have a couple of hours or full days to work between mowing, raking and hauling the leaves, your help is always appreciated.





**BLACKSTONE RIVER**  
**WATERSHED COUNCIL**

*Friends of the Blackstone*

P.O. BOX 8068  
CUMBERLAND, RI 02864



Find us on Facebook!

[facebook.com/BlackstoneRiverWatershedCouncil](https://facebook.com/BlackstoneRiverWatershedCouncil)

### **New! Eco-friendly Membership Renewal!**

We launched our new website and logo this year. Our totally redesigned site has a state-of-the-art look along with many new features. People can easily sign up, renew memberships, volunteer, or donate online. Simply go to our Membership page on [BLACKSTONERIVER.ORG](http://BLACKSTONERIVER.ORG), select the membership level you desire and complete the information. We are pleased to offer this eco-friendly way for you to renew your membership. It saves you time while helping the planet. Also, our Events calendar informs people of our activities and is integrated with Google Maps. Our new site also allows us to more easily fulfill our obligation to keep the public current on the status of the Peterson Puritan Superfund Site as well as other developments impacting the river.



**BLACKSTONE RIVER**  
**WATERSHED COUNCIL**  
*Friends of the Blackstone*

[About Us](#)

[Programs](#)

[Events](#)

[Con](#)

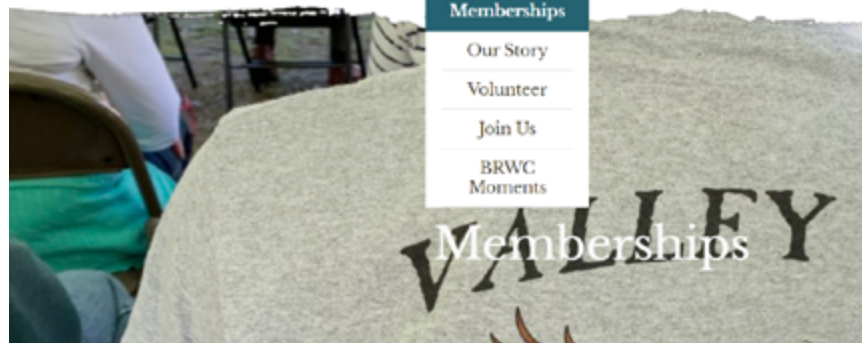
**Memberships**

[Our Story](#)

[Volunteer](#)

[Join Us](#)

[BRWC  
Moments](#)



If you prefer, you can send us an email at [BRWCFOB@gmail.com](mailto:BRWCFOB@gmail.com) and request a membership form. We will email it to you.