Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Event

November 9, 2015

The BRWA's mission is to engage, educate and advocate to improve water quality in the Blackstone River Watershed.

Agenda

- **2015 Accomplishments**
  - **The Year in Review**
- **2016 Board Members and Officers**
- **Priorities for 2016**
- **Special Event – Gene Bernat**

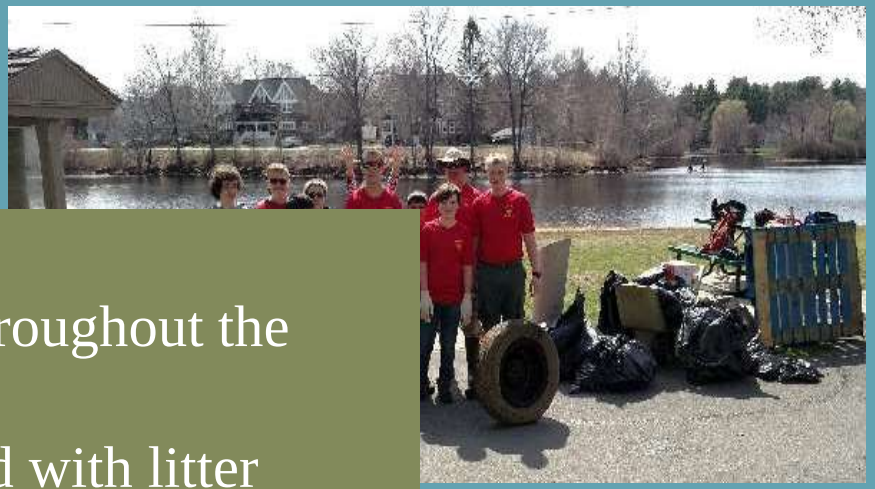
  The Living Systems Lab

How we Engaged

Winter Hike

About 50 people trekked through Hassanamesit Woods in Grafton learning about the natural history of this beautiful land and its prehistoric use by the Nipmuc Indians.

2015 Earth Day Cleanup



- 200 volunteers
- 36 sites in 10 towns throughout the watershed
- 210 garbage bags filled with litter
- Volunteers also pulled tires, household items, electronics, furniture, car parts, construction debris, the remnants of a bathroom remodeling job

Thanks to 2015 Earth Day Cleanup Sponsors:
Homefield Credit Union
Hannafords of Uxbridge
and
Next Step Living

A special thanks to our partners at Alternatives and the terrific MA DCR team at Riverbend Farm!

FAMILY FUN FISHING DAY 2015

- Sponsored by the BRWA in partnership with Alternatives, MA DCR, and Trout Unlimited
- People of all ages and abilities lined the banks of the Blackstone River and canal
- More than 100 people attended with over 80 registered to fish
- Grand raffle prize of a fly rod kit generously Donated by LL Bean

A Day Along the Blackstone

- A paddle event from Uxbridge to the Blackstone Gorge led by National Park Ranger Chuck Arning
- Over 30 participants soaked in the beauty and history of the river along with a little water!
- Thanks to our good partners who helped make this possible!

  MA DCR, Alternatives, Blackstone Valley Paddle Club, Ranger Chuck Arning

Invasive Species Program

Invasive plants on land and in the water
Linwood Pond, Northbridge

Accomplishments for 2015

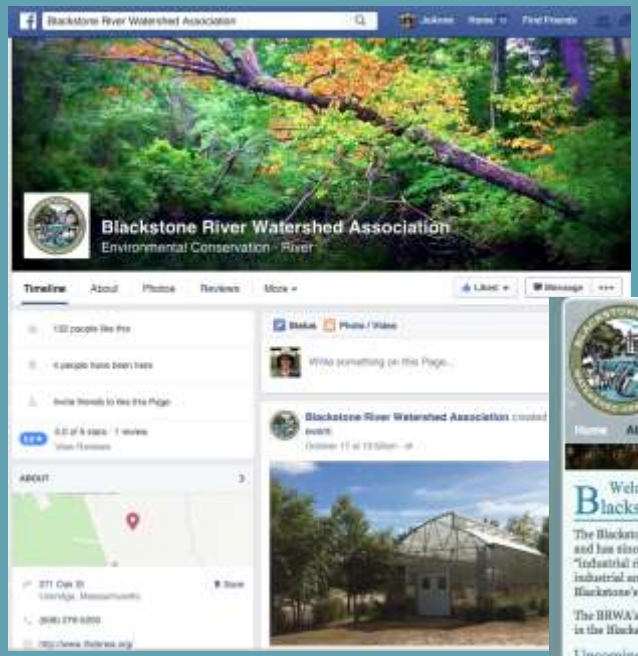
- Continued to manage Water Chestnuts in Rice City Pond Uxbridge. Several small patches were removed but large scale effort not required.
- Initiated surveys of invasive aquatic vegetation in the watershed (rivers, ponds, impoundments)

Targeted 2015 Fall Cleanup

Tire Cleanup at property adjacent to Uxbridge High School

- 50 tires were removed from the canal
- Engaged with Uxbridge high school and town personnel
- Approximately 200 tires remaining in the upland area are slated for removal next spring due to scheduling issues with the tire recycler.

Website
Facebook and Twitter presence!



www.thebrwa.org

Volunteer Bulletin

- email communication to inform subscribers of volunteer opportunities

Sign Up Today

www.thebrwa.org

Special Events

30th Annual Valley Friendship Tour

- 5K Walk/Run to support our partners Alternatives.
- $1060 raised
- The first $625 to fund essential programs at Alternatives
- The remaining $435 is offered back to the BRWA in support of our work.

BRWA Supports Rain Gardens

On June 14th, Pieter de Jong, BRWA Board Member, assisted the Blackstone River Coalition (BRC) and the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) in planting a rain garden at Regatta Point Park along the Lake Quinsigmond shoreline in Worcester.

Special Events

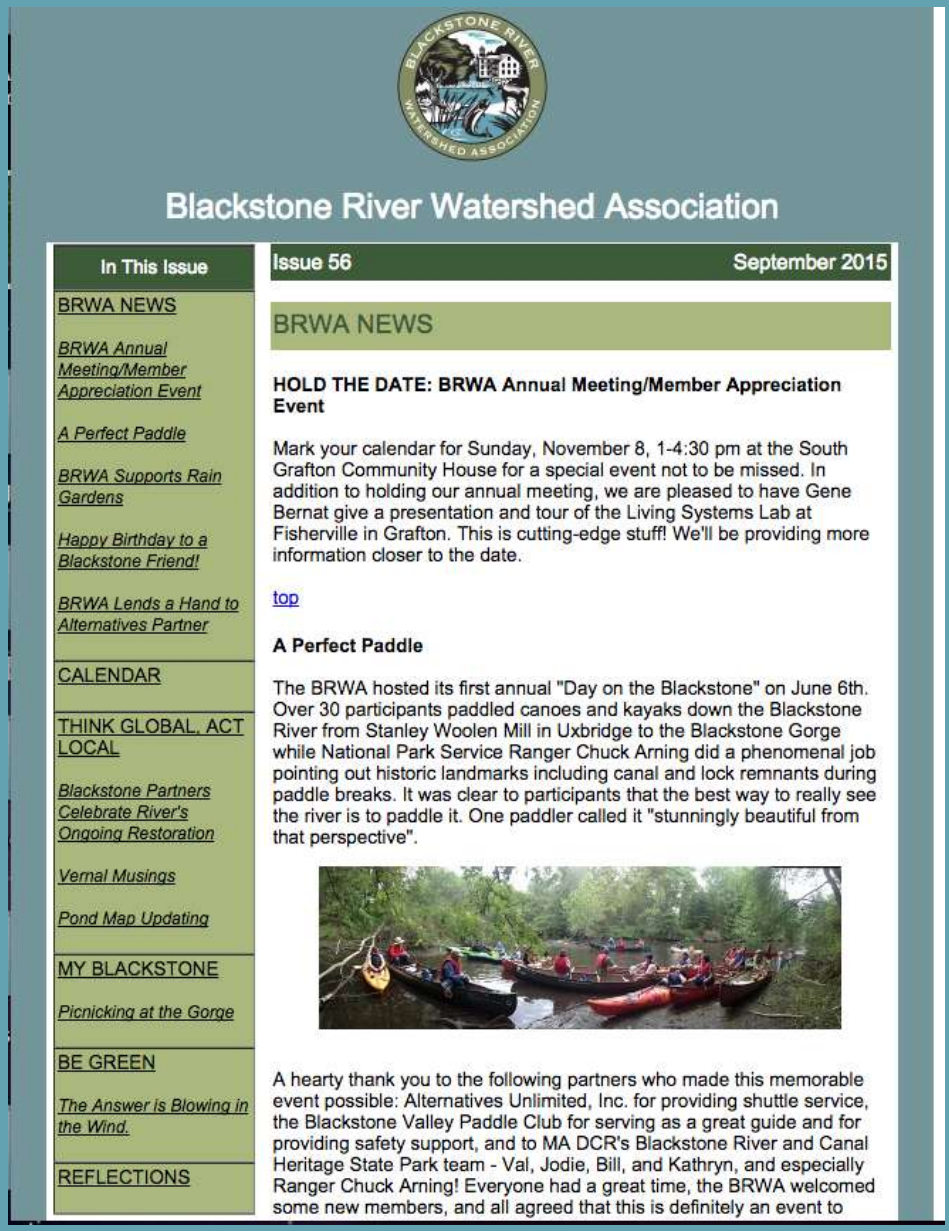
Blackstone Partners Celebrate River's Ongoing Restoration

The BRWA was present to help the Blackstone River Coalition (BRC) celebrate the many successes of its "Campaign for a Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone". Congressman James McGovern headlined a panel of government speakers on Sunday, July 26th that were gathered at the scenic Blackstone Gorge State Park in Blackstone, MA.

How we Educated

BRWA Newsletter

- Provides educational content that improves public awareness of watershed issues
- Communicates news of events and volunteer opportunities
- Electronically distributed to ~400 friends



Blackstone River Watershed Association

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BRWA Lends a Hand to Alternatives Partner

CALENDAR

THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

Blackstone Partners Celebrate River's Ongoing Restoration

Vernal Musings

Pond Map Updating

MY BLACKSTONE

Picnicking at the Gorge

BE GREEN

The Answer is Blowing in the Wind.

REFLECTIONS

Issue 56 September 2015

BRWA NEWS

HOLD THE DATE: BRWA Annual Meeting/Member Appreciation Event

Mark your calendar for Sunday, November 8, 1-4:30 pm at the South Grafton Community House for a special event not to be missed. In addition to holding our annual meeting, we are pleased to have Gene Bernat give a presentation and tour of the Living Systems Lab at Fisherville in Grafton. This is cutting-edge stuff! We'll be providing more information closer to the date.

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A Perfect Paddle

The BRWA hosted its first annual "Day on the Blackstone" on June 6th. Over 30 participants paddled canoes and kayaks down the Blackstone River from Stanley Woolen Mill in Uxbridge to the Blackstone Gorge while National Park Service Ranger Chuck Arning did a phenomenal job pointing out historic landmarks including canal and lock remnants during paddle breaks. It was clear to participants that the best way to really see the river is to paddle it. One paddler called it "stunningly beautiful from that perspective".

A hearty thank you to the following partners who made this memorable event possible: Alternatives Unlimited, Inc. for providing shuttle service, the Blackstone Valley Paddle Club for serving as a great guide and for providing safety support, and to MA DCR's Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park team - Val, Jodie, Bill, and Kathryn, and especially Ranger Chuck Arning! Everyone had a great time, the BRWA welcomed some new members, and all agreed that this is definitely an event to

Outreach

River Bend Farm 20th Anniversary celebration

- Happy Birthday to a Blackstone Friend!
- BRWA staffed a table with information on invasive plants and more.

Clean and Green Fair with Alternatives in conjunction with the Earth Day Cleanup

- Displays and demonstrations about watershed protection and terracycling
- Seedling plantings and children's activities

Watersheds and Us

- Interactive watershed model used to increase awareness and stewardship
- Engaged Earth Day Cleanup participants, students in Grafton, Millville, Uxbridge, Hopedale, Shrewsbury in discussions of the water cycle, environmental and human consequences of water pollution, and conservation practices

Teacher and Student Feedback on the "Watersheds and Us" Education Program

- *Your program is so IMPORTANT to our youth. Our students NEED to know the IMPORTANCE of water quality. They are the future of our environment and natural world. Having you come in yearly to do the hands-on program regarding watersheds is so valuable to our students and the teaching of environmental studies. Whitin Elementary School has been recognized by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a Green School and we strive to learn more and more about keeping our earth green. Your program helps us with our goal each school year. On behalf of Grade 5, we invite you back again in May 2016 to demonstrate to our students the importance of keeping our water clean, free of pollutants, and to understand the water cycle with a hands-on activity.* **Lori Fafard, Principal, Whitin Elementary School, Uxbridge MA**

- *Your program is interactive and able to accommodate all learners in our classrooms. Everyone gets to take an active role, and the children are so excited to volunteer! You present the information in a way that is easy for the children to understand. We look forward to it every year.* **Linda Simonds, 5th Grade Team Leader, Whitin Elementary School, Uxbridge MA**

- *The presentation at Millville Elementary School was very informative and the children enjoyed it.* **Miss Ranieri & Mrs. Faulkner, 5th grade teachers, Millville Elementary School**

- *Thank you for teaching us about watersheds and waterbodies and how to take care of them so we can have a better earth some day!*

- *Thank you for teaching us in a fun, and productive way about watersheds! It was really fun.*

  It (the science day presentation) really helped me on my MCAS.

- *Thank you because now I know what a watershed is.*

- *Thank you for teaching us all about watersheds and how not to pollute the earth.*

How we Advocated

Water Quality Monitoring

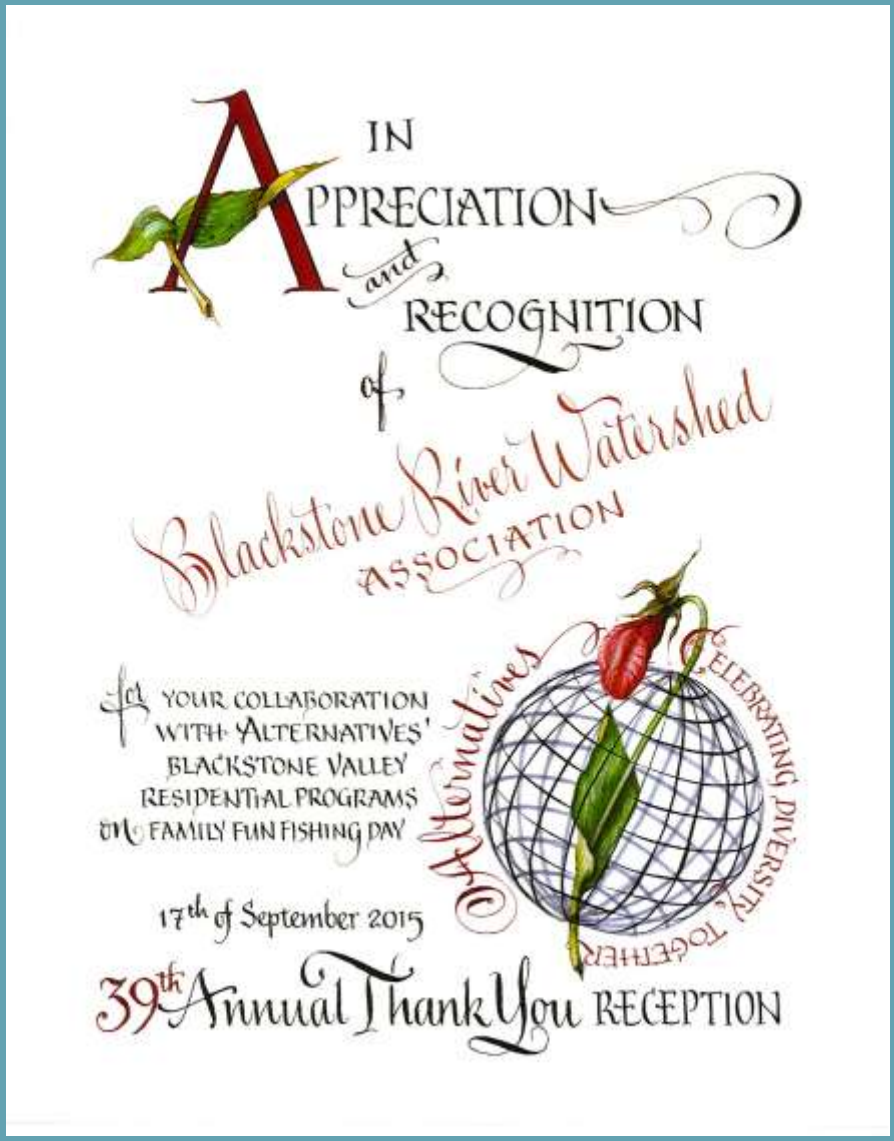
- 28 sites, Grafton to Blackstone, monitored as part of BRC program, now in 12th year
- Data used by EPA, MA DEP,RI DEM, municipalities, and environmental groups to promote smart development and water resource protection

The BRWA connects with legislators!

We continued the process of connecting with our State Representatives and Senators to make them aware of the work of the BRWA, advocating for the Blackstone River Watershed.

A special thanks from the BRWA to the Commissioner of Fish and Game, George Peterson, and to State Representative David Muradian!

BRWA receives Community Bridging Award



Leadership for 2016

Board Members

Ken Bedard

Pieter DeJong (term continues)

Tammy Gilpatrick (term continues)

JoAnne Holahan (term continues)

Joy Trahan Liptak (term continues)

Mary Murray (term continues)

Tara Neal (term continues)

Jim Plasse (term continues)

Maggie Plasse (term continues)

Mike Sperry (re-elect)

Michelle Walsh (term continues)

Proposed Slate of Officers

President: JoAnne Holahan

Vice President: Tara Neal

Treasurer: Tammy Gilpatrick

Secretary: Jim Plasse

Thank you Nominating Committee

Chair Mike Sperry, Maggie Plasse

Priorities for 2016

BRWA Aquatic Connectivity program
(formerly Stream Continuity)

- Establish a minimum of two survey teams including 2 Lead Observers.

- Survey a minimum of 25 crossing sites either as a stand-alone program or in conjunction with a BRWA project.

Education Program

- Increasing the number of schools/organizations for the Watershed and Us program
- Providing better curriculum support materials for teachers and students available through our website
- Completing the work on a promotional video for the Watershed and Us program

Invasive Species Program

- Develop and install AIS signage at popular water access areas in the watershed
- Update the invasive species section of thebrwa.org
- Continue monitoring Rice City Pond for Water Chestnuts
- Continue invasive aquatic vegetation assessments
- Begin development of an invasive species assessment/action plan document

Membership

- Increase membership by 25%
- Engage more Corporate Sponsors

Continue with successful events

Fall/Winter Hikes
Earth Day Cleanup
Family Fun Fishing Day
A Day Along the Blackstone

Come Join Us!

Guided Autumn Hike

Stefans Farm, Upton

Sunday, November 15, 2015, 1:00pm to 3:00pm

Join the Blackstone River Watershed Association as we explore one of the natural treasures within the watershed.

- **Enjoy:** It's a perfect time of year to view the fall colors on a guided walk through the fields and woodlands of this beautiful 120 acre property that has been set aside as open space by the town of Upton.
- **Discover:** Our hike will lead through riparian areas, vernal pools, wetlands, meadows, and forested habitats that support a diversity of plants and animals.
- **Learn:** Find out how this property is part of an Area of Critical Ecological Concern (ACEC) within the Blackstone River watershed. Witness remnants of the land's rich agricultural past.
- **Know before you go:** This will be a moderate, three-mile hike with uneven ground that could be wet or muddy depending on the weather. Wear appropriate footwear and bring water. Afterwards, we'll return to the parking area for warm drinks & snacks.
- **Cost:** Free for BRWA members. Nonmembers pay $5/person ($15/family) to help defray program cost. *Want to Join? Sign up at www.thebrwa.org.*
- **Directions:** Take 140 S from the Grafton/Upton line and turn left onto Mechanics Street. Or from Upton Center, take 140 N to Mechanics Street on your right. Proceed one mile to a gravel parking area on the right immediately past the powerlines.

For more information, or to RESERVE YOUR SPOT, please e-mail *events@thebrwa.org*, or call 508-278-5200.

BLACKSTONE RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
PRESERVING AND PROTECTING THE BLACKSTONE RIVER AND ITS TRIBUTARIES

For more information about the BRWA: http://www.thebrwa.org

Thank you, Susan!

We welcome your comments, encourage your participation, and thank you for your support