

**Newsletter of the Saugatucket River  
Heritage Corridor Coalition**

*Dorothy Devine - President; Richard Youngken - Vice President; Sue Fisher - Treasurer; Robin Nelson - Secretary*

**Issue 10, March 2002**

***New Office Open House***  
*A Celebration!*

**Join us in our exciting new office space on the Saugatucket River, at 333 Main Street in Wakefield. We are located off the long hall behind Fiddleheads Cafe & Bakery. Park in the riverside lot and enter the door furthest to the left.**

***Refreshments, Displays, Information on Plans for 2002***

***Thursday, March 14, 7-9 p.m.***

**Special presentation at 8:00 p.m.**

*Troy West's Main Street East Design (see story inside)*

*President's Report*

You may be wondering why you did not receive a newsletter from us in December. The answer is that we have been busy setting up our new office on the Saugatucket River in Wakefield's Historic Main Street District (333 Main, behind Fiddlehead's Cafe). We've been working for the river since 1994; now we should be much easier to find!

Renting the office was made possible by a \$10,000 check from the RI General Assembly to support the local water protection efforts of each of the five Watershed Councils. Hard work by Meg Kerr of the RI Rivers Council and sponsorship by Reps. Eileen Naughton, Scott Rabideau, Suzanne Henseler, and Brian Kennedy should be praised. They have sent a strong and positive message that community-based efforts to defend the health of our rivers and watersheds are critical to our environment, economy, and overall quality of life. Thank you also to our VP, Richard Youngken, who attended many Rivers Council meetings to lobby for this support.

Thanks, too, to our wonderful clean-up volunteers. Many students, family groups, and scouts joined us on Rivers Day in June to clean up the site of the Saugatucket River Walkway in preparation for the Main Street Block Party.

*by Dorothy Devine*

You'll be happy to know that we are told construction of the Walkway is finally scheduled to begin this year.

In September we cleaned Saugatucket Park and planted spring bulbs in our garden. Special thanks to the SK High School students who had so much fun pulling ancient shopping cards from the river AND videotaping themselves and us in the process.

In October we cleaned the nature trails in Old Mountain Field and also had a display at the Main Street Octoberfest Block Party. The nature trails show marked improvement. Environmental stewardship has really caught on.

In 2002 we have a new environmental protection project called Grate-Mates (*see story inside*). We are also looking for volunteers to help in the office so we can organize our many resources and schedule hours we are open to the public. To help, call 782-0149.

***RIVER OFFICE WISH LIST***

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Computer Chair | Rugs            |
| Sidewalk Sign  | Office Supplies |
| Coat Rack      | Office Staff    |
| Bookcases      | Grant Writer    |
|                | Video Editor    |

***Please come enjoy our open house the 14th. Just drop by — or stay a long time! We'd love to see you!***

## *Saugatucket Pond Levels Affect Fish, Recreational Use, Algae Blooms by Dorothy Devine*

Saugatucket Pond, located between North Road and Oakwoods Drive, the Peace Dale Library, and Saugatucket Road, is a 41-acre reservoir created in the 1800s to power the Peace Dale Mill Complex, now Palisades Industries. Water is held in the pond by a beautiful antique stone dam, visible from Route 108, and leaves the pond by both the river and by a sluiceway which, in the past, directed the water power to turn the turbines in the mill.

During the summers of 2000 and 2001 water levels in Saugatucket Pond were unusually low. I began to feel like real a river *ombudswoman*, as I received pond residents' complaints and was asked what could be done to restore water levels. Recreational enjoyment for canoers, fishermen, and kayakers was at a new low, as was the water! People were putting gauges on the legs of their docks to measure water loss. Based on my depth measurements for Watershed Watch, at its lowest point in 2001, the pond contained 22,242,703 fewer gallons of water than usual.

Calls to the Department of Environmental Management brought a visit from Paul Guglielmino, who had issued a permit to the Guarriello family for dam repairs (the sluiceway gates had to be open so the water wouldn't run over the dam while it was being worked on). Per his request to the family, the gates at the sluiceway were closed during the only rainy week during the summer 2001, and for a few days

### **SRHCC 2002 Events**

*Check local newspapers for more details, or call us at 782-0149.*

#### **March 14**

Open House, 333 Main Street, 7-9 p.m.

#### **April 20**

Earth Day River Cleanup, 10 a.m.- Noon

#### **June 15**

Rivers Day events throughout South County

#### **September 14**

Saugatucket Park Cleanup & Garden Care, 10 a.m.-Noon

#### **October 14**

Breakfast on the Saugatucket, 11 a.m.

the pond again measured its usual 3 meter depth. Work on the dam never, in fact, took place.

We were told by D.E.M. that new regulations demand that the fish ladder at Palisades Industries always be full of water, not just during the two months (April and October) when the river herring need it for their run upstream to spawn and when the new offspring swim back down to the sea. Although fish have been filmed using the fish ladder at Main Street, there is no real evidence they ever make it up the fish ladder at Palisades to spawn in Saugatucket Pond. Perhaps keeping the ladder full is a start to see what needs to be done to improve the ladder so the fish can use it. Leaving the sluiceway gates open leads in drought conditions to low pond levels, loss of water clarity, greater algae blooms, habitat degradation, difficulty putting in and taking out boats, canoes, and kayaks, and generally lowered recreational values.

Our next step will be to find out how, why, and by whom this troublesome regulation was implemented, and whether it is possible to get some sort of variance in the requirements. We can also hope we don't have another drought year in 2002.

### *Loss of a Friend*

We were deeply saddened by the death of our Board member, Ed Steward of Peace Dale, and send his wife Ruth our deepest condolences.

Ed was a true example of the power of energetic volunteerism, with service to literally dozens of organizations, including the Appalachian Mountain Club Narragansett Chapter, the Health Center of South County, Camp E-Hunt-E, Wakefield Rotary, South Kingstown Parks and Recreation, and the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition.

He was our largest individual donor and also achieved the donation of property on River Street and conservation easements on Silver Lake Avenue for the Saugatucket River Green Corridor. He and Ruth created and cared for the Tri-Pond Trail. It's hard to believe we won't run into Ed — wearing his signature tam-o'-shanter and a wide grin — around town anymore.

He is and will be missed.

*by Richard Youngken*

The Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition is proud to present a creative plan for remaking a significant part of the watershed. Troy West of Sustainable Design Associates will be on hand at our Open House March 14 to discuss his models and drawings and will do a presentation and answer questions at 8 p.m.

Developed incrementally over 30 years, Tower Hill Road and its strip development in Wakefield has become both a gateway to the community and a dangerous sea of asphalt which has a negative impact upon Indian Run and the Saugatucket River by way of toxic runoff.

This area, also know to some as Main Street East, is burdened by strip commercial development that could be found virtually anywhere. Much of what has been built has become less than attractive as a place to visit. It is a place many in the community, especially pedestrians, avoid if given a choice.

Why not imagine remaking the area into a more beneficial place - a place with heightened economic development potential, the possibility of creating a living and working environment with less hazardous traffic, more pedestrian-friendly amenities, more sophistication and greater beauty? Couldn't we use a more complementary gateway to Wakefield?

Troy West's plan is the starting place for a constructive dialogue on ideas - we can call them "what ifs?" One of the leading planners of the last century said "make no little plans, for they do not inspire the hearts of men (or women)." We agree. We thank the Rhode Island Foundation for funding this project and we look forward to the discussions and comments it generates.

Treasurer's Report

*As of February 5, 2002, the Coalition's financial situation is as follows:*

**Total Assets:**

Certificates of Deposit	\$17,500.00
Checking Account	7,214.88
Cash	12.17
Interest Earned - 2000 & 2001	772.35
Legislative Grant (Sosnowski)	1,000.00
Legislative Grant (Watershed Councils)	10,000.00
<b>Total Current Funds:</b>	<b>\$36,499.40</b>

**Assets Committed:**

Boardwalk (Prospect Hill Fdn.)	\$7,000.00
Held for Friends of the Bike Path	1,089.29
Held for Outdoor Classroom	8,788.07
Held for Main St. East Project	2,000.00
Committed for Office Rent	8,400.00
<b>Total Assets Committed:</b>	<b>\$27,277.36</b>
<b>Remaining Discretionary Funds:</b>	<b>\$9,222.04</b>

Grate-Mates are catch-basin inserts. They are special fabric filters. When they are placed in storm drains, they can trap 50% of the oil, dirt, other pollutants, and trash that would otherwise drain into the Saugatucket and its tributaries without any treatment.

Our fish and aquatic life are suffering from a wide range of impacts — oil from our cars; metal shavings from our brakes and tires; soap when we wash our cars; pesticides from our lawn care products; sediments from construction sites.

Grate-Mates can capture 20-55 pounds of pollutants in a six-month period, including 1/2 quart of oil. Each quart of oil can create a 2-acre oil slick and used oil has toxins like lead, arsenic, and benzene. 70-80% of water pollution has been shown to come from trash, dirt and oil washing off paved surfaces, about half from parking lots.

The process of installing Grate-Mates requires a partnership of several groups. The Town of South Kingstown needs to clean out the storm drains before they can be installed. Students and volunteers need to install the Grate-Mates. In the process, they learn about the environmental impact of development and take action to mitigate it. Merchants and project sponsors need to finance the cost of the inserts for parking lots. Filters cost about \$95, of which 50% is tax-deductible. The students who do the work get \$25 per installation for a charity or cause of their choice. Our Grate-Mates project includes public education, public awareness, and public involvement efforts. It's a collaboration between business, government, schools, and non-profits. To help, call us at 782-0149.

*by Sue Fisher*

Learn more! Search for "Saugatucket" on the Internet!  
www.saugatucket.org  
It's easy to find our website, maps & watershed information

Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition  
P.O. Box 209  
Wakefield, Rhode Island 02880

**Please Check One:**

- I have contributed before. Here is my contribution for 2002-2003.  
 Please add my name as a supporter of the Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing/Phoning

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my contribution for conservation  
of the Saugatucket River:

City \_\_\_\_\_

State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

\$10 Pumpkinseed

\$25 Pickerel

\$50 Yellow Perch

\$100 Smallmouth Bass

(Other) \$\_\_\_\_\_ Trout

*All who care about the Saugatucket are welcome to join us at our monthly meetings  
at 333 Main Street, Wakefield, the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 pm.*

Please make checks payable to S.R.H.C.C.  
Mail to: P.O. Box 209, Wakefield, RI 02880.

I would like to help out with:

- Grate Mates Project & River Clean-ups  
 River Access & Trail Development  
 River Office Volunteer Staff  
 Garden Planting & Care (Saugatucket Park)  
 Education / Publicity / Exhibits / Displays  
 Land Acquisition & Protection  
 Grant Writing, Fundraising & Membership  
 Self-Guided History/Ecology Tour Design  
 Attending/Reporting on Relevant Town Meetings

Questions? Ideas? Call us at 782-0149  
or email saugriv@aol.com

Here are some other ways I can help (please specify):