The Nashua River Watershed Association is pleased to receive a Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET) grant to help improve wild brook trout habitat in the Town of Ashby. Ashby is rich in coldwater fish resources, with populations of native Eastern Brook Trout that seek the cold, well oxygenated, clean water for their habitat. Eastern Brook Trout are indicator species of stream health. Ashby is also home to several dirt roads composed of fine-grained sand that easily erodes. Intense rainstorms scour dirt roadways, sending the sand to adjacent streams where it covers the natural stream substrate used for spawning. Such weather events also mean that these roads require frequent and costly maintenance.

With funding from MET, an environmental engineer from Inter-Fluve, Inc. will develop a design plan to improve and strengthen the endurance of a dirt roadway where it crosses a tributary to Trapfall Brook. The tributary was found by Massachusetts Fisheries & Wildlife to sustain a healthy population of wild native brook trout. However, sedimentation could lead to a decline in population health and abundance. The new design is intended to protect the important coldwater fish resource area adjacent to the road. The methods developed at this site will be reproducible at other dirt road locations. Ashby will also be eligible for implementation funding that could include the replacement of a culvert at that location. The current culvert is perched, with the base of the culvert above the streambed, impeding fish passage.

This project grew out of NRWA’s previous MET-funded work to assess culverts for fish passage and flood control in all twenty-four Massachusetts watershed towns. NRWA is working with our communities to address issues related to climate change, seeking to protect local bio-diversity and to increase resilience to extreme weather events from drought to flooding.

NRWA Updates Ayer Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Town of Ayer contracted with the NRWA to help update its Open Space and Recreation Plan. Working with Ayer Conservation Agent Jo-Anne Crystoff, the NRWA conducted an in-depth review of the existing Plan, then wrote an updated Plan with extensive revisions, which included ADA requirements and production of new maps. The updated Plan was approved by MA Division of Conservation Services. To work with the NRWA on open space and recreation planning, please contact Al Futterman, Land Programs Director, AlF@NashuaRiverWatershed.org.

MET Specialty License Plates

The Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET) has awarded a number of grants to the NRWA over the years. MET is a state trust that awards grants to projects to protect water and water-related resources, www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-environmental-trust. MET’s funding comes solely from the sale of specialty license plates. You can help support MET by purchasing their Right Whale, Leaping Trout, or Blackstone Valley plates at https://secure.rmv.state.ma.us/SpecialPlates/intro.aspx. Thank you to MET for supporting NRWA’s work to protect our waterways and communities.
A Canoe & Kayak Access Assessment Project

Public access to our beautiful rivers is of great importance to the NRWA and the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Committee (Study Committee). Access can take the form of riverside trails, identified locations for shore fishing, places where the beauty of the rivers can be viewed and enjoyed, and, of course, access locations for paddlers (and other boaters). The access sites themselves are the first experiences paddlers will have as they approach our waterways, and they need to be as safe as possible, serve a variety of physical abilities, and have a minimal ecological footprint. As its first project since securing National Wild and Scenic River designation for sections of the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers, the Study Committee conducted a careful field assessment of current canoe access sites on all three rivers. Led by Al Futterman, NRWA Land Programs Director and lead researcher/writer of the NRWA’s Nashua River Canoe and Kayak Guide, teams of volunteers did site visits to approximately 30 sites, as well as considering some possible new access sites. Sites were assessed using a custom checklist tool created specifically for the task. The teams looked at elements such as the slope or steepness of the site, vulnerability to erosion, the presence of invasive plants, stormwater runoff concerns, parking availability, and ease of users to get on/off the road.

The assessment found the sites to be in various conditions from the “premiere” Petapawag site in Groton, which is the only concrete ramp site for boat-trailers, to several that are rarely used—perhaps indeed due to difficulty of use. A few sites were impeded by steep approaches from parking to the river, difficult entry from the river bank into the water, bank erosion, or encroaching vegetation. Only a few sites are adequately marked with signage; most are “hidden” and only known to locals, and a couple are privately owned, although not posted “No Trespassing”. Most of the sites are logically located where a road crosses or comes closest to the river. Some could be improved through minor fixes while others demand major fixes such as guard rail modifications. Because none of the sites has visitor usage data, it was very helpful to speak with local residents about site usage. Only a few sites seem to be “officially” maintained, while most rely on maintenance by users. The next step will be for the Study Committee to review the assessments and formulate an action plan to prioritize potential improvements. Funding for this project has been provided in part by the National Park Service, the Bruce J. Anderson Foundation, and the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts.
NRWA PUBLIC PROGRAMS in 2019

Mike Bailey (back left) talks about re-introduction of the American alewife during our free guided walk along the Nissitissit River in Brookline, NH, part of NRWA’s 50th Anniversary series. Credit: Al Futterman

Success! Nearly three dozen individuals of all ages participated in our “Beginner Fishing Clinic” in Lunenburg, MA, funded by a grant from the Greater Lowell Community Foundation. Credit: Nancy Karuzis

Over eighty people attended our “History of the Nashua River and the NRWA” program in Fitchburg, part of NRWA’s 50th Anniversary series. Left to right: Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale; Ellen DiGeronimo, former Fitchburg City Councillor; Marion Stoddart, NRWA founder; Ralph Baker, current NRWA Board Secretary; Warren Kimball, current NRWA Board member; and Bill Flynn, former Fitchburg Mayor. Credit: Wynne Treanor-Kvenvold

Learning about good forestry practices and impacts of climate change from NRWA Board member Mike Fleming (far right) during our walk in Leominster State Forest, part of NRWA’s 50th Anniversary series. Credit: Nancy Karuzis

Chris Buelow, from MA Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (fourth from left) leads our exploration of the unique habitats at the Pine Hill site of Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area in Bolton, part of NRWA’s 50th Anniversary series. Credit: Nancy Karuzis
50th Anniversary Celebration!

DATE: Saturday, November 2, 2019
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: Devens Common Center

Live Music by Trilogy
Watch for your invitation this fall

Presenting Sponsor

Anniversary Sponsors

CanAm Machinery Inc.