


NARROW RIVER NOTES

Narrow River Preservation Association: Preserving the Narrow River and the Watershed / Spring 2012

Saltmarsh Sparrow



Last year, our Road Race symbol was the mighty Bald Eagle. This year, it's a slight but speedy sparrow that nests in the salt marshes along Narrow River. The Saltmarsh Sparrow has adapted to the moon high tide cycle in order to breed, starting a nest immediately after one moon tide and breeding before the next moon tide can sweep away the nest and new brood.

© 2008 Wolfgang Wander



The Good, the Bad and the Ugly In a scene played out every spring throughout the Narrow River Watershed, Oriental bittersweet climbs a small oak along Lake Canonchet in Narragansett while Phragmites move in from the water's edge. The invasive woody vines will eventually choke the oak as well as starve out the vegetation below the tree. A group in Narragansett is looking to remove the bittersweet and other invasive vegetation and restore natural habitat along this pond in the southeast corner of the watershed. See *Restoring Habitat* on page 4 to learn more about this ambitious project and how you can help.



Along the River, May 19

Don't miss the 25th Narrow River Road Race (see page 6).



In the River, June 23

The Turnaround Swim celebrates the returning health of the river and the joy of open water swimming (see page 6).



On the River, July 21

This year's Pettaquamscutt Paddle will be a sunset cruise (see page 6).

President's Cove

As we do in each spring issue, this *Narrow River Notes* includes a call for volunteers for the NRPA River Watch Water Quality Monitoring Program (see page 5). The program consists of volunteer monitors who obtain samples at 14 sites along the river, from Gilbert Stuart Stream in the north to Mumford Brook and Sprague Bridge in the south, from May to early October. Since the start of the program in 1992, over 160 volunteers have taken more than 30,000 measurements and samples.

While the volunteers provide collection, measurement and basic analysis, the URI Watershed Watch Program provides the professional services necessary to have accurate, reliable and usable scientific data. The services include training, equipment and supplies, and laboratory analysis of thousands of samples according to EPA quality assurance standards.

The data have been used by numerous groups ranging from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to University of Rhode Island scientists and students to local high school students. For example, the database was the only basis for the long-term trend analysis in the 2001 R.I. Department of Environmental Management study that identified Narrow River as an impaired water body. In response to the finding, the Town of Narragansett went forward with significant investments in stormwater management projects along the river, such as those in the Circuit Drive, Mettatuxet, Edgewater and Pettaquamscutt Terrace neighborhoods.

Several of the River Watch sites are near the water quality improvement projects in which the Town of Narragansett has already invested. By monitoring the water quality here, we are able to look at the effect of these projects. Other sites may help detect problems with septic systems and wastewater in other parts of the river.

Water quality of Narrow River is crucial not only to Narragansett residents who live on or near the river, but also to anyone who is using Narrow River for recreation. Good water quality is essential for promoting Narrow River and its surrounding land as a place for people from other towns and states to visit and enjoy, and perhaps even move to. Recreating in Narrow River – whether it is swimming, boating, fishing or other uses – is made all the more enjoyable by knowing the water is being tested on a regular basis.

As we start the third decade of the Watershed Watch Program, we are very grateful to the more than 160 volunteers who have participated in the program over the first 20 years and to the towns of Narragansett, North Kingstown and South Kingstown and other funding sources including our members that have contributed to the cost of the professional services provided by the URI Watershed Watch Program.

Richard Grant
NRPA President

MISSION STATEMENT

The Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA) works to preserve, protect, and restore the natural environment and the quality of life of all communities within the Narrow (Pettaquamscutt) River Estuary and Watershed.

www.narrowriver.org

NARROW RIVER PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 8, Saundertown, RI 02874
(401) 783-NARR (6277)
nrpa@narrowriver.org
www.narrowriver.org

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Association (NRPA)

Editor

David Smith

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Ken McShane, Treasurer
Jon Boothroyd, VP Science
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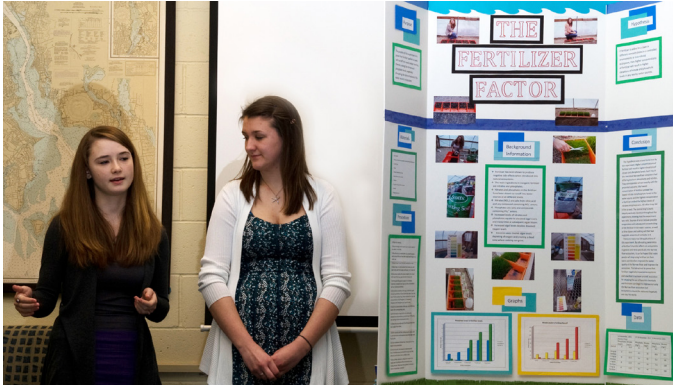
Submissions & Correspondence to
nrpa@narrowriver.org

Rhode Island Rivers Council

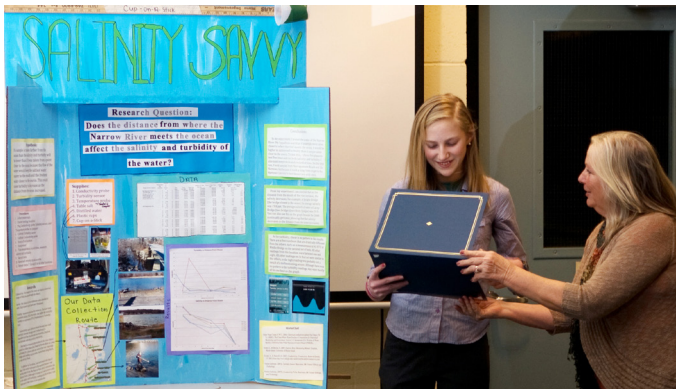


NRPA Honors Three for Science Fair Projects

NRPA presented awards at its March 2012 meeting to Alexis Cobb and Jessie Trager of South Kingstown High School and Morgan Fogleman of Curtis Corner Middle School for their science fair projects at their respective schools.



Jessie Trager (above, left) and Alexis Cobb began the meeting by discussing the *Fertilizer Factor*, their study on how lawn fertilizer impacts the ecology of the river.



Morgan Fogleman (shown above receiving an award certificate from Board member Lynn Wolslegel) followed with her study, *Salinity Savvy*, in which she measured levels of salinity and turbidity at various points along Narrow River starting with the source of salt water at Narragansett Beach and traveling north to Gilbert Stuart Museum.

The young scientists were then given a certificate of award, a \$50 U.S. Saving Bonds and a student membership in NRPA.

Each year NRPA Board members judge high school and middle school science fairs in towns in the watershed for NRPA Science Fair awards in order to encourage the curiosity of young scientists and to help them gain respect for the environment.

One award is given for one project in each school and Honorable Mentions are given to other qualified students in recognition of the quality of the student's research and its relevance to NRPA's goal of protecting the Narrow River, its watershed, and its communities as a unique, dynamic, and fragile ecosystem. The project does not have to be about the Narrow River specifically, but can be on any relevant topic.

Students receiving Honorable Mentions for projects at the South Kingstown High School Science Fair were:

Jordan Towle: *River Quality Before and After Precipitation*

Katherine Moore: *How Rainfall Affects the pH of River Water*

Kira Wencek: *Sewers, The Solution to Pollution?*

Doug Barlow: *Best Boom Materials*

Students receiving Honorable Mentions for their exhibits at the Curtis Corner Middle School Science Fair were:

Kate and Scott DeBoer: *How Clean is the Air You Breathe?*

Keia Depina: *Salinity in Different Aquatic Environments*

Maleah Gillette: *The Effect of Water Depth on Current Speed at the Surface*

Sophia Lavoie: *What is the Most Effective Method of Cleaning Up After an Oil Spill?*

In addition to judging at middle schools and high schools, NRPA Board members visit elementary school science fairs to give out certificates to students with appropriate environmental projects. Other NRPA education initiatives include the Active Watershed Education (AWESome) curriculum and the Watershed Science for Educators course, and the NRPA/Lesa Meng College Scholarship.

Photos

Page 1: Clockwise from the sparrow: Wolfgang Wander, John McNamara, John McNamara, Ron Wofford, David Smith

Page 3: John McNamara

Page 4: David Smith

Page 6: John McNamara and Ron Wofford

Page 8: David Smith

Restoring Habitat: Friends of Canonchet Farm Tackles Invasives

The Friends of Canonchet Farm in cooperation with the Town of Narragansett has launched a three-year program to remove invasive vegetation along the east edge of Lake Canonchet, a coastal freshwater pond across Boston Neck Road from the Narragansett Beach South Pavilion. Lake Canonchet flows into Little Neck Pond to its north, which in turn empties into Pettaquamscutt Cove. The Town of Narragansett's Master Plan for Canonchet Farm calls for elimination of beach employee parking on the site as the entire stretch between Boston Neck Road and the two ponds will be turned into a linear park.

The invasive removal program, which is being conducted under a permit from the R.I. Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC), involves Friends of Canonchet Farm members and other volunteers cutting and up-rooting Black swallow-wort, Oriental bittersweet, Japanese

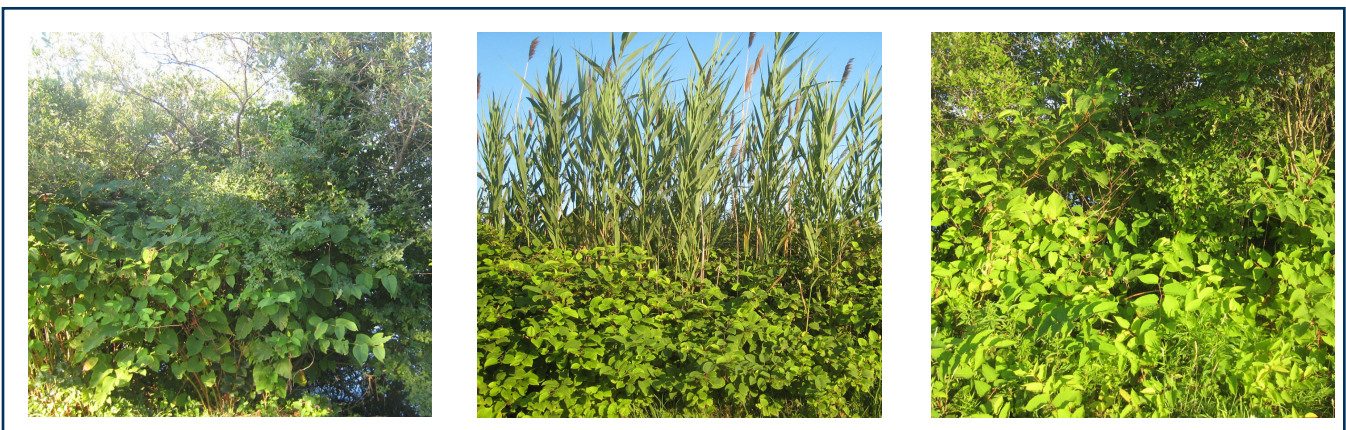
knotweed and other invasives that are out-competing the shadbush, bayberry and other natives species on the site. Where the invasives have already eliminated the native species, the group will plant a variety of plants selected from the Rhode Island Coastal Plant Guide (click the **RI Coastal Plant Guide** link at uri.edu/cels/ceoc). The removal of the invasives will restore diversity to the vegetation, which in turn will provide a richer environment for wildlife, including migratory birds.

Work began March 30 and 31, and will continue on selected Fridays and Saturdays through the spring. Training in plant identification and removal methods will be provided by four members of the Friends of Canonchet Farm who have been certified as Invasive Control Managers by CRMC and URI. The volunteer work parties will use various mechanical techniques to remove the un-

wanted plants while protecting the root systems of the native plants and the pond embankment. No herbicides will be used during the spring. However, after the growing season, the Friends will hire a licensed applicator to treat certain areas.

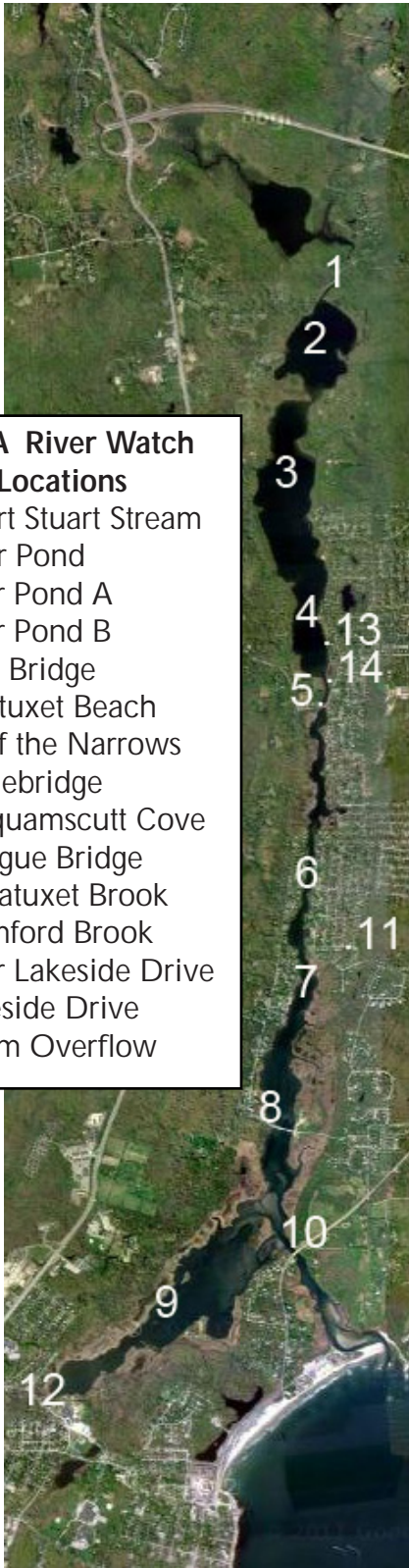
An important goal of the Lake Canonchet project is to build public awareness of the problem of invasive species and demonstrate effective methods of removal. The Friends of Canonchet will be joined in this educational effort by volunteers from the URI Master Gardeners. But don't think that all the jobs have been taken. Plenty of volunteers are needed as this project will take at least three years to complete and the plan is to work on adjacent areas while maintaining the initial project area. For more information, click the **Restoring Habitat** tab on:

<http://canonchet.org>



Japanese knotweed (left) is a principal villain at Lake Canonchet, sometimes joined by Phragmites (center), and is winning its battle against native plants (right).

River Watch Volunteers Needed



NRPA River Watch Locations

- 1 Gilbert Stuart Stream
- 2 Upper Pond
- 3 Lower Pond A
- 4 Lower Pond B
- 5 Lacey Bridge
- 6 Mettatuxet Beach
- 7 End of the Narrows
- 8 Middlebridge
- 9 Pettaquamscutt Cove
- 10 Sprague Bridge
- 11 Mettatuxet Brook
- 12 Mumford Brook
- 13 Near Lakeside Drive
- 14 Lakeside Drive Storm Overflow

Base image ©2011 Google - Cnes/Spot Image, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, MassGIS, Commonwealth of Massachusetts EOE, RIGIS, USDA Farm Service Agency

NRPA is looking for volunteers to join its River Watch Program. Volunteering to be a water quality monitor is a great way to learn more about the water quality of the Narrow River, and at the same time provide a much-needed service to NRPA. No previous experience in water quality monitoring is required.

All new volunteers receive both classroom and field training from the University of Rhode Island's Watershed Watch personnel. Manuals and all necessary monitoring equipment are provided.

The monitoring season runs from May until October. The program consists of biweekly measurements of temperature, algae concentration, salinity, water clarity, and dissolved oxygen. Each volunteer is assigned a river location for monitoring. Some locations can be monitored from the shore while other locations require a boat or canoe for monitoring.

Classroom training is highly recommended for all new volunteers. The training is designed to help people learn more about water quality in general, and about the Watershed Watch program. New volunteers have a choice of attending classroom training on either:

- Saturday, March 31, 9:00 a.m.
- or
- Thursday, April 5, 6:00 p.m.

The training sessions will be held in Weaver Auditorium, Coastal Institute on the URI Kingston Campus.

Volunteers only need to attend one of the sessions and can choose whichever one is most

convenient. The training does not cost anything, but in order to be sure that there is adequate materials for everyone, please pre-register by contacting the URI Watershed Watch Office at:

**(401) 874-2905 or
(401) 874-4552**

Field training is required and is tentatively scheduled for the dates below (volunteers select the date that is most convenient). The training location sites will be announced when registering.

Saturday, April 14, 9:00 a.m. for lakes and ponds, coastal sites

Saturday, April 14, 1:00 p.m. for rivers and streams, coastal sites

Saturday, April 21, 9:00 a.m. for coastal sites, lakes and ponds (Bristol Harbor and eastern R.I. sites).

Additional information about the Watershed Watch program can be found on the web at:

www.uri.edu/ce/wq/ww



NRPA is part of the *United Way Workplace Campaign*.

Our donor option number is **6239**

If you plan to give to United Way, please consider designating a portion of your gift to NRPA.



The NRPA is participating in the 2012 Rhode Island State Employees Charitable Appeal (SECA).

Our fund number is **6239**.

25th Running of the Narrow River Road Race

The 25th Annual Narrow River Road Race, sponsored by Citizens Bank, gets under way at 10:00 on Saturday morning, May 19, with 10K runners starting from the Narragansett Beach North Pavilion, and 5K runners and 5K walkers setting out from Pettaquamscutt Park on Middlebridge Road in South Kingstown.

Registration opens at 8:30 a.m. in the Narragansett Beach North Parking Lot. Shuttle buses from the registration area to the starting line for the 5K events at Pettaquamscutt Park begin at 9:00 a.m.

To register, click one of the Narrow River Road Race links on www.narrowriver.org to display the Road Race page, and then either register online or download an application form. Either way, sign up now for a reduced registration fee. The first 300 registrants receive a Narrow River Road Race T-shirt, this year featuring the Saltmarsh Sparrow (see page 1). The entry fee is \$20 if postmarked by May 7, 2012, and \$25 after May 7 and on the day of race.



Start of the 2011 Narrow River Road Race

Once again Citizens Bank is the lead sponsor of the Narrow River Road Race. But it's not too late to become a 2012 Road Race Sponsor and show your commitment to protection of the watershed. For a sponsorship package, call 401-783-6277 or e-mail nrpa@narrowriver.org.

Take a Sunset Paddle on the Narrow River

Join us on July 21 for the 5th Annual Pettaquamscutt Paddle, cosponsored by Narrow River Kayaks and the Rhode Island Blueways Alliance for the benefit of NRPA. This year's event culminates with a guided 2.5 hour round-trip tour of the lower Narrow River.



Exploring Narrow River

This gentle paddle gives you the opportunity to explore the picturesque John H. Chafee Wildlife Refuge when the salt marsh is most active: at sunset during low tide. Learn about the unique features of the watershed, including its ecology, geography and diverse history and how we can preserve it for future generations to enjoy. Let your worries melt away as the sun gently sets over the western horizon on your return to Narrow River Kayaks. No prior paddling experience is necessary. Kayak raffle, prizes and refreshments to follow.

Pre-registration is required for the guided tour. The cost is \$10 with your own equipment, \$20 for solo kayak, \$30 for a tandem. For information or to register, contact Jason Considine at:

401-789-0334 or
narrowriverkayaks@verizon.net

Turnaround Swim is June 23

The Narrow River Turnaround Swim creates awareness of the river as a scenic area and as a good place to swim, promotes open-water swimming as a lifetime activity, and raises money for NRPA's education, preservation and protection programs, including the River Watch monitoring program, now starting its 21st year. But most importantly, it's a lot of fun!

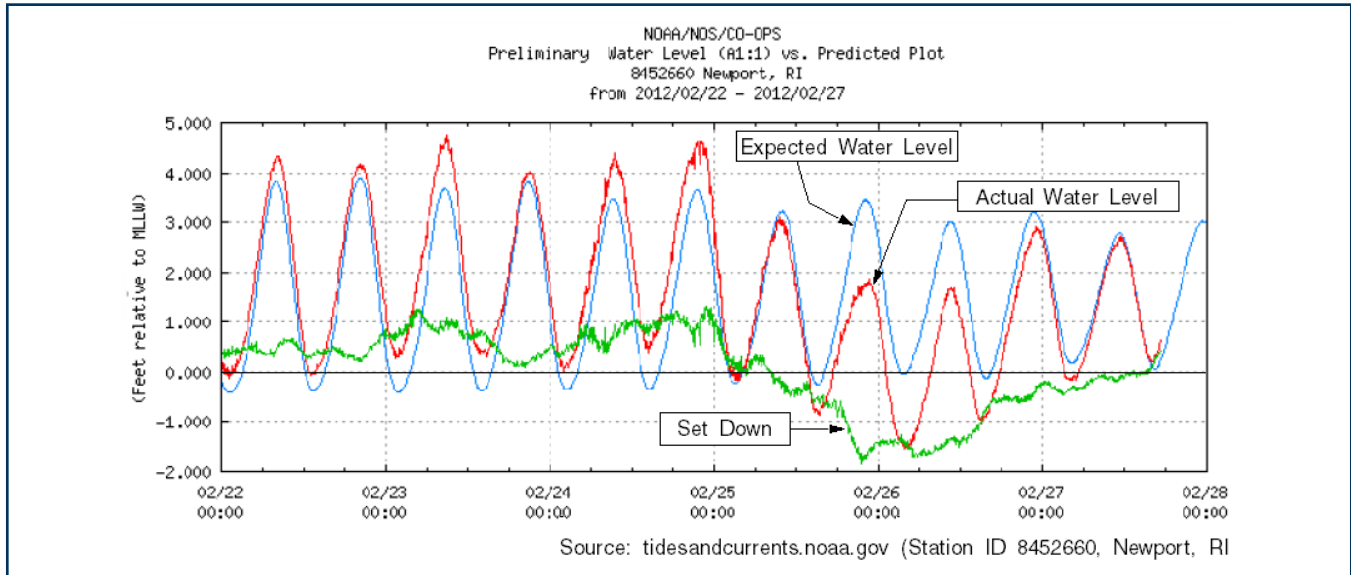
This year's swim will be on Saturday, June 23, and we are pleased to be returning to the URI Rowing Center, a beautiful spot on Narrow River's Lower Pond, and also the location of LaFarge Point Park. WER LaFarge was one of the founders of NRPA in 1970 and remained active until his untimely death from cancer in 1994. He bequeathed a piece of his farm as land for the URI Rowing Center.

If you are looking forward to swimming outdoors after a winter in the pool, sign up and support a good cause and celebrate the seventh year of the swim!

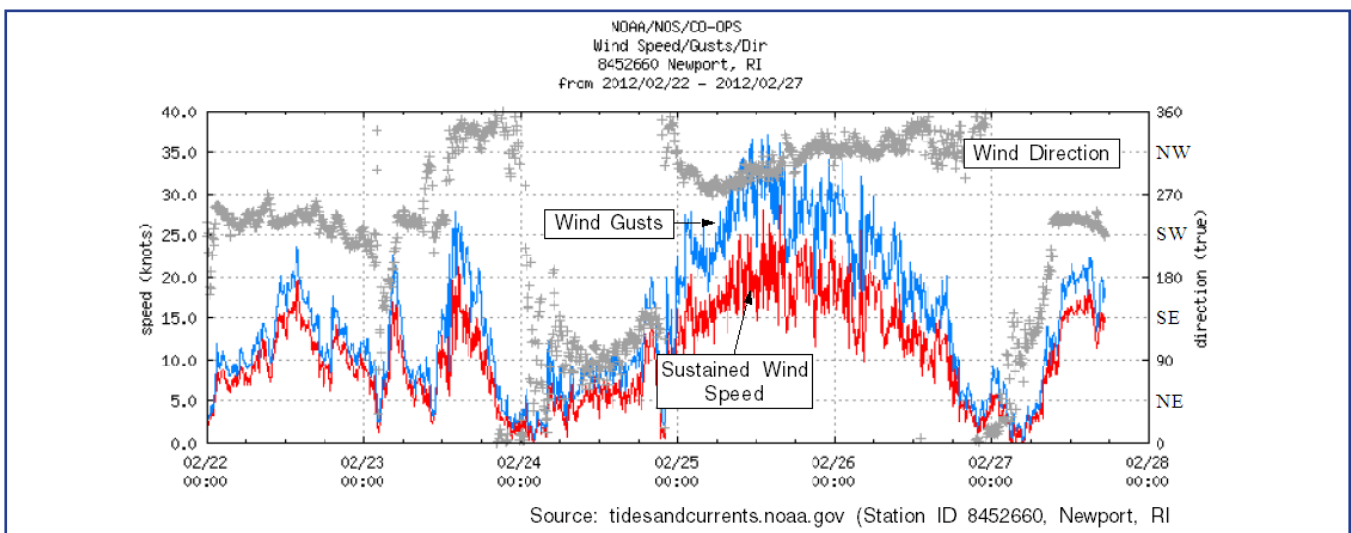
Go to www.narrowriver.org for complete event information and registration materials. Please register by June 13. There will be free T-shirts for the first 125 swimmers. When you register, you can also become a member of NRPA at a discounted rate.

Winds Drop Water Level in Narrow River

During the first low tide on February 26, the sand bars near the mouth of Narrow River appeared to have doubled in size and the water level dropped enough at Middlebridge to expose two sand bars north of the bridge. But this extreme low tide was not followed by an extreme high tide. In fact, the high tide at Newport was well below the expected level. As depicted in the chart below, the water level during the entire tidal cycle was 1.5 feet below the expected levels. As the Bay goes, so goes the river, with the corresponding drop in water level exposing the sand bars in the Narrows and at Middlebridge.



What caused this *set down*? The answer was, literally, blowing in the wind. Fifteen to 25 knot winds (with gusts up to 35 knots) out of the northwest pushed water out of Narragansett Bay causing the set down of as much 1.5 feet at Newport starting the night before and lasting until the second low tide on the 26th. The chart below shows the velocity of sustained winds and gusts for the same periods along with plots of the wind direction. The wind direction is shown in the 360 degree scale on the right, in which, for example, 300 degrees is northwest and 270 is due west.



On Pettaquamscutt Builds Awareness of the Watershed Ecology, History

Each of the three presentations in the new winter speaker series, *On Pettaquamscutt*, filled the room at the Maury Loontjens Memorial Library in Narragansett and gave audience members fresh perspectives on the natural and cultural history of the Narrow River Watershed. The series, which drew an average of 60 people per event, was a joint effort of the Friends of Canonchet Farm, NRPA and the South County Museum, with support from Trio Restaurant, where participants continued the conversation after the talks. Many thanks to Trio, and to the library staff for hosting the events.

NRPA Board member Dr. Veronica Berounsky started the series on January 29 with a PowerPoint® tour

of Narrow River and discussion of important issues facing the watershed.



Wildlife biologist Mike Lapisky (*above right*) brought skeletons and pelts to his February presentation on *Wildlife at Canonchet Farm*. In March, South County Museum Direct Jim Crothers wrapped things up with tales of the



Mumfords, Robinsons, Spragues and other owners of Canonchet. After the talk, Jim was busy collecting more stories about the history of Canonchet (*above right*).

If you have comments about the series or suggestions for topics and speakers, please contact event coordinator Rosemary Smith at rcaims@aol.com.

Narrow River Preservation Association
P.O. Box 8
Saunderstown, RI 02874
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