



Northfield Riverbank Views

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GNWA Receives Citizen Stewardship Award

GNWA was honored to receive the 2011 Northfield Citizen Stewardship Award, the first organization to receive this recognition from the town. In announcing the award, Jerry Wagener, Chair of the Open Space Committee, acknowledged GNWA's contributions toward the objectives of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. GNWA President, Jenny Tufts, accepted the award at a Selectboard meeting on February 15 recognizing her parents, Nate and Ros Tufts, who established the Bennett Brook Watershed Association in response to the threat of a large regional sludge processing and solid waste facility which was to be sited on railroad land adjacent to Bennett Brook. She noted that in changing its name to the Greater Northfield Watershed Association in 2001, GNWA officially expanded its outreach and mission to encompass all Northfield tributaries to the Connecticut River. Recent accomplishments include receipt of a MA Riverways Grant from the state to establish Stream Teams and restore the King Philip's Hill trail. GNWA also secured a grant from the Norcross Foundation to help pay for computer software needed to implement the Community Preservation Act.

Riverscaping Project funded by the European Union



Five Colleges, Inc. has been awarded a European Union grant of 100,000 euros (\$132,000) for an architectural studies program to connect communities along the Connecticut River from Turners Falls to Springfield. Five Colleges, Inc., Hampshire College and UMASS have put in another \$48,800 in the form of courses, program support and personnel. The Riverscaping Project seeks to raise awareness of the social, environmental and artistic importance of the river and its role in the future of local communities. Using a variety of programming, events, films and poetry readings, lectures and research, the project plans to work with communities to highlight needs, challenges and goals for the valley. The focus is on learning and dialogue rather than large-scale planning and building. UMASS officials recently told a group meeting to discuss the future of Schell Bridge, that they believe it might be possible to bring Northfield into the project.

The Scientific Underpinnings of Sustainability: Tom Wessels



It was standing room only in the Green Trees Gallery on March 3rd, and the group that gathered was transported in time from life 3.5 billion years ago, to just prior to the Industrial Revolution, up to the current financial crisis. The man leading this journey was Tom Wessels, an ecologist and founding director of the master's degree program in Conservation Biology at Antioch University New England.

While the audience traveled through these historic events, Tom wove in lessons of biology, ecology, economics and sustainability, seamlessly intertwining the second law of thermodynamics and Adam Smith's theory of the "village merchant economy." Using human examples to demonstrate scientific theories, Tom wove these ideas together with many other fascinating nuggets illustrating the importance of an integrated community toward creating a sustainable environment.

Tom's books are well known to those who enjoy the New England woods: [Reading the Forested Landscape](#), [The Granite Landscape](#), [Untamed Vermont](#), [The Myth of Progress](#), and his most recent, [Forest Forensics: A Field Guide to Reading the Forested Landscape](#). The event, co-sponsored by the Greater Northfield Watershed Association, the Northfield Energy Committee, and the Transition Town Initiating Committee, addressed issues at the heart of each of these organizations, with a particular emphasis on the shared goal of protecting our natural resources.

As Tom explained, according to the second law of thermodynamics, every single environmental problem we face today is a cause of "entropy"—the loss of energy during transformation—citing as examples soil erosion, the over-harvesting of fish, the removal of the rainforest to grow soybeans, and the combustion of fossil fuels. However, without human interference, the natural world thrives toward energy efficiency.

Each year the planet becomes more and more entropic, and Tom pointed out that we need to make some conscious changes in our behavior in order to reduce the loss of energy in our biosphere. One way he suggested we accomplish this is through "self-organization," one of nature's complex systems of high efficiency. Organisms that have learned to be more efficient, e.g. the acacia ant, are able to support a larger population with less energy; they work together as individuals whose special skills complement, rather than compete with, the skills of other members in the group. Self-organization, Tom reminded us, is the key to creating a sustainable economy and community. The Greater Northfield Watershed Association is glad to be part of Northfield's self-organization and a more sustainable future.

Is Your Drinking Water Safe?

We have a wonderful resource close by in the Mass Rural Water Association (MRWA). We asked Rebekah McDermott, Groundwater specialist at MRWA, to weigh in on a recent notice from the State concerning possible uranium and arsenic in our groundwater. Rebekah wrote back saying, "My advice to anyone utilizing a private well is to test it either annually or biannually. Public water supplies are required to test frequently by law, but home owners often assume that their private well is immune from the very same contaminants that are found in public wells that draw water from the same aquifers or sources. If



GNWA members have private wells that draw water from fractured bedrock, then the uranium, arsenic and radon levels should be tested. If the well draws from a sand and gravel source these contaminants are not as likely to occur, but other contaminants may be present. If you don't know what kind of substrate your private well draws its water from then check

with the local board of health and determine if they have records or boring logs for your well. The well drilling company may have submitted them to the BOH at the time the well was put in. If there are no records of your private well then adjacent well logs (nearby sources) may indicate what kind of substrate your well is drawing from."

The local labs listed below may test for some or all of the usual contaminants as well as the uranium, arsenic and radon.

Berkshire Enviro-labs (413) 243-1416

Spectrum Analytical (413) 789-9018

Severn Trent Labs (413) 572-4000

Costs: Standard analysis + coliform bacteria + nitrate/nitrite ~ \$75-125; Radon + Gross Alpha ~ \$75; VOCs (including MTBE) ~ \$100-125

Calendar

April 16, 2011

Invasives Workshop and Workday
10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

June 25, 2011

Paddle and Picnic
9:30 AM @Pauchaug Boat Ramp

October 1, 2011

Source to Sea Cleanup

October 29, 2011

GNWA Annual Meeting



"The storage pool at Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Station was originally licensed to hold 600 spent fuel assemblies. There are now 2,935 assemblies in the pool, or 932 metric tons of radioactive waste."

350

Think Globally--Act Locally

**Count me a friend of
The Greater Northfield
Watershed Association**

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

All dues/donations are
entirely tax deductible.

Please write check to:

**GNWA
P.O. Box 44
Northfield, MA 01360**

- ___ \$25 Family
- ___ \$15 Individual
- ___ \$50 Sponsor
- ___ \$100 Patron
- ___ \$100 Corporation
- ___ \$50 Small Business

My interests are:

- ___ Wildlife
- ___ Wetlands
- ___ Recreation
- ___ Land-use planning



Greater Northfield Watershed Association
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