



Northfield Riverbank Views

P.O. Box 44, Northfield, MA 01360

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Trust For Public Land Working to Save NMH Forestland



Old Postcard View of E. Northfield Forest

Many GNWA members have seen the recent Greenfield Recorder article announcing that the Trust for Public Land (TPL) has entered into an agreement with Northfield Mount Hermon School to purchase NMH forest land in East Northfield, including East Northfield Water Company. At a meeting of the Northfield Open Space Committee on April 16, Clem Clay, a representative from the TPL, spoke about the role and strategy of TPL in preserving 1,650 acres of unfragmented forest east of the former Northfield campus, surrounding and including Grandin Reservoir, operated by the East Northfield Water Co, and supplying the campus and about 200 homes with water. Clay knows the town quite well after leading the "TPL Greenprinting" study several years ago. He described closing the purchase on the NMH forestland as "complicated," primarily due to the necessity to preserve the reservoir and and drinking water access in the northeast area of Northfield.

TPL can still back out of the option at the end of a four month period of "due diligence" inspections (through end of June approximately) and has hired Weston Sampson, an engineering firm with experience in environmental and infrastructure work, to examine the East Northfield Water Company in its entirety. TPL will be investigating regulatory aspects, possible future structure, and potential managers/owners, including the possibility of merging with the Northfield Water District. In past discussions, Northfield Water District has been hesitant to take on any responsibility for the East Northfield Water Company if it's going to cost significant money to rehabilitate the system. TPL is considering ways to finance necessary upgrades and repairs as they consider the whole financial structuring of the deal.

TPL understands that the problem of the water supply is critical to future economic development in this part of Northfield and will be making that argument as they approach legislators and state agencies, as well as other potential private investors or donors to become managers and owners of the property. Possible funding resources for the forestland include the Department of Conservation and Recreation in conjunction with a Landscape Partnership Grant, or the federal Forest Legacy program.

It is certainly in Northfield's best interest for TPL to succeed in resolving the issue of the water company and very encouraging to have TPL as a partner in seeking a positive outcome for this very valuable watershed area in the northeast quadrant of town. TPL is interested in any and all community interest and feedback. If you would like to contact Clem Clay he can be reached at clem.clay@tpl.org, 413-253-6686.

High-Pressure Gas Pipeline Proposed to Pass Through Northfield



Pipeline would be 30-36" in diameter and buried 3 feet deep

Early this year, the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company (TGP) began contacting landowners and towns for permission to survey their land for a 30-36" diameter high-pressure pipeline. It would transport fracked natural gas from Pennsylvania and New York shale fields to Dracut, MA. Their proposed route crosses the southern edge of Northfield, following the electric transmission lines along Four-Mile Brook Road, and then turning east toward Warwick.

TGP is asking landowners for a 400 foot right-of-way. Much of this would be cleared for construction, and a 50-100 foot swath would be maintained as open land to monitor the pipeline in perpetuity. A cleared swath leads to erosion and easy colonization by invasive plants. This will impact countless rivers and wetlands throughout the state, and a few

here in Northfield, including Four-mile Brook, Jacks Brook, and Keyup Brook.

Natural gas pipelines have a history of leaks, fires, and explosions. Natural gas is methane; while this is less of a water pollution concern than many other fuels, it is a more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Company documents say that this gas is intended for electricity generation, compression into liquified natural gas, and export. TGP has no plans for distribution points in western Massachusetts.

For more information and opportunities to oppose this pipeline, go to www.nofrackedgasinmass.org or find us on Facebook at "Northfield Gas Pipeline Resistance". Submitted by Julia Blyth

Supporting Pioneering Stewardship Plan



RR Bridge below Bennett Brook Road

The Greater Northfield Watershed Association will be financing the first action to be taken under the newly approved Pioneering Stewardship Plan drafted by GNWA member and Restoration Ecologist, John Lepore. The plan is the result of countless hours of work John put in to develop a comprehensive land sustainability plan for the 89 acre Pioneer Valley Regional School property in west Northfield. This property is key to protection of the medium-yield aquifer along the west side of the Connecticut River and drains directly into Bennett Brook.

John met with the GNWA Board in January and explained that there are a couple of very important first steps that will, hopefully, open doors to larger grant making agencies in the state. One of these is to complete vernal pool certification. The second step is to do a thorough study of rare or endangered species that may be on the land. Existence of a potential vernal pool along the northwest boundary originated from MassGIS in 2011 and was further supported by DCR forester, Brian Hawthorn during a site visit in 2012. Vernal pool identification and certification is important to any future conservation restriction the school might wish to pursue. A vernal pool signifies important habitat for certain species dependent on these seasonal pools for reproduction. The goal of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) vernal pool certification is to protect the state's biological diversity. Certification will be limited to the PVRS portion of the pool in this instance. Amphibian and invertebrate species will be documented.

River Monitoring Effort Resumes for Second Year



Please be a designation “Clean River” Supporter. In the last newsletter we reported to you that GNWA had participated last summer in the Connecticut River Watershed Council (CRWC) project to monitor *E.coli* levels in the river. For several years about 45 sites from Hanover to Hartford have been monitored. A map of the testing sites can be found at <http://www.ctriver.org/portfolio-items/is-the-river-clean/>. Northfield is the only site being tested between Brattleboro and Turners Falls. Barbara Richardson and Andrew Vernon volunteered to conduct the sampling at Pauchaug Boat Ramp last year and have graciously agreed to resume again this year. A huge THANK YOU to both of them!

Now it’s your turn to become involved.

You will note that there is a special line item in the membership renewal form included in this newsletter to allow you to contribute directly to the river sampling project. This service costs GNWA \$23 each time we drop off a sample at the CRWC lab in Greenfield. In other words, our membership dues barely cover one sample. Please show your support for this volunteer effort by making a special additional contribution for this purpose.

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

_____ I have included an additional contribution for river sampling.





**GREATER NORTHFIELD WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION
PO Box 44
NORTHFIELD, MA 01360**