

Trail Mix The Newsletter of the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island



Volume 6, No. 3

Spring 2007

Greenwords:

Blueways and Greenways!

Many people do not realize how great a place Rhode Island is for canoeing and kayaking. This may be a symptom of the fact that it can be hard to find information on where to go paddling in Rhode Island. Walkers and hikers in Rhode Island also know that it is hard to find information on where to go walking in our state. Narragansett Bay is replete with interesting coves and bays to explore; and there are rivers, lakes, ponds and reservoirs scattered across the state that are wonderful for freshwater paddling. Every town in our state has nice places to go walking, from shoreline trails on the south coast, to the deep woods of Burrillville. All of these places are an afternoon away, if you know they exist! The information is out there, but it is scattered across various books, pamphlets, and websites, and the best but hardest to find resources are often the individual people who know the area.

In the last issue of Trail Mix we introduced the Rhode Island Blueways and Greenways Project and the partnership between the Greenways Alliance and the Blueways and Greenways Project. This issue is devoted to the project and the partnership. A little over a year ago, the Rhode Island Rivers Council, with help from the National Park Service

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Looking at the chart and reviewing plans before setting out on the Blueways Long Trail paddle

The Blueways Long Trail: A newbie sea kayaker's experience

By Chuck Horbert

Day One
Most people would choose an easier trip for their first sea kayak experience – say a paddle around Wickford Cove. Not

Casson on a three-day trip from Providence to Westerly, along what we named the Blueways Long Trail, or “BLT.” We set out from Collier Point Park with a flotilla of eight boats, accompanied by a few dignitaries who would join us for the first couple miles to Save The Bay’s new headquarters building on Fields Point.

Conditions for our first leg to Jamestown were initially ideal; light northwest wind, an outgoing tide, sunny 60-70 degree weather. I felt

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Northern Forest Canoe Trail offers unique trips for paddlers

By Meg Kerr

On March 19, the Rhode Island Canoe/Kayak Association (RICKA) invited Kate Williams, Executive Director of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, to speak at their monthly meeting. Kate’s assignment was to introduce Rhode Island paddlers to her 740-mile multi-state water trail, whetting their appetites for the Rhode Island Blueways to come.

Kate’s presentation took us along the Northern Forest Canoe Trail with breathtaking photos showing highlights of the route from Old Forge in the Adirondacks of New York to Fort Kent in Maine. The Northern Forest Canoe trail follows historic Native American travel routes across New York, Vermont,

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Greenwords

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Rivers & Trails Program and many other partners, launched the Blueways Project to try to tackle the information gap on places to go paddling. Early on the people involved with the project realized that walkers faced many of the same issues as paddlers, which led to the partnership with the Greenways Alliance and the expansion of the project to include trails on land, not just on the water. Now it is the Blueways and Greenways project.

The idea is to bring together paddlers, walkers, watershed councils, land trusts, state agencies, outfitters and anyone else interested in the Project for the purpose of compiling information on Rhode Island trails and access sites into one central location. The goal is not just to get people out walking and paddling, but also to encourage better stewardship of our trails, woods and rivers.

Experience has shown that if people are out using the woods and waters for quiet recreation they will care more about protecting these places.

In urban areas, recreational use of the land and water can change the perception of a river or wood from "urban wasteland" to "scenic and recreational asset." Even in the city, our rivers and Greenways inject a bit of wilderness into the urban jungle. Just recently, four loons were seen fishing in Waterplace Park, just down the hill from the State House! Making people aware of their connections with the outdoors will enrich peoples' lives and encourage stewardship of our natural places.

This issue of Trail Mix looks at the Blueways and Greenways project from various angles. Since most of the work so far on the project has been on the Blueways side, that is what this issue focuses on (but we hope work will

start ramping up on the Greenways side soon). Inside this issue you will find information on where to go paddling, on paddling events you can take part in, on where to find a canoe or kayak if you don't have one, and on the ExploreRI.org website, which is a key element of the project. There are even some paddling stories to whet your appetite for getting out on the

Trail Mix is the quarterly newsletter of the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island (GARI).

Editor Bruce Hooke

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Paddling down Woonasquatucket Reservoir, at the start of day two of the Source to Sea journey down the Woonasquatucket River.

water. Just remember, all paddling does not have to be as adventurous as these two trips were!

So dig in and enjoy the stories and then get out on the water and enjoy the paddling, get out in the woods and enjoy the summer, and get involved in this project and help it grow!

For more information on the Blueways and Greenways project visit ExploreRI.org or send an email to info@ExploreRI.org.

Sue Barker GARI Chair



Lisa Aurecchia (left) and Jenny Pereira on the Source to Sea trip, paddling a fast section of the Woonasquatucket River between Stillwater Reservoir and Capron Pond



Help Make Greenways in Rhode Island

Photo credits, pages two and three: Bruce Hooke.

Source to Sea on the Woonasquatucket River

By Bruce Hooke

The rain did not seem to be bothering the birds, and it was certainly fitting for the start of a source to sea trip, so we tried not to let it bother us either. The wet woods, vibrant with spring greenery, were quite beautiful. Every pine needle had a glistening drop of water at its tip and rain was making rings on the pond. The downpours of the last few days meant the outlet stream was running high, but it was still small enough to step across in places.

Five of us: Jenny Pereira, Lisa Aurecchia, and Bruce Hooke from the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council; John Monroe from the National Park Service; and Juan Mariscal, General Manager of the Water Resources Board, had gathered at this pond on a drizzly Friday morning in May. Our plan was to follow as much of the Woonasquatucket River as we could, from the headwaters in North Smithfield to the Providence River and the head of Narragansett Bay in Providence. Our goals were to know the river better and publicize it as a recreational and natural asset to the communities it flows through. Some of the waters we would be in and on are only rarely paddled, even though many people live near them. We planned to talk to some of these people along the way, both to learn what they knew about the river, and to promote awareness and stewardship of the river.

We started out walking the trails of Fort Refuge, an Audubon Society of Rhode Island property, but soon we were on paved roads; following as much as we could the course of the still nascent Woonasquatucket River. Our route crossed and re-crossed the river, so we could watch it grow as we followed it towards the sea. The

weather cleared up as the day went on, but every hollow in the land was filled with water and every gully contained a brook.

The end of day one brought us to Mowry Conservation Area, a beautiful bit of protected land at the north end of Woonasquatucket Reservoir. Here the river was big enough to power a small mill of some sort a couple of centuries ago, and the remains of the foundation and dam still sit beside the river.

Day two began with launching our canoes into the north end of Woonasquatucket Reservoir, also known as Stump Pond. A brisk wind made paddling hard work, but it was a beautiful Saturday morning and many people were out plying the waters with fishing poles.

Below Stump Pond the river winds through a narrow, forested valley spanned by the soaring arch of Stillwater Viaduct, and then flows into the small Stillwater Reservoir. Below here the river divides into two channels. Our plan to follow the quieter of these channels was thwarted by an abundance of poison ivy, so we tempted fate by trying to follow the steeper channel. Some exciting paddling brought us to the top of a nest of canoe-eating rocks and churning whitewater. Fortunately we were able to escape by dragging

the canoes and gear through water and brush onto dry land. A portage to the quiet channel (below the poison ivy!) got us back on our way, only to be stopped by impassable tunnels that carry the river under Interstate 295. More hauling of gear through water and brush got us back to the road, at which point it was high time to go home, dry out, and rest up for the next day!

Day three began on Georgiaville Pond, in Smithfield. Our hard work the day before was rewarded by a beautiful paddle across Georgiaville Pond followed by a very nice run down the river. This section of the Woonasquatucket passes through the historic village of Georgiaville and winds past houses, parks and mills. Much of the year it is quite rocky, but with the water running high it offers



A sea of paddlers on the last stretch of the Source to Sea trip on the Woonasquatucket. People are always surprised by how woodsy the river feels, even in the middle of Providence!

some fun paddling for skilled canoers and kayakers, which was a great discovery.

Before we knew it we were at Cricket Park, in North Providence, where we had to take out to skip over a Superfund site that has closed 1.5 miles of the river to recreational use. Since time was now running short we went straight to the tidal section of the river in Providence, where a large group was already gathering for the final leg of the trip.

With storm clouds hurrying us on our way, we launched a fleet of canoes and kayaks into the river and headed downstream into the heart of Providence. Lisa and Jenny

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Happen: Join the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Today!

Blueways Long Trail:

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comfortable on the Bay. The shore was close, there weren't many other boats ...it was like paddling on a really big pond. Our first short break was at Conimicut Point. It was there that I first noticed the power of the tidal current as Narragansett Bay began its diurnal drain out to the ocean.

We next set out for the narrow channel between Prudence and Patience Islands. I noted what a beautiful place the Bay is below Providence. Paddling up to the wild shores of these Islands, it was easy to imagine that I was somewhere other than one of the most populated states in the nation. It was clear why so many sea kayakers populate the state.

We had lunch on Patience Island on a beautiful, remote beach and then pressed on. We also took a short breather on a cozy little rock-lined cove at the south end of Hope Island, one of the nicest spots I've been to in a kayak.

As we traversed the length of Jamestown, we had to deal with a stiff west-northwest wind, beam seas, and a slackening tide. Jamestown is a long island. It amazes me that people race around it. We paddled in building seas past the Jamestown Bridge and headed for the passage between Jamestown and Dutch Island.

When I pulled onto the beach at Fort Getty in Jamestown at 4:30 in the afternoon, our camp location for the night, I was toast. We had paddled close to 25 nautical miles, which according to Jo are the same as statute miles, but wetter. After a hearty meal, we checked charts and weather forecasts, discussed some



Camping at Fort Getty Recreation Area on Jamestown Island, on the Blueways Long Trail paddle. Fort Getty is one of the few places in the state where you can arrive at a campground by water.

options for the remaining miles, and retired to rest up for the next day.

Day Two

I had expected to wake up the next morning to find my arms had detached themselves from the rest of me during the night, so I was pleasantly surprised to find myself whole and feeling energized. But Hurricane Florence was out in the Atlantic and was predicted to start kicking up swells on the south coast. Winds were forecast to be in the 20 to 30 knot range (and it seemed like it would take 20 to 30 knots to secure a boat in such a wind), with seas of 5 to 8 feet – not conducive for a long trip where a beach landing might be necessary. It was decided at breakfast, then, that we would bag our Day Three plans, and continue only to Point Judith while conditions were favorable.

Looking out past the bay entrance to the horizon of the Atlantic Ocean, seeing the steady swells from Florence roll in, I was ready to classify this as a true sea kayak experience. None of my previous paddling experience could really compare. I recognized what a unique environment the ocean and the Bay is, and how nicely adapted a sea kayak is to this environment.

As we approached Point Judith, it was clear that there would be no cutting of corners. The surf zone extended about a quarter mile out to sea from the rocky shore. We gave the surf zone a very wide berth, paddling around in a big arc to approach the opening of the breakwater from the south.

I'd not yet experienced seeing the entire shore of Rhode Island appear and disappear as each swell overtook us, lifted us, and shrugged us off its back. It was mesmerizing. So mesmerizing in fact that had Peter not been paying attention as he had been all trip,

a couple of us would have paddled smack into the rip current coming out of the harbor with the outgoing tide.

Paddling through the opening of the breakwater into the Harbor of Refuge was like paddling from Tsunamiland to the Lazy Lagoon in the space of a couple minutes. I have never appreciated the utility of a couple thousand well-placed boulders until that moment. There was an intoxicating feeling of accomplishment as the kayak hit the beach that second day. It has been torturous waiting over the winter to paddle the third and final leg, but once we do the story will continue...



Jenny Pereira helps guide a canoe past a downed tree on the Source to Sea trip on the Woonasquatucket.

Source to the Sea

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led the assembled paddlers in a Woonasquatucket chant at Waterplace Park and then we pushed on to the landing, arriving just ahead of the rain. We were all pretty worn out from three days of walking and paddling, but we certainly knew the river a whole lot better than we did three days earlier and we had talked to a lot of folks along the way.

Getting people out on the water is a great way to promote better stewardship of the river, both because you see the river close up when paddling and so pay more attention to it, and because just seeing people paddling on an abused river can change peoples' image of the river. Blueways can benefit the environment in addition to providing recreation!

Calendar of Events for Rivers Month



Get out on the water and explore Rhode Island's Blueways! All of the events listed below take place in June – Rhode Island Rivers Month. Most events require advance registration. For many events you must bring your own boat and gear, however, there are some events where you do not need a boat or where there is a nearby place from which you can rent a boat. For details, see the individual listings or contact the organizers of the event. Many of the outfitters shown on the Blueways map also run trips so check with them for additional ways to get on the water. The letter in front of each item on the calendar corresponds to the letters in the stars on the map on page 7.

required. Contact WPWA at 401-539-9017 or e-mail info@wpwa.org. All start times are 9 a.m. Please be on time.

Blackstone River

A June 16: Celebrate the Blackstone at Rivers Day in Central Falls. Events will take place from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., including free river tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer, canoe and kayak rides with the Blackstone Valley Outfitters, and more. Location: Central Falls Landing, Broad Street & Madeira Avenue, Central Falls. To learn more, visit www.tourblackstone.com.

Buckeye Brook

B June 10 The Buckeye Brook Coalition is holding a canoe and kayak trip on Warwick Lake and approximately 0.7 mile of the upper reaches of Buckeye Brook. Bring your own canoe or kayak, PFDs and paddles. Meet at 11 a.m. in the parking lot of St. Timothy Church at the intersection of Warwick Ave. and Lake Shore Dr. in Warwick, from there everyone will drive to a specific launch site by 11:15 a.m. This is a very easy paddle and a good way to see this part of Buckeye Brook up close and personal. It is also an opportunity for people to see the effects the airport is having on the environment. The trip usually takes only an hour or two, depending upon how windy it is. More time can be spent exploring the 90 acres of Warwick Lake. For more info contact Paul Earnshaw at 401-739-6592.

Narrow River

C June 23 This June swimmers will dive into the waters of Narrow River for the 2nd Annual Narrow River Turnaround Swim. Although individuals and even some teams have been swimming in Narrow River for years, this group swim of 1 mile will showcase the improving water quality of the River. This event is a benefit for the Narrow River Preservation Association (NRPA). For more details, including application and sponsorship information, visit www.altrue.net/site/river.

Pawcatuck River

For five Saturdays in June, the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association (WPWA) will sponsor a guided canoe and kayak Blueways paddle from the source of the Pawcatuck River in South Kingstown to its outlet near Little Narragansett Bay, Westerly. Participants may take part in one or all of the trips. \$10 donation per person (\$5 for members of GARI, WPWA, AMC, or RICKA) for each day. Bring your own boat, PFD, lunch, and water. Shuttling of cars and people will be arranged by WPWA. Pre-registration is

D June 2 Put-in: Taylor's Landing, Rt. 138, South Kingstown. Take-out: Biscuit City Landing, South Kingstown. 10 miles; no portage. We recommend only experienced paddlers attempt this section.

E June 9 Put-in: Biscuit City Landing, Kenyon School Road, South Kingstown. Take-out: Richmond Fishing Access, Rt. 91, Richmond. 8 miles; three portages, one section of class II rapids.

F June 16 Put-in: Richmond Fisherman's Landing, Rt. 91, Richmond. Take-out: Bradford Fishing Access, Rt. 91, Westerly. 8 miles; one (possible) portage.

G June 23 Put-in: Bradford Fishing Access, Rt. 91, Westerly. Take-out: Potter Hill Mill, Laurel Street, Ashaway. 7.5 miles, one portage.

H June 30 Put-in: Potter Hill Mill, Laurel Street, Ashaway. Take-out: India Point, Westerly. Picnic provided by WPWA on the waterfront lawn at a private residence in Westerly. 10 miles; no portage, two sections of class I – II rapids.

Pawtuxet River

I June 16 Come to Farm & River Day on the Pawtuxet River, get some fresh produce at the farmers' market and canoe a quiet section of the river at your own pace or go on a guided wildflower walk. Farm & River Day is the official opening of the Pawtuxet Village Farmers' Market at Rhodes on the Pawtuxet. Friends of the Pawtuxet

For all of these events, bring water, sunscreen, bug repellent, sunglasses, and shoes that can get wet.

Continued on next page.

Calendar of Events for Rivers Month

Pawtuxet River, continued

will be supplying canoes, paddles and life preservers to people who want to rent a boat for an hour. Reservations are required and may be made for 9, 10 or 11 a.m. Once outfitted, you paddle the calm, quiet Pawtuxet for an hour at your own pace and then return to the put-in location. Turtles, muskrats, swans and great blue heron are often seen. The trip is ideal for kids. Adults are \$3, children are \$2. Reservations may be made after June 1 by calling 401-784-8240. The walk is an easy 3 miles along the river starting at 10 a.m., with naturalist Rod Rodrigues who will be talking about wildflowers.

Quonochontaug Pond

J **June 2** The Salt Ponds Coalition is leading an interpretative kayak trip around Quonochontaug Pond in Charlestown. Assemble at the Quonochontaug Breachway launch ramp at the end of West Beach Rd. off Route 1 at 8:30 a.m., on the water at 9 a.m. and be back at noon. Four local experts will be joining the tour to talk about historic sites, salt marshes, and conservation efforts to protect the barrier beaches and marine resources. The waters here are fairly calm except for the crossing of the breachway, where the currents can be strong. Kayak rentals are available locally at Cap'n Don's Bait & Tackle about a mile away on Route 1 (401-322-0544). If you email or call ahead, the organizers will notify you if weather is postponing the trip. Reservations are not necessary. There is no charge for the trip, but donations made out to the Abby Aukerman Memorial Scholarship Fund are gratefully accepted. For more information call Art Ganz at 401-364-3068 or visit www.saltpondscoalition.org.

Saugatucket River

K **June 23** The Saugatucket River Heritage Corridor Coalition is running an on-the-water, ecological and historic tour of the Saugatucket River. The trip starts in downtown Wakefield at 10 a.m. and ends at Historic Peace Dale Mills at around 2 p.m. Kayak and canoe rentals are available from Wildwood Outfitters, 271 Main St., Wakefield, which is also the put-in location. For more information contact Glenn Ricci at 401-789-1412.

Ten Mile River

The Ten Mile River Watershed Council is running three paddling events in June. For more information on any of them contact Keith Gonsalves at 401-474-3813 or KtgGroup@aol.com.

L **June 2** Celebrate National Trails Day with an easy two mile paddle on the Ten Mile River in Attleboro. Bring your own canoe or kayak, PFDs, and paddles. The trip starts at Larson Woods at 11 a.m. Reservations are required for this event.

M **June 8** After work paddle on Central Pond and the Ten Mile River in East Providence. This is an easy lake paddle starting at Kimberly Rock Athletic Fields at 5 p.m. Bring your own canoe or kayak and gear, or if you call ahead rental boats may be available.

N **June 16** Five mile paddle for experienced paddlers only. The trip will start at Central Ave. in Pawtucket at 11 a.m. and end at Ferris Ave. in East Providence. There is some quickwater on this trip and one portage around a dam. Bring your own canoe or kayak, PFDs and paddles.

Woonasquatucket River


O **June 14** Go for an after work paddle on the Woonasquatucket River in downtown Providence and you'll see the city and the river from a new angle. This is an easy 3.5 mile trip on flat water, starting and ending at South Water Street in Providence. Some canoes and kayaks are available but please bring your own if you have one. The event is free but advanced registration is required. To register call the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council at 401-861-9046 or email lisa@woonasquatucket.org. More details are available at www.woonasquatucket.org.

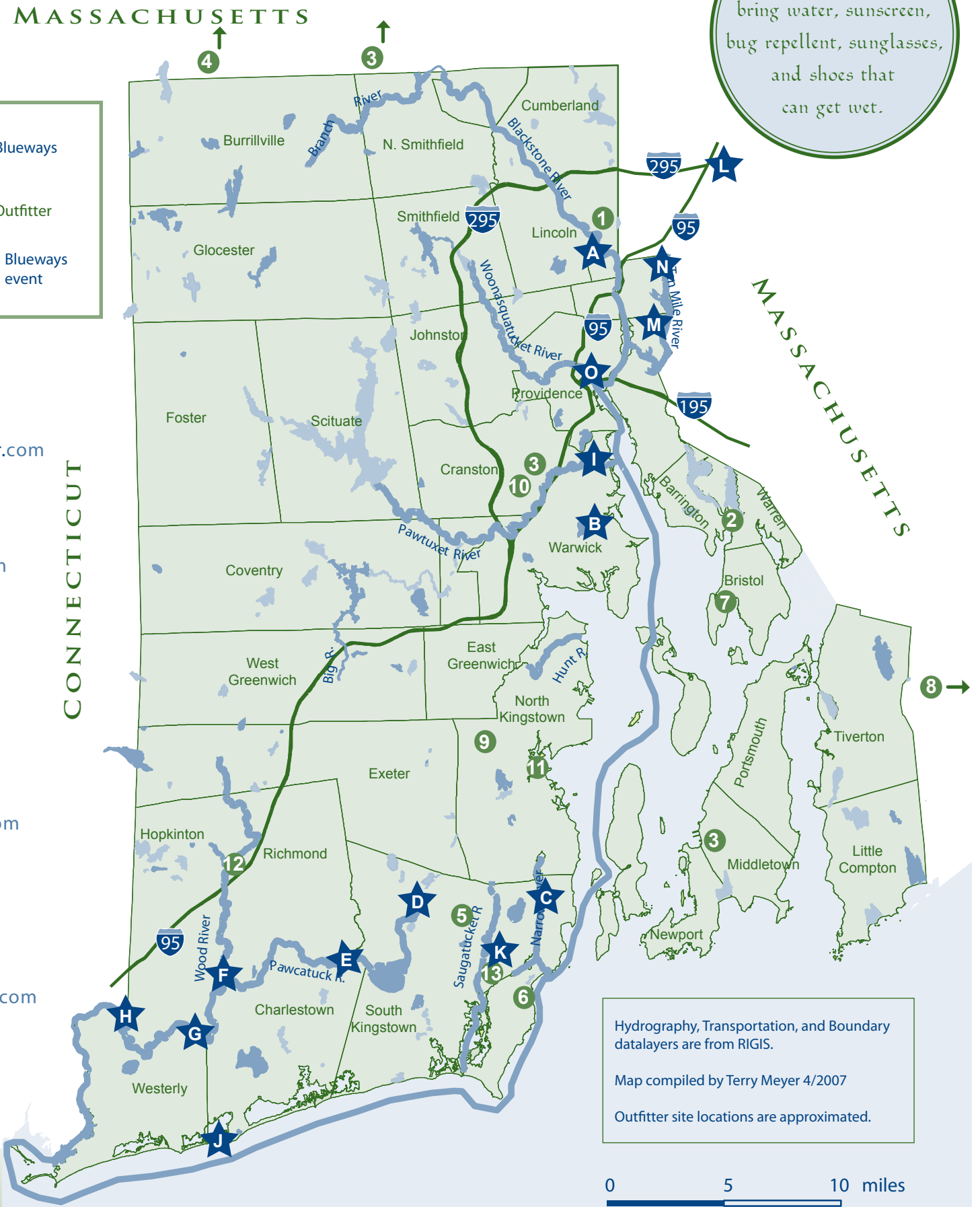
Outfitters

- 1 Blackstone Valley Outfitters
401.312.0369 bvori.com
- 2 Canoe Passage Outfitters
401.245.9025 canoepa.org
- 3 EMS Outfitters
888.463.6367 ems.com
- 4 Great Canadian Outfitters
508.865.0010 greatcan.com
- 5 Kayak Today LLC
401.207.6511 kayaktoday.com
- 6 Narragansett Pier Dive Shop
401.783.2225 pierdive.com
- 7 Ocean State Adventures
401.254.4000 oceanstateadventures.com
- 8 Osprey Sea Kayak Adventure
508.636.0300 ospreysa.com
- 9 Quaker Lane Outfitters
401.294.9642 quakerlaneoutfitters@quakerlane.com
- 10 REI
401.275.5250 rei.com
- 11 The Kayak Centre
401.364.8000 www.kayakcentre.com
- 12 URE Outfitters
401.539.4050 ureoutfitters.com
- 13 Wildwood Outfitters
401.789.1244 wildwoodoutfittersri.com

RHODE ISLAND'S BLUEWAYS and OUTFITTERS

For all of these events, bring water, sunscreen, bug repellent, sunglasses, and shoes that can get wet.

-  Blueways
-  Outfitter
-  Blueways event



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Special stretches for special trips

During those dog days of summer, no matter how fast you pedal, the breeze won't cool you down. It's a good time to look at paddle sports as a way to keep active and outdoors without feeling like your body's going to spontaneously combust or melt in a pool of sweat.

Before you jump into the closest river, pond, or cove in a canoe, kayak, or scull, you need to limber up. Hiking and bike riding work all sorts of muscle groups (especially your

arms as you swat at the black flies and mosquitoes buzzing around your head when walking in the woods), but paddle sports work different areas of the body and as such have specialized stretches. The following stretching advice was published on R.I. Canoe & Kayak Association web site:

Children and young adults can paddle all day without much negative impact on their muscles and joints. Simply put, they can stress their bodies and not feel sore the next day. On the other hand, those of us who are a little bit older must find ways to prevent pain and injury.

Beneficial stretching should be part of a regimen of good fitness, which also includes a healthy diet and aerobic (running, bicycling, yoga, etc.) as well as anaerobic (weight training, push-ups, etc.) exercise. You should stretch daily, at least before and after exercising, including paddling days. Stretching is essential for preventing muscle strain as well as healing injuries. Below is a list of suggested stretches.

Warm-up: Jog in place for a few minutes, jump rope, do some jumping jacks, ride a bicycle – anything that heats your muscles up and elevates your heart rate.

Neck: Rolling a kayak can really do a number on your neck, and keeping neck muscles loose is vital. Start by nodding your head gently forward and backward. Next, slowly turn your head to each side, looking behind your shoulders. (A variation on this is to tilt your head toward each shoulder.) You may also want to rotate your head clockwise and counter-clockwise. It's important to do each of these exercises slowly, hold each position (besides the rotating) for a few seconds, and repeat each a few

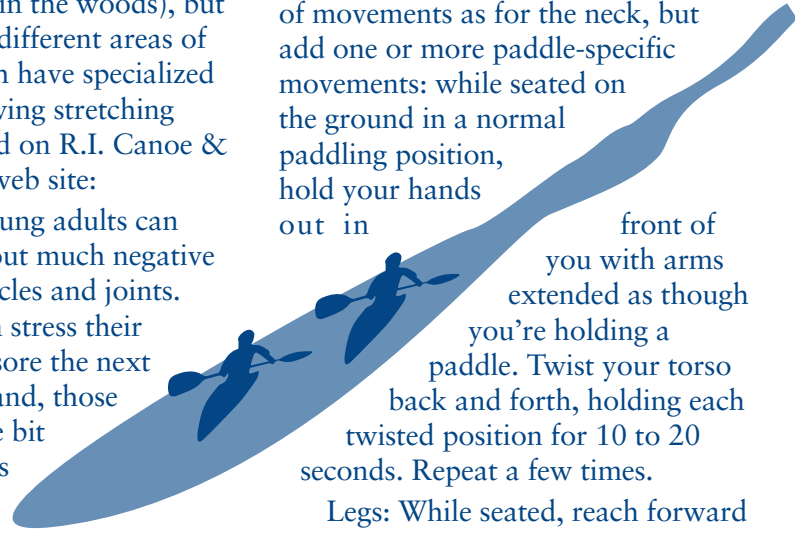
times.

Torso: Perform the same types of movements as for the neck, but add one or more paddle-specific movements: while seated on the ground in a normal paddling position, hold your hands out in front of you with arms extended as though you're holding a paddle. Twist your torso back and forth, holding each twisted position for 10 to 20 seconds. Repeat a few times.

Legs: While seated, reach forward and hold your toes, keeping your legs straight. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds. Repeat a few times. While standing, spread your legs apart greater than shoulder width, and reach for your toes or the ground. Hold for 10 to 20 seconds, and then come back up slowly. (Don't bounce.) Repeat, moving your feet closer to each other each time (three or four reps) until they're touching, and reaching as far as you can, holding for 10 to 20 seconds. Stretching your torso and legs will also help loosen your lower back.

Wrists/Ankles: Make sure to roll your wrists and ankles clockwise and counter-clockwise a few times. Also, take hold of your fingers on one hand with the other, and alternately bend your hand back (toward the top of your forearm) and forward (toward the bottom of your forearm), holding it in each position for 10 to 20 seconds. Do this for each hand.

All stretches should be performed both before and after you paddle. A good stretching program will keep you on the water longer, more often, and with greater enjoyment. And – as a bonus – you'll find you feel better in all your daily activities.



Let's Meet!

Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Spring Meeting Schedule

Wednesdays 6:30 p.m. May 23, June 27.

Gibbs College 85 Garfield Ave. Cranston, RI 02920

From the north: Take Route 95 south to exit 22B (Hartford, CT, Route 6/10). Continue on Rte 6/10 connector for 2 miles to Rte 10 (left lane). Continue on Rte 10 south for 1/2 mile, take second exit (Cranston St.). At the end of exit ramp, Gibbs College will be directly ahead.

From the south: Take Route 95 north to exit 16. Follow signs to "Reservoir Ave." and continue through interchange, onto Rte 10 north. Continue on Rte 10 north for just under 2 miles, take exit for "Cranston St." (makeshift sign on right side of road for this exit). At end of ramp, turn LEFT onto Niantic Ave. Continue on Niantic Ave. for about 1/4 mile to Cranston St. Turn LEFT onto Cranston St., and continue for 1/8 mile to stoplight. Turn LEFT onto Garfield St., and continue to stoplight. Turn RIGHT into Gibbs parking lot.

Join the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Today!

Webmaster's Corner

ExploreRI.org: Building a One-Stop Shopping Tool for Blueways and Greenways

By Meg Kerr and Bruce Hooke

When Mike Sullivan first came on as DEM Director, Meg met with him to introduce herself and talk about rivers. "Why isn't there a Blueway trail here in Rhode Island?" he asked her. "Wouldn't it be great to have a trail that linked the rivers to the bay?"

Sullivan is an enthusiastic paddler and has actually explored the Woonasquatucket River in front of the DEM offices along Promenade Street, and under the Providence Place Mall. He would love to have a canoe launch site right in this area.

As we talked about what the trail would look like, Sullivan suggested that the paddler of tomorrow might not be carrying a book or a map, but would have an electronic device – a phone or personal organizer – that could access the web, would have mapping capabilities, and would access information about the river, bay and surrounding amenities. Such technology, in a form suitable for boats, is not yet common, so Sullivan's vision cannot yet be realized, but certainly the web is the right place to collect and present up to date information.

Most successful water trails around the county rely heavily on a web presence. ExploreRI.org is being designed to meet this vision – and not just for water trails, but in the future, we hope to expand the site to include land trails as well!

The Rhode Island Rivers Council hired Bruce Hooke to develop the first phase of the ExploreRI.org site. Bruce

had created the Providence Citywide Green web site with a map-based "park finder" (www.citywidegreen.org/park-finder.php) and the Council liked the site's clear presentation, clean and simple maps and smart, easy search capabilities. The

Blueways planning team met with Bruce to discuss what our web site should look like.



We agreed that the Blueways site needed to start with maps and information on access sites, and that river trails would come later. In order to keep the clean and simple layout that we liked so much, Bruce encouraged us to develop our own system of maps at four scales, so that we could provide easy to understand maps that would allow users to zoom in on areas of interest to them. Many online mapping systems are designed for people skilled at reading maps and aerial photographs. We wanted maps that would require no more skill to read than a road map.

We thought about the information needed to describe a small boat access site and developed a data collection form and a system for entering the collected data on the web site via an easy to use form. Since collecting and updating the site data will be an ongoing process, a key element of the web site is a management system that allows data to be collected and reviewed before it is made public. When a site is ready to be "published" to the public side of the web site, it can be done with the click of a mouse and it will immediately show up on the maps and other listings on the public

web site. Later, if updated information becomes available for a site, the data can be updated just as easily.

Partners and volunteers are the key to successful water trail efforts and ExploreRI.org is ideally suited for collaboration. We are developing the site incrementally, relying on people who know and love each river system to help us collect information on access sites. We are using as much existing information as possible. The Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association web site (www.ricka.org) is full of terrific information on paddling in Rhode Island, and there are also published guide books, DEM access site information and CRMC information on public rights of way, all of which are providing the foundation for our research. Partner groups such as the Salt Ponds Coalition, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and Save the Bay are working with us to collect and organize the information for the ExploreRI.org web site.

Where are we? The ExploreRI.org web site went live in March 2007. We plan to have maps and access information for our first sites available for public viewing very soon, maybe by the time this article reaches you!

Where do we go from here? We will continue to collect information on access sites, working with partners to add data and keep it current and up to date. Down the road, we plan to add information on paddling routes to the web site. And we are very excited to begin working with GARI on adding greenway information in the near future!

Special Thanks to the RI Trails Advisory Council, the East Coast Greenway Alliance Narragansett Bay Wheelmen and the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council for their generous funding.

Forest canoe trail continued from page 1

Quebec, New Hampshire and Maine and celebrates the history of the northern forest. It covers 22 rivers and streams, 56 lakes and ponds, 45 towns in two countries and crosses three National Wildlife Refuges. Along the way, paddlers have opportunities to experience flat water, white water, large lake open water on Lake Champlain, and 55 miles of portages. Although only five people (as of 2006) have through paddled the Trail, most people explore small sections. Kate herself has paddled approximately 100 miles of the trail, and says that she enjoys exploring portions of the trail with her husband and children. The excellent maps developed by the Northern Forest Canoe Trail make planning an afternoon's adventure easy.

The Trail, completed in the spring of 2006, took about 10 years to develop. Its design reflects input from local community partners. These partners continue to play a crucial role in trail stewardship and maintenance, keeping the maps and web site up to date, designing and finding funds for information kiosks and signs, developing camp sites and spreading the word about the Trail. Kate enthusiastically endorsed the use of the web for maintaining up to date information on the trail and its partners. "The web allows us to

acknowledge new partners as soon as they come on board," she said.

The Northern Forest Canoe Trail web site (www.northernforestcanoetrail.org) includes a wealth of information on the trail, such as a section that describes how the trail differs from a long land trail like the Appalachian Trail. These differences highlight the special characteristics of "Blueways" and are useful to keep in mind as we develop the Rhode Island Blueways system.

Both the Northern Forest Canoe Trail and the Appalachian Trail are long-distance trails that celebrate the outdoors and outdoor recreation. They both require physical activity to enjoy and can both be enjoyed in their entirety or in small sections. Most people will experience both trails in one-day or short overnight trips.

The Northern Forest Canoe Trail is different in how it is managed. The Trail obtains access for campsites and portages through landowner permission rather than through land protection. The Trail flows through both developed areas and wilderness, blending communities with the waters that connect them. Like the Appalachian Trail, the skills needed to successfully enjoy the Northern Forest Canoe Trail range from novice to expert.



The Northern Forest Canoe Trail is managed by a nonprofit organization with a small staff and a board of directors. The organization is guided by the mission listed in the sidebar below, which certainly rings true here in Rhode Island. As we begin to develop the Rhode Island Blueways system, we are fortunate to have such rich water trail experiences all around us to learn from!

In the context of partnering with local communities, honoring Native American culture, and conserving the human and natural heritage of the region, we will serve travelers and benefit neighboring communities by:

- Encouraging canoe/kayak travel and recreation.
- Stimulating economic development by attracting a wide range of visitors to the region's communities.
- Improving local access to regional waterways – rivers, streams and lakes.
- Enabling travelers to experience the Northern Forest's full range of diverse landscapes, from working

cities to towns to farms, forests and mountains.

- Supporting community-based services and local arts, education and environmental programs that educate and inspire residents and visitors alike.
- Enhancing quality of life by creating opportunities for people to reconnect with place.



Paddlers on a lake on the New York section of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.

Dear Kaptain Kayak,

Captain Kayak is filling in for Dr. Sprocket while the doctor takes a much needed rest. He will return to answer questions in the next issue of Trail Mix.

Q Dear Captain Kayak,
I have watched people kayaking and canoeing on the rivers in Rhode Island and it looks like a lot of fun. What do I need to know get started? Is canoeing easier to learn than kayaking? Can I rent a boat somewhere and do I need to know how to swim?

Paddling Wannabe

A Dear Wannabee,
Thanks for your great questions – and you are right, paddling is a lot of fun. It's also a great way to get some exercise while you explore some of Rhode Island's beautiful waterways. As with any activity, it is always best to get some instruction when you get started. One basic piece of advice is that novice paddlers should always start out on a flat water lake or

pond to learn the basics before taking on a river or the open bay or ocean.

One great way to discover the sport is to get out with the Blackstone Valley Paddle Club. This group hosts weekly paddling trips on waterways across the Blackstone Valley on Tuesdays from May through August. They also offer a monthly training session on the fourth Thursday of each month where you can learn some of the basic strokes and try out a boat. For more on this group, take a look at their web site www.ricka-flatwater.org/bypaddlers.htm. This website also has a links page that lists some of the local outfitters where you can rent or buy a boat. The map on page 7 also has information on outfitters.



As for whether it is easier to learn to canoe or kayak – it really depends on you. Many people do say that it is easier to pick up kayaking, and kayaking's popularity has skyrocketed in recent years. However, some people feel confined in a kayak, and they can be difficult to squeeze into.

Your best bet is to find a friend or vendor who will let you try out both so you can see which type of boat feels best to you.

I strongly suggest that paddlers know how to swim, and always wear your PFD whenever you go out no matter how good a swimmer you are.

If you have any questions about paddling in the Blackstone Valley, you can call Kevin Klyberg, Park Ranger, or any of the other adventurous paddlers at the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, (401) 762-0250.

Our recent accomplishments

- > Worked with other advocacy groups to organize Bicycle Friendly Community meetings and workshops to encourage grass roots trail advocacy and development.
- > Represented pro-bike path positions at various public meetings (including submitting letters during formal public comment periods).
- > Sponsored and organized the 2006 National Trails Day events in Rhode Island.
- > Named the Washington Bridge Linear Park in George Redman's honor.

www.rigreenways.org

Get on the trail!

Join the only organization dedicated to statewide advocacy of bike paths and greenway development in Rhode Island. Your membership dues make this newsletter possible and enable us to continue our mission of working with state and local leaders to ensure Rhode Island has an integrated, well-maintained network of alternative transportation and recreation corridors.

Name _____
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Organization _____

Annual Membership enclosed

- Individual \$15
- Family \$25
- Nonprofit \$50
- Corporate \$100
- Other: _____

Please return membership form with check payable to the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island to: GARI, 31 Stanchion Street, Jamestown, RI 02835.

Please tell me about GARI meetings by
 E-mail Regular Mail Neither

Spring 2007

Join the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Today!

Connecting the DOTs

Environment top priority in Lonsdale section of Blackstone River Bikeway

By Charles St. Martin

The Blackstone River Bikeway offers more than just a pretty ride along the river, it has been an impetus for environmental improvements along the river with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT) making changes in the path's design to minimize environmental impact.

The most recent project is a 540-foot long boardwalk under construction in the Lonsdale Marsh in Cumberland. This boardwalk will help carry Segment 4A, an approximately 1-mile long section of the bike path. This will connect the path's current southern terminus at the former Lonsdale Drive-In on John Street to

Mill Street at Cumberland Town Hall.

RIDOT chose the boardwalk design for that portion of the bike path because it will have a minimal impact on the environment. An alternative design would have involved the filling of a portion of the marsh to build up a stable foundation for the path. The 14-foot wide boardwalk will be about five to six feet above the marsh, allowing water to flow unimpeded. This is critically important during flooding conditions. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) was an important partner in this project.

The remainder of the new path segment runs on drier ground, and a few local streets will be used to help extend the path to Mill Street. RIDOT's goal is to have the path on its own alignment as much as possible, but it was not feasible in this situation. RIDOT has used local roads to connect segments of bike path before. In the South Kingstown village of Peace Dale, a portion of the South County Bike Path runs along Railroad Street to link one

segment of the bike path to another.

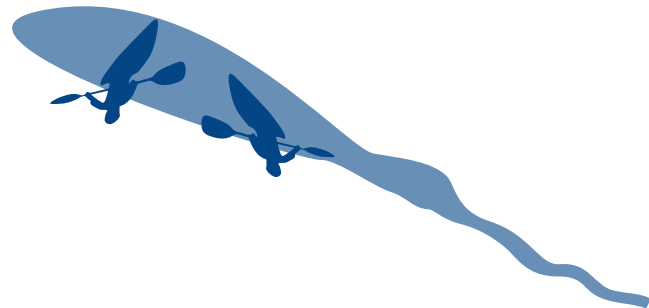
RIDOT expects the boardwalk segment to open later this year. When combined with two other projects on the northern terminus of the path, plus the projected reopening of the path at Martin Street this year, the bikeway will be about 11 miles long.

The boardwalk segment connects to another environmental milestone, that being the restoration of land at the former Lonsdale Drive-In. Acres of asphalt were removed in 2002 and the path was built along the western edge of the property. The design not only allowed the path to continue on its own alignment, but created a vast meadow out of a parking lot, with other sensitive wetland areas restored. RIDEM and the Army Corps of Engineers led this project, with RIDOT constructing the bike path portion.

The writer is an Information and Public Relations Specialist for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation

Calendar of Events for Rivers Month

Special Pull out Section!



www.riverways.org

31 Stanchion Street,
Jamestown, RI 02835

GARI