

In the Mainstream

Newsletter for Members of the Norwalk River Watershed Association [NRWA]
New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT, and Lewisboro, NY

www.norwalkriver.org

Fall/Winter 2008/2009

RIVER STUDY JOINS NRWA

Late this past summer the Six Town River Board formally dissolved and turned over to NRWA its physical and financial assets, as well as responsibility for the in-class training of volunteer guides who teach the River Study Program to fourth- and fifth-grade students in Ridgefield and Wilton.

The River Study Program was started under the auspices of the Junior League of Stamford-Norwalk in the mid 1970s and spun off to the newly formed Six Town River Board when the program was thriving in the six towns of Darien, New Canaan, Norwalk, Ridgefield, Stamford, and Wilton. The aim of the program was, and continues to be, to train adult volunteers (and, in some cases, a few advanced high-school science students) to teach students about river ecology and the link to Long Island Sound, and to make participants realize the necessity of good supplies of clean fresh water and ways they can conserve and protect it. The program, taught in an experiential way, includes information on the history and function of rivers and adjacent land in a watershed; the life in, beside, and above the river; the way plants and animals function and adapt in nature; and the ways mankind has impacted these natural resources over time. The goal of the program has been to educate both adults (present voters, professionals, property owners, and activists) and children (future scientists, legislators, businessmen, educators, homeowners, etc.) because those involved with the program have understood clearly that the more people know and understand, the more they will act responsibly and work to protect those resources they regard as essential for life as we know it.

For a variety of reasons – not the least being the necessity, in many cases, of both parents to work – the program as the regular part of elementary education ceased in a number of towns. It has continued to thrive, however, in both Ridgefield and Wilton – two towns where the program has been written into the school curriculum and science coordinators are paid to recruit and work

with volunteers to train other volunteers to teach students during the field trips to the respective river sites along the Norwalk River in the two towns.

The plan is for NRWA to better coordinate the future preliminary in-class training sessions in both fall and spring with The Discovery Center in Ridgefield – which provides a wide variety of mounted native, animal specimens that are discussed – and with the schools in both towns, so the guides can take advantage of additional background information through PowerPoint presentations, demonstrations, and lectures that clarify principles and facts and make the guides more knowledgeable and comfortable with the information they teach.

Adults who have taken River Study training have found the knowledge gained useful. It helped them avoid buying houses likely to have a wet basement, enabled them to improve water quality in their pond or stream, gave them facts that make a hike to any other area more meaningful, and helped them with badges for Cub Scouts or Girl Scouts.

River Study's goals and subject matter are akin to those of NRWA, so the Association is looking forward to working with all factions and individuals to help the program succeed and possibly expand to other towns again. NRWA is interested in adding Board Members or Advisors who subscribe to the value of the program. Anyone wishing to learn more about ways to be a part of this environmental education should contact Lillian Willis (203-438-8653) or info@norwalkriver.org. River Study is an important educational opportunity and responsibility, and NRWA is eager for adults to contribute their knowledge and expertise to further the project.



River Guides open amazing doors to knowledge and inquiry for children and other adults, who begin to understand the interconnectedness between living things and their environment, and the impact human beings have had and can have - both good and bad - on all life.

HUNTING SEASON PRECAUTIONS

Hunting season starts in September and includes various seasons for different weapons and game species until May. In addition, hunting practices may differ on public and private properties. Although hunting is not allowed on Sundays in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, it is always safer to wear lots of blaze orange at all times when hiking during the fall, winter, and spring. That precaution especially applies to children who might dash ahead along the trails.

FALL IS LEAF TIME. But please don't dump or blow your leaves into rivers, ponds, or wetlands. That practice suffocates insects and eggs, alters the food chain, impedes wetland functions, and makes waterways shallower and warmer, thereby eliminating cold water fish, such as trout. Leaves clog culverts, increase flooding, and lead to algal blooms, loss of oxygen, dead fish, smelly waters, and potentially expensive dredging. Instead, compost leaves to form rich topsoil or broadcast them into your woodlands. Download NRWA's new "Four-Season Yard Worker Tip Sheet" from our website to learn suggestions for good yard care this fall. Leaves are a natural resource, not litter.

