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## One weekend + 12 towns + 7 rivers = 7 Rivers Festival

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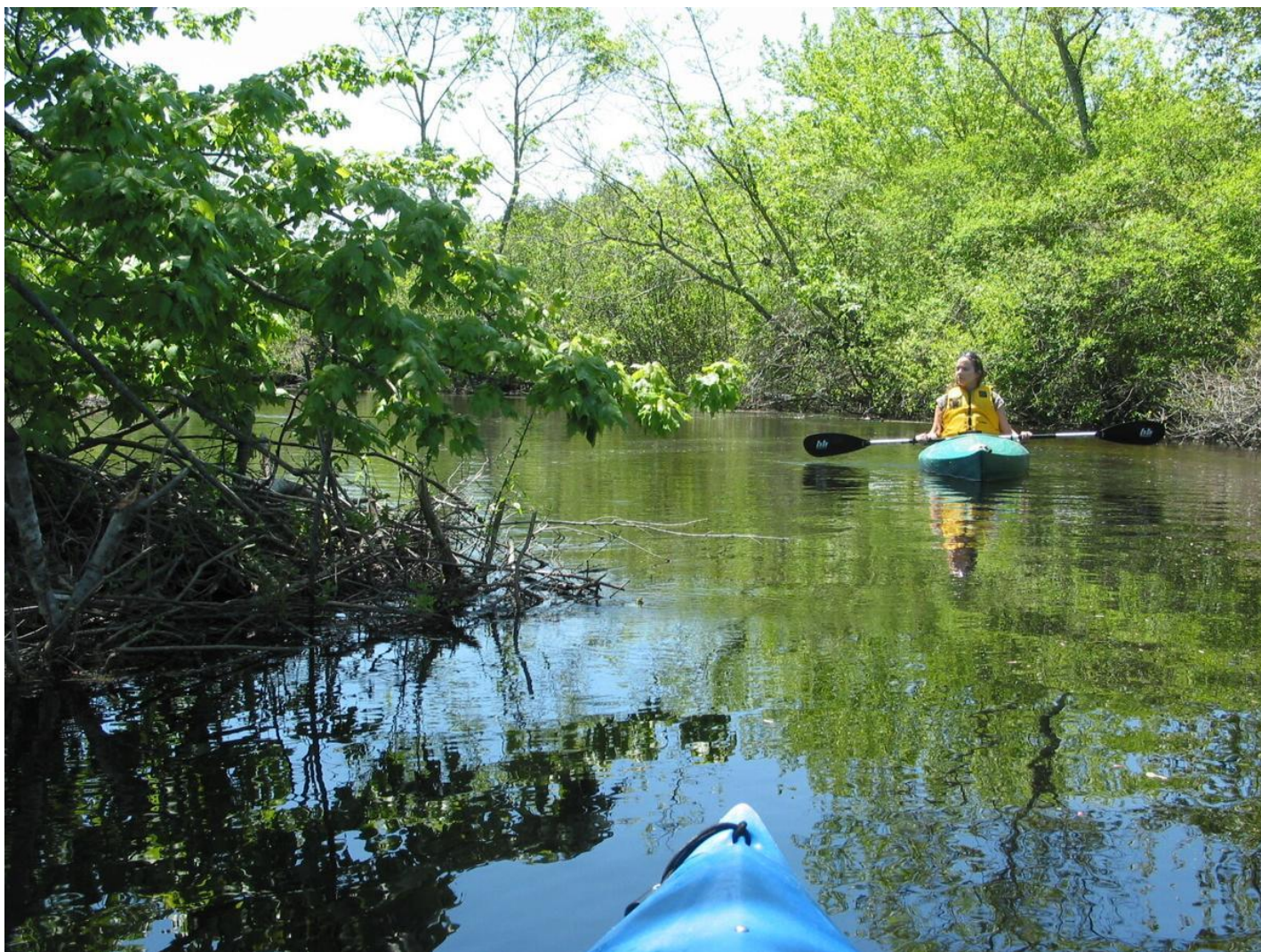


Photo Courtesy of The Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association

HOPKINTON — The Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council will hold a celebration of seven local rivers this weekend with a series of events scheduled to occur on or around rivers in Rhode Island and nearby Connecticut.

The 7 Rivers Festival, which recognizes the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers status of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed in Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut, will be held Saturday and Sunday with 28 free events in Westerly, Stonington, North Stonington, Charlestown, Hopkinton, Exeter, Richmond, Exeter, South Kingstown, West Greenwich, North Kingstown, Sterling and Voluntown.

The scenic rivers being celebrated are the Wood, Beaver, Pawcatuck, Green Fall-Ashaway, Chipuxet, Queen-Usquepaugh, and Shunock rivers.

"Our 7 Rivers Festival event partners have been overwhelmingly supportive, offering more than 30 wide-ranging, free events focused on our 'Wild and Scenic' rivers," said Kassi Donnelly, coordinator of the stewardship council. "Festival-goers will find that each event is unique thanks to our partners celebrating the rivers in their own special ways.

"Whether on a riverbank, the water, or in the community, these events will highlight special rivers in our twelve towns," she said.

In March 2019, after thousands of hours of community effort spanning 10 years and led by the WPWA, Rhode Island and Connecticut residents received word that their waterways within the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed received a National Wild and Scenic Designation by the federal government. This special care and protection status is held by less than 1% of the 3.6 million miles of waterways in the United States.

The festival organizers have partnered with a number of local businesses who have special offers in store for festival-goers: Knead Doughnuts in Westerly will offer one free doughnut per person on Saturday and Sunday; Leyden Farm Vineyard & Winery in West Greenwich will offer two tastings for the price of one; Little Country Pizza & Barbeque in Exeter will offer a free homemade lemonade, ice tea or orangeade with the order of any Italian Stallion or veggie grinder calzone; Mia's Cafe in Pawcatuck will offer a free brownie or cookie per person on Sunday; Next to Nowhere Creamery in Exeter will offer one free topping on any size scoop order; Shaidzon Beer Company in West Kington will offer one free pour per person; and Stagecoach House Inn in Wyoming is offering 10 percent off a two-night stay over the festival.

"Events like the 7 Rivers Festival highlight all that is worth protecting for our rivers by educating us on their remarkable and one-of-a-kind characteristics, their role in our history, as well as considerations of ecology and animals," said Nancy Quinlan, a member of the Stewardship Council. " These elements offer us a call to action as residents to help protect and enjoy these treasures."

The council is coordinating support of the following events:

- Moth Light Attraction Trap Discovery at the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association — a Friday night special in Hopkinton from 8-10 p.m.
- Combined paddle by the Rhode Island Canoe and Kayak Association and Southern New England Paddlers in Hopkinton, Sunday, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- A night sky bat event at Eppley Wildlife Refuge in South Kingstown with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, Saturday, 8-10:30 p.m.
- Fly-tying and fly-fishing with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Hopkinton, Saturday, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
- Stream selfie with Citizen Science at Cross' Mills Public Library in Charlestown, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Guided hike at Alewife Brook Preserve with South Kingstown Land Trust, South Kingstown, Saturday from 8-10 a.m.
- Nature book display at Kingston Free Library in South Kingstown.
- Book and materials display at Stonington Free Library, Stonington.
- Naturalist guided walk on Napatree with the Watch Hill Conservancy, Westerly, Saturday at 9 a.m.
- Milltown Arts North Stonington: en Plein air painting at the Hewitt property, North Stonington.
- Wild plant walk with Tien Tran of Exeter Public Library and member of the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society, Exeter.
- Library Story Trail at Voluntown Public Library along the riverbank, Voluntown.
- Westerly Land Trust guided hike of new Cottrell Family Preserve, Westerly.
- Stream Insects in our Neighborhood with the Hopkinton Land Trust, Hopkinton.
- Narragansett Trail Hike with the Appalachian Mountain Club & The Nature Conservancy at Carter Preserve, Charlestown.
- Queen's River Free Paddles with Queen's River Kayaks and tours of Kenyon's Grist Mill, South Kingstown.

- Bird walk at Ryan Park with Ocean State Bird Club, North Kingstown.
- River & Wildlife book display, Stonington Free Library, Stonington.
- Free kayak rentals with Stonington Recreation and Mechanic Street Marina, Pawcatuck.
- Grand opening celebration with a naturalist-guided walk at the Sheets Family Forest, Avalonia Land Conservancy, North Stonington.
- Muddy World of Amphibians with the Mystic Aquarium, North Stonington.
- 7 Rivers Festival table display at Wheeler Library, North Stonington.
- Hike along the Shunock River with the North Stonington Conservation Commission to see a glacial erratic.
- Enjoy a sunrise or sunset hike at Pharisee Rock with the Friends of Pachaug Forest, Sterling.
- Story walk to read "In the Small, Small Pond" by Denise Fleming, Louttit Library, West Greenwich.
- Mushroom hunting with the Mushroom Hunting Foundation's Ryan and Emily, West Greenwich.
- Paint rocks to be added to a river of rocks at the Exeter Public Library, Exeter.
- Wild plant walk with Exeter Public Library librarian Tien Tran, a member of the Rhode Island Wild Plant Society, Exeter.
- Rhode Island Civilian Conservation Corps Camps, presented by Martin Podskoch with the Exeter Historical Association, Exeter,.
- Tomaquag Museum's "Culture Bearer Series: The Rivers Connect Us" with Cassius Spears Jr.'s "Understanding Waterways, Kinship, and Tribal Sovereignty" in Exeter.
- Westerly River Days sponsored by the Southern Rhode Island Conservation District; join the celebration with Trout Unlimited, Leave No Trace RI, and a day of family-friendly, fly-fishing activities along with designs for a future riverfront community space. Many community events, river-themed offers from restaurants, a Hawaiian Shaved Ice truck, and music by Cross Rhode Blues.

For more information, call 401-539-9017 or email [wildevents@wpwa.org](mailto:wildevents@wpwa.org). Additional events and upcoming registration information can be found at [WPWildRivers.org/7-Rivers-Festival](https://www.wildrivers.org/7-Rivers-Festival).

— *Nancy Burns-Fusaro*

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## Nancy Burns-Fusaro

Arts & Culture Editor