

THE DRAGONFLY EXPRESS: SUMMER 2025

A WOOD-PAWCATUCK WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS PUBLICATION



WOOD - PAWCATUCK
WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

WPWildRivers.org

↑ **SHUNOCK RIVER,**
HENNE MEMORIAL PRESERVE

NORTH STONINGTON, CT

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The Council's mission is to help preserve, protect and enhance the special environmental, cultural, and recreational values of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed's federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers and tributaries in

Rhode Island and Connecticut for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

In March 2019, after thousands of hours of community effort over a ten year period, Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut residents celebrated seven rivers within the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed receiving a National Wild and Scenic River designation. The watershed is now considered a Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers System under the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Less than 1% of the 3.6 million miles of streams in the U.S can claim this designation!



Stewardship Council Members

Executive Committee

Antonia Bryson, Chair
Elaine Caldarone, Vice Chair
Denise Poyer, Secretary
Harvey Buford, Treasurer

Members Representing Towns

Charlestown, RI: Robert J Maietta
Charlestown, RI: Justin Andrade (alt)
Exeter, RI: Nan Quinlan
Exeter, RI: Sharon MacLean (alt)
Hopkinton, RI: Harvey Buford
Hopkinton, RI: Juliet Lamb (alt)
North Kingstown, RI: Ahren Cohen
North Kingstown, RI: vacant
North Stonington, CT: Madeline Jeffery
North Stonington, CT: Elaine Caldarone (alt)
Richmond, RI: Antonia Bryson
Richmond, RI: Denise Poyer (alt)
South Kingstown, RI: Tom Halavik
South Kingstown, RI: Ali Gretchner (alt)
Sterling, CT: Kim Gunn
Sterling, CT: vacant
Stonington, CT: Fred Wagner
Stonington, CT: Sara Baker (alt)
Voluntown, CT: William Gay
Voluntown, CT: vacant
West Greenwich, RI: Chris Grube
West Greenwich, RI: vacant
Westerly, RI: Robert D. Madison
Westerly, RI: vacant

Member Agencies and Partners

RI Department of Environmental Management:
Corey Pelletier
CT Department of Energy & Environmental
Protection: vacant
National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis
Save the Bay: Catie Alves, Ph.D.
The Nature Conservancy: Harvey Perry
Westerly Land Trust: Marc Doherty and Jenn Fusco
Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association: Chris Fox

Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers

Coordinator
Casey Merkle

GIVE US A LISTEN!

Seven Rivers Unbound: A Wild and Scenic Journey through the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed

Explore the Wood-Pawcatuck's Wild and Scenic Rivers through Seven Rivers Unbound! Learn how scientists, artists, hikers, birders, and so many others enjoy and conserve the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed and its federally designated Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Our podcast is sponsored by the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council. Listen wherever you get your podcasts!

Episode 7



Waterfowl with Jenny Kilburn, RI DEM

Episode 8



Shunock River with Vilma Gregoropoulos

Episode 9

Coming Soon!

Hydrogeology with Dr. Thomas Boving

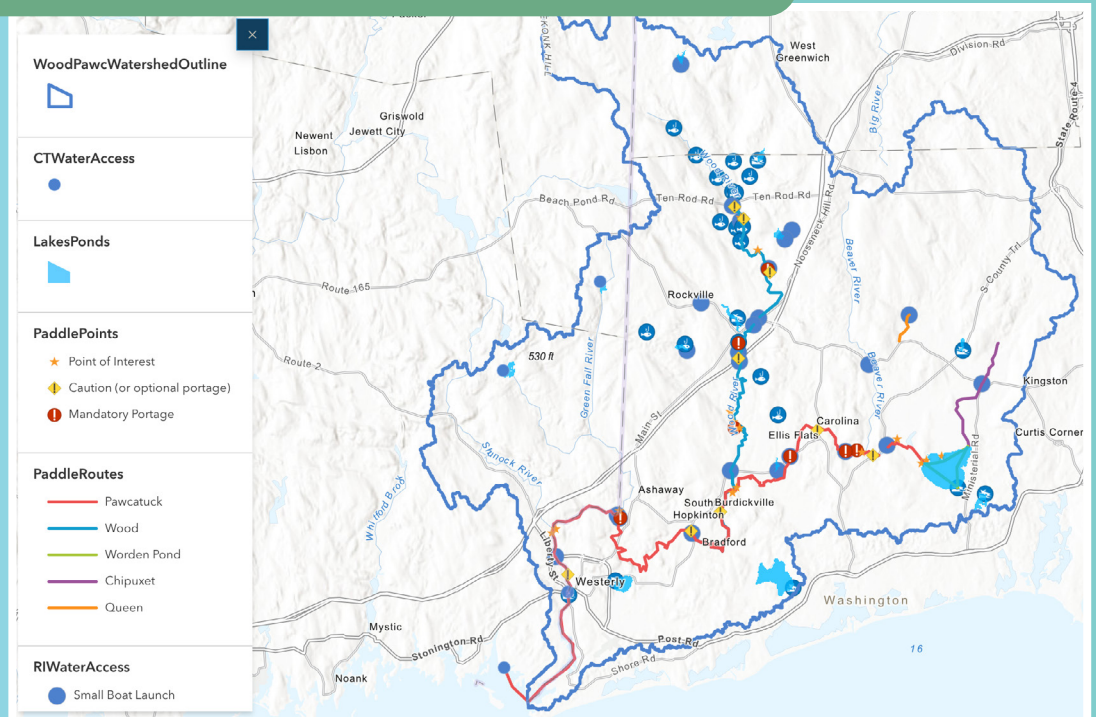
PLAN YOUR SUMMER PADDLE

Visit our website to explore our [Water Trails map](#) and start planning your summer paddle. Our maps show access points at ponds and rivers for boating or fishing. Navigable sections are highlighted.

Always follow safe boating practices!

When entering and leaving a water body, be sure to follow the "Clean, Drain, Dry" procedure to prevent the spread of Aquatic Invasive Species.

Learn more at stopaquaticinvasivehikers.org.

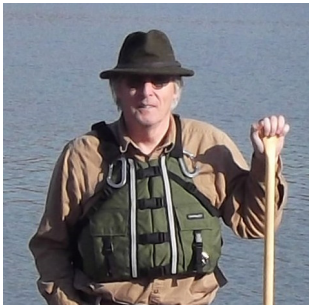


Welcome new Stewardship Council Members!



Harvey Buford, Town Representative, Hopkinton
Council Treasurer and Projects Committee Member

Harvey chaired the Hopkinton Conservation Commission for 30 years and founded the Hopkinton Land Trust. He is a retired building contractor. With those skills he has designed and installed most of the trails and trail signage throughout Hopkinton in the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed. He has helped document thousands of Native American stone structures. He is interested in budgets and other management duties.



Robert Madison, Town Representative, Westerly
Information and Education Committee Member

Bob Madison is the Westerly Town Representative to the Stewardship Council. Bob is a retired literature professor with a specialty in maritime literature and natural history. He is a native of Westerly and a graduate of the University of Rhode Island. He and his wife Karen live adjacent to the Sunnyacres Preserve in Dunns Corners. Bob has paddled the watershed from Hundred Acre Pond to the tidewater. He has also paddled the Buffalo River in Arkansas—the first National River—from Ponca to its confluence with the White River, followed the wake of Thoreau in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine, and shared the lilies with a moose in the Boundary Waters.



Juliet Lamb, Town Representative (alt), Hopkinton

Juliet is a marine scientist with The Nature Conservancy, where she studies seabirds and marine ecosystems. After spending many years researching seabirds and other wildlife in the Mediterranean Sea, North Sea, Gulf of Mexico, Gulf of Maine, Florida Everglades, Ecuador, Panama, France, Spain, Scotland, and along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of North America, she is now happily settled in Hope Valley and enjoying backyard canoe adventures in the Wood River with her family. She is passionate about science communication, outreach, and protecting and sharing Rhode Island's natural treasures.

River Clean-up Wrap

Thanks to RI DEM's Litter-Free Mini Grant for supporting our Earth Day River Clean-ups!

We're thrilled to share highlights from our recent Earth Day-inspired river clean-up efforts—made possible through a \$500 Litter-Free Rhode Island grant awarded by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) and Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank.

Over the spring, volunteers came together to clean up sections of the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers. These clean-ups not only helped our Wild and Scenic Rivers maintain their outstanding, remarkable values, but also brought people together from our Rhode Island and Connecticut towns.

With your help, we accomplished:

- 4 successful clean-up events
- Over 15 volunteers in attendance
- More than 1,500 pounds of trash removed from riverbanks, trails, and access points



The grant-funding helped us provide cleanup supplies, allowing an efficient sweep of nips, cans, plastic bottles, styrofoam, straws—and our most unique find, over 20 car fresheners.

We encourage everyone who took part to continue their commitment by signing the Litter-Free Rhode Island pledge at litterfree.ri.gov/take-pledge.

To all our volunteers—thank you! We couldn't do this without your time, energy, and dedication.



Watershed Artist Highlight

LORÉN M. SPEARS

Author, artist, and Executive Director of the Tomaquag Museum

Lorén Spears, a gifted artist, poet, author and enrolled citizen of the Narragansett Tribal Nation, has been inspiring Indigenous artists and helping them build creative businesses for 22 years as Executive Director of the Tomaquag Museum. As an artist herself, she understands the challenges they face, especially when asked to adapt to systems that often overlook or exclude traditional knowledge. Her mission is to change that by empowering artists and guiding curators on how to create space for more inclusive ways of knowing and being.



↑ LORÉN AND HER WOVEN WORK, *CONNECTION*

When asked about a turning point in her artistic journey, she says there wasn't one—because her art has always been part of her life. Lorén was taught beading by her aunt at a young age, and she grew up surrounded by traditional skills like finger weaving, basket making, and twining. Today, she carries on those traditions through her intricate weavings, paintings, poetry, and more.

One of her woven pieces, *Connection*, is especially powerful. It's rich and entangled with meaning, through intentional choice of colors, texture, and materials to tell a story that spans generations and lands. *Connection* symbolizes a profound lineage, reaching back to her ancestors who were sold into slavery and brought to the islands of Bermuda. The piece includes seven wampum shells, representing a linkage between seven generations across two lands.

A poet as well, Lorén often turns to writing to express her connection to family and place. In her poem “Roaring Brook”, featured in the anthology *Dawnland Voices*, she remembers a cousin who once fished and played in that very stream, just as her grandson does today. Her grandfather lovingly cared for the brook, keeping it clean and glass-free. When asked what she would say to the Roaring Brook, she would “give thanks for all the gifts that it gave... to all our relations... everything that is connected to this ecosystem.”

Lorén leaves a lasting message: access is essential to her lifeways. She challenges modern conservation approaches that promote a “look, don’t touch” mindset. For her, it’s critical to stay connected and actively participate in the ecosystem. Without that relationship, these places will go by the wayside.



↑ **BROOK IN ARCADIA MANAGEMENT AREA**

To learn more about Lorén’s work, check-out the **Tomaquag Museum**! They are located at 390 A Summit Road, Exeter, RI 02822.

Plan your visit at

<https://www.tomaquagmuseum.org/plan-your-visit>



←
**OUTSIDE AND
INSIDE OF
THE MUSEUM.
COURTESY OF
THE TOMAQUAG
MUSEUM**

Short Essays from Stewardship Council Members

Trusting the Wind

By Robert D. Madison, Stewardship Council Town Representative,
Westerly, RI

The other day I was sitting at the south end of my porch watching activity at the bird feeders. There wasn't much going on, but the day was sunny and it was pleasant to get some warmth in April.

Then something brushed across my face from right to left—just a slight breathing of air. It should have come from the southwest: the storm had passed and the sky was still sunny with only a few cumulus clouds.

Another brush that could hardly be called a wind—this time from a couple of points farther south. Was the air trying to be a sea breeze? On a warm summer day the sea breeze will reach inland as far as Sunnycroft, in Dunns Corners; but, will back quickly from south the southwest. And, it will be steady.

Another uncertain touch of air in my face, and I said silently to myself "I don't trust this wind. I stood up and walked to the door, not fifteen feet distant. Before I got there, raindrops began to spatter the porch where I had been sitting.

If you are a native of these parts, you have probably come to trust the wind. Sailors on Little Narragansett Bay watch little strands of yarn tied to a backstay or—more frequently—the ripple of a cat's-paw whisking in from Sandy Point. Farther up, a work crew for the Westerly Land Trust watches the color of the trees change as the wind begins to turn the leaves. On the big ponds, paddlers heading west in the afternoon may tuck in under the shore or postpone their crossing entirely to avoid an afternoon grind in favor of an evening paddle.

On the tributaries, fishermen may sense that the afternoon breeze is time to pack up and get a good night's sleep to arise before dawn to set out on another morning's quest.

And I suppose our friend The Naturalist has a long list of non-human creatures that trust the wind in similar ways. Does the Osprey read the wind on the water? Do the dragonflies know how to make the winds their friends?

Even the absence of wind is something we come to trust. I remember one winter's night long ago at the Burlingame canoe campsite in Charlestown, RI. Lying under my tarp and ensconced in my sleeping-bag, I heard nothing and could see nothing. The day had been cloudy and the night was correspondingly dark. There was no wind in the trees.

And then I began to hear a very slight and unrhythmic patter—I have no simile for it. It was the sound of snowflakes landing on the tarp. Have you heard a snowflake fall?

As I've been writing this, the wind has been rising. The wind-chimes are singing. I trust it will be a good day.

Cultural Sites along the Narragansett Trail

By Harvey Buford, Stewardship Council Town Representative
Hopkinton, RI

Rhode Island's Appalachian Mountain Club is based in the only New England state that lacks direct access to the Appalachian Trail. When it was established 100 years ago, the club set an early goal of connecting to the Appalachian Trail via the proposed Narragansett Trail. The proposed route would run from their site on Worden Pond in South Kingstown to a new trail junction on Lantern Hill in Ledyard, Connecticut—a distance of 22 miles in RI and 22 miles in CT. A noteworthy aspect of this winding trail is that it repeatedly passes through Native American Ceremonial Stone Landscapes, which contain thousands of cultural and religious stone structures.

The trail had just been completed when the Great Hurricane of 1938 felled thousands of trees across it. Debris was cleared from the trail less than a year later and quickly became popular; you can still find it on USGS maps of the area.

However, as the federal government and the State of Rhode Island turned their focus to automobile transportation, the Narragansett Trail was blocked off 70



↑ **STONE STRUCTURES AT MANITOU HASSANNASH**

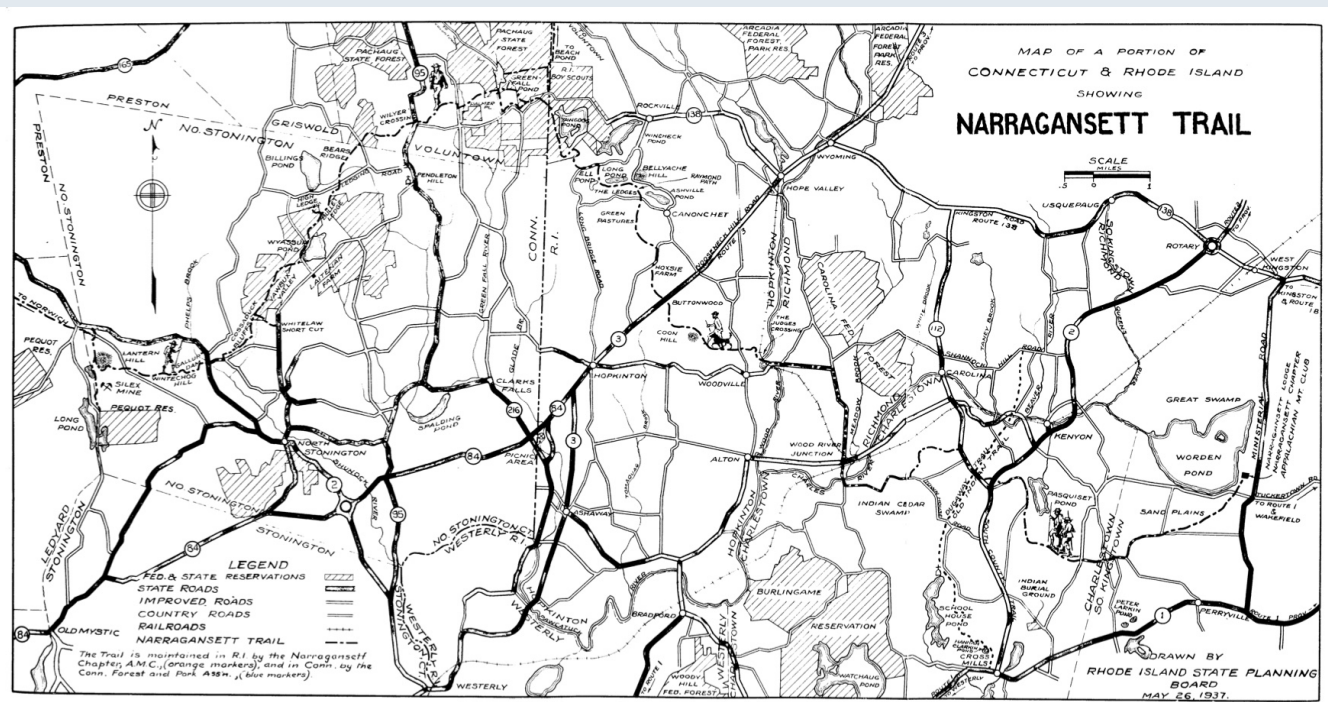
years ago where the new I-95 crossed it on its ascent of Coon Hill in Hopkinton. In 2019, Kerry Robinson of the AMC set out to reinstate the Narragansett Trail, including the roughly 20 miles in Rhode Island that were no longer in regular use. In the more rural areas of Connecticut, most of the familiar Connecticut Forest & Park blue-blazed trails still maintain the Narragansett Trail.

The Hopkinton Land Trust acquired the 13-acre Manitou Hassannash Trail property in 2013 to preserve this Ceremonial Stone Landscape, which had been slated for housing development, and to protect the 1,100 stone “prayers” that the Narragansett Trail passes. Thousands more of these stone structures can be found within the larger Canonchet Preserves, owned by The Nature Conservancy.

A current effort is under way to restore the Narragansett Trail with a pedestrian bridge over I-95, supported by RIDOT and, we hope, federal partners as well. If you visit these cultural sites, please recognize them and help preserve them.

Note from the Editor: Protecting and reconnecting this trail aligns with the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers program’s core mission of preserving and protecting cultural values, including sacred landscapes and place-based connections to the rivers. The trail passes very near the Pawcatuck and Wood Rivers.

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↑ 1937 NARRAGANSETT TRAIL MAP COURTESY OF APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB - NARRAGANSETT CHAPTER



UPCOMING EVENTS

Look out for upcoming monthly hikes and paddles led by members and partners of the Council. Follow us on FaceBook, Instagram, and our website.

Thursday, July 31, 9:30am - 2pm: Paddle the Pawcatuck with Westerly Land Trust

Email coordinator@wpwildrivers.org for more details and to register.



*Thank you,
The Stewardship Council*



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