

**WILD & SCENIC**

**2015** ANNUAL  
REPORT

# WESTFIELD RIVER

COMMITTEE



**WILD & SCENIC  
WESTFIELD RIVER  
COMMITTEE**

**WILD & SCENIC**

**2015 Highlights**

**FROM AROUND THE WATERSHED**

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

### Town of Becket

Mercedes Gallagher, Treasurer  
Alvin Blake, *alt.*

### Town of Chester

Robert Thompson, Chair  
Dave Pierce, *alt.*

### Town of Chesterfield

Nancy Rich; Denise Cormier, *alt.*

### Town of Cummington

Amy Pulley

### Town of Huntington

Jeff Penn, Vice-Chair

### Town of Middlefield

Carol Waag; Terry Crean, *alt.*;  
Don Munger, *alt.*

### Town of Savoy

John Tynan

### Town of Washington

Roy Bryan

### Town of Windsor

Jim Caffrey, Secretary

### Town of Worthington

Roan Katahdin; Jim Dodge, *alt.*

### Additional Members:

Westfield River Watershed Association  
The Trustees of Reservations  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission  
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
National Park Service

### Associate Member:

Westfield River Environmental Center —  
Westfield State University

## OUR MISSION

*To preserve, protect and enhance the special qualities and outstanding resources of the Westfield River Watershed in concert with local communities.*

**Front cover: Meadowhawk Dragonfly**  
**Photo Credit — John Burns**



## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

As we put together our annual report for 2015 it always seems to be a time of reflection and anticipation. Reflections of the past years accomplishments and appreciations of individual efforts. Dedication and commitment by all of the members of the Committee, ongoing, tireless

work by Dave Pierce on behalf of Keystone Arch Bridges designation. Our dedicated National Park Service Representative Liz Lacy, Carrie Banks our State Coordinator provided by the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, who is the principle driving force behind all of the Committee's activities. Special appreciation of Meredyth Babcock and all of the Stream Team volunteers for their contributions over the past year.

Anticipations and expectations for the coming year are high — plans for our 3rd Annual Watershed Blitz, continued monitoring of water quality, control of invasives within the watershed, and broader collaboration with the other Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers. I am excited that the Westfield Committee will be hosting the 2017 Partnership Rivers Conference. There will be new workspace at Westfield State University to further collaboration with faculty and students. All giving a sense of excitement and renewed commitment for the Committee and the Designation.

On behalf of the entire Committee I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to, or been involved in, any of the activities associated with the Committee and the Watershed. I would also like to recognize the support of the Wild and Scenic Towns through their representatives. It is the collaboration and commitment of a number of groups and individuals that contribute immeasurably to make the Westfield a spectacular River.

Sincerely,

Robert Thompson, *Chair*



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*Gators in the Westfield River —  
creative art installation project by  
Community Access to the Arts.*

# A YEAR BY THE NUMBERS

**\$270,391+** in grants, donations, in-kind and volunteer services leveraged by the Committee.

**215**

**ROAD-STREAM CROSSINGS** surveyed by interns to prioritize restoration projects based on risks to both ecosystems and infrastructure.

**137**

**STREAM TEAM VOLUNTEERS** contributed **OVER 749 HOURS** to monitor the watershed, remove invasives and enhance historical and recreational features along the river.

**103<sup>rd</sup>**

**BIRTHDAY** celebrated by Mr. Aaron after his wish to conserve **70 ACRES** of his family homestead was granted with the help of a Wild & Scenic Riparian Conservation Grant.

**67**

**WATERSHED BLITZ PARTICIPANTS** surveyed **13.5 RIVER MILES** and collected more than **300 PHOTOS** and **DATAPPOINTS**.

**12**

**LOCATIONS AND COMMUNITY EVENTS** hosted the Wild & Scenic Travel the Watershed Suitcases and distributed **OVER 600 EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**.

## FINANCIAL REPORT

*Project funding provided through the National Park Service's Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Program (except as noted\*).*

### General Expenses

General Operations \$8,404\*

### Outreach & Education

Outreach and Education \$5,032

Watershed Blitz \$818\*

### Resource Stewardship

Culvert Fish Passage Monitoring \$8,524

River Internships \$3,093

Stream Team Projects \$18,033

### Community Grants

Becket-Washington Stream Explorers \$300

FLT Riparian Conservation Project \$1,681

NEWFS Rare Plants & Invasives Project \$8,000

TNC Riparian Conservation Project \$15,000

**TOTAL EXPENDITURES: \$68,885**

Additional Project Funds Under Contract: **\$23,561**

*Program and technical assistance provided by staff at the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, Department of Fish & Game and the National Park Service.*

*\* A total of \$579 of these funds came from other donations.*



## DIDYMO FOUND IN WEST BRANCH

# CHECK, CLEAN, DRY

Didymo, aka Rock Snot, was found along the West Branch in Becket, Middlefield, Chester and Huntington. Help prevent its spread! After leaving the water:

**CHECK** – Remove all visible algae and plant material from fishing gear, clothing, waders, sandals, water shoes, floats, boats, and anything else that has been in the water.

**CLEAN** – Wash boats and gear thoroughly in **HOT** soapy water. Soak clothing, felt-soled waders, and other absorbent items in **HOT** soapy water for 30 minutes.

**DRY** – Dry equipment completely. Complete drying may take multiple days for some types of gear and equipment, e.g. life jackets, sneakers, clothing, felt-soled waders, etc.

## WILD & SCENIC

# 2015 HIGHLIGHTS

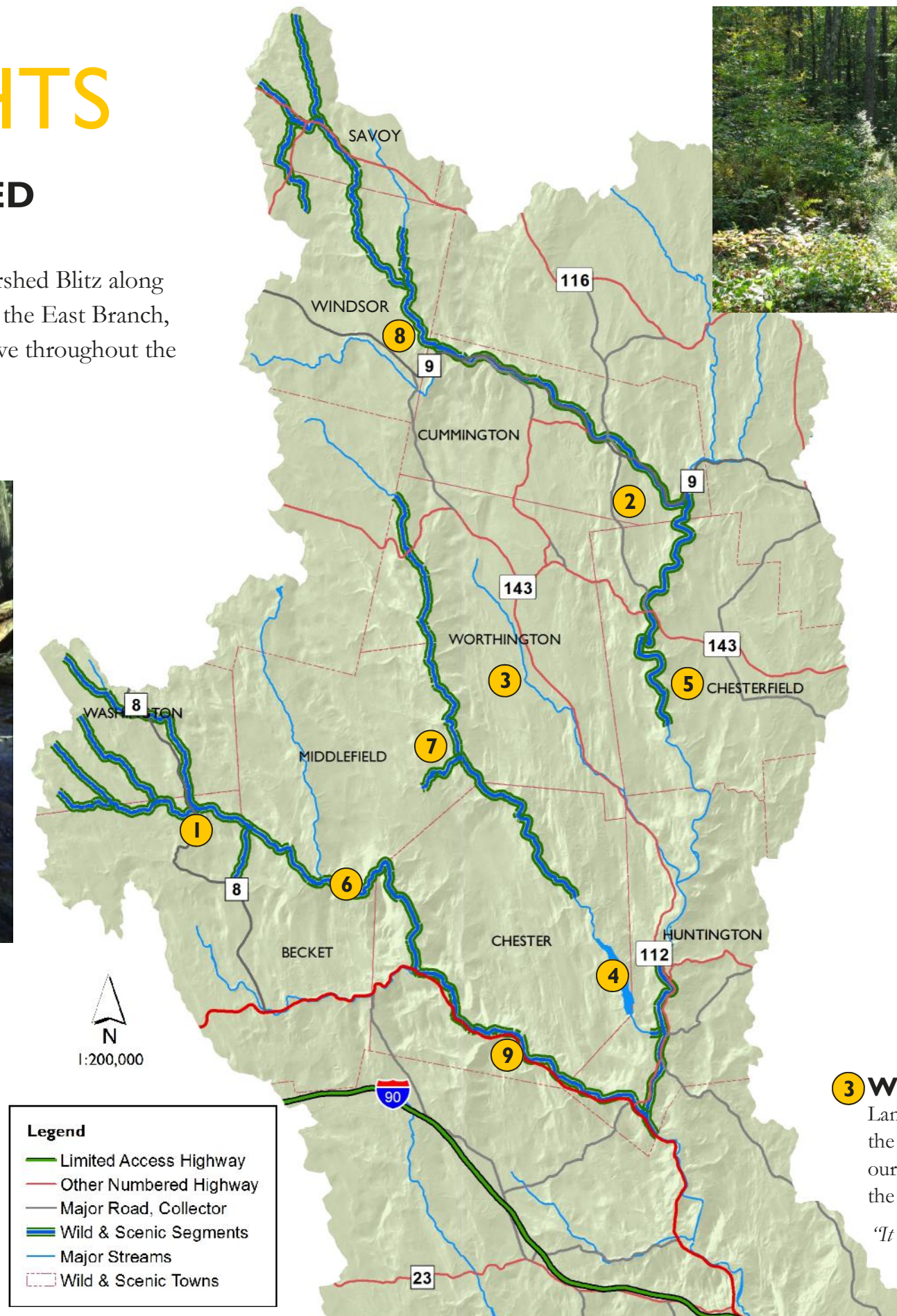
## FROM AROUND THE WATERSHED

From stream explorations along the West Branch to a Watershed Blitz along the Middle Branch to land conservation along tributaries to the East Branch, the Wild & Scenic Westfield River Committee has been active throughout the watershed. Here are just a few highlights from 2015!



**1 STREAM EXPLORERS:** Sponsored a five week after-school Stream Explorer Program for fourth and fifth graders. The hands on and playful sessions insure a lifelong love of stream exploring.

*"We are a small school of about 100 children and a very small PTO with limited funds. Thank you for supporting of our Stream Explorers! The program is offered to the delight of our students, increasing their awareness and appreciation for their local watershed."* – Renee Adams, Becket-Washington PTO Co-President



**2 RIPARIAN CONSERVATION GRANT:** In 2008, Jim Aaron approached the Franklin Land Trust on behalf of his 96-year-old father who wished to donate a conservation restriction (CR) on the 70-acre homestead draining to Tower Brook.

Because of unresolved due diligence issues, the CR was never recorded. This past winter, Jim contacted FLT again. His father, now 102 years old, was anxious to put his affairs in order. Through the Committee's Riparian Conservation Grant program, the FLT was able to resolve the due diligence issues and fulfill Mr. Aaron's wishes. The CR was finally recorded this past July, one month before his 103rd birthday.



**3 WILDLIFE CAMERAS AND STREAM SURVEYS:** Landowners, interns and volunteers surveyed and inventoried features along the Little River and Wards and Watts Brooks. The Committee loaned out our wildlife cameras to interested landowners to document who was using the river corridor.

*"It is very exciting to see what's on the camera, it almost feels like Christmas when we get to see the critter cams. So far we have seen bobcat, bear and otter."*

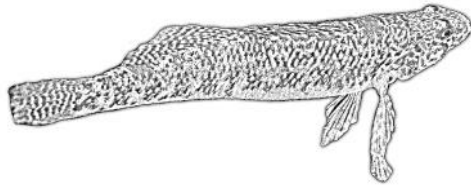
– Jennifer and David Parish-Hill



#### 4 LITTLEVILLE HISTORY PADDLE:

*Just got back from the Littleville Lake trip awhile ago. Beautiful day, Great trip, Fun no hassle time. Thank you so much for organizing and doing these trips. It is so cool to enjoy all these wonderful places we might never know about if it weren't for you and 'Wild and Scenic' people. – Marie*

*The day canoeing on Littleville Lake was a perfect way to end the season. I am so glad there is a group protecting the river that also helps you enjoy it. – Joyce Keith*



**5 RARE PLANT SURVEY:** With funding support from the Committee, the **New England Wild Flower Society** surveyed **64 rare plant populations, collected seed from 9 for conservation and restoration purposes, and managed invasives at two sites in the Westfield River Watershed.** NEWFS surveyed occurrences of rare plant species that have not been found in over 15 years, verified the existence of others, and documented a few that were not located in previously recorded areas. Information on the threat of invasive species and the current status of rare plant populations will help determine invasive management priorities.



**6 HISTORIC KEYSTONE ARCH BRIDGES:** With funding from the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Committee, **the Chester Railway Foundation and Friends of the Keystone Arches** hired the **Public Archeology Laboratory (PAL)** to research and nominate the **2 state-owned Arches for National Historic landmark status, the highest recognition available.** The bridges are located on Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Walnut Hill Wildlife Management Area. Constructed in the 1840s, the railroad was built in the most remote and unwelcoming territory ever traversed by a railroad at that time. The Westfield News-Letter wrote: "It is the last route in the world where we should ever dream of making a railroad."

For several years, the Committee has helped **coordinate climbers and volunteers to assist in the removal of vegetation threatening to damage the stunning Keystone Arch Bridges.**

*Great to have such hard working volunteers maintaining these wonderful and historic bridges! – Jim Dodge, Volunteer and Worthington Alternate*

**7 WATERSHED BLITZ: 67 participants and specialists spent the day collecting data and building a river community along the Middle Branch and its tributaries.**

*“John McDonald was a wonderful leader...He could not only identify tracks, scat, and other signs but he could give us so much information about animal biology and choice of habitat, particularly bear and moose. He answered many of my questions, such as the reason I see large trees at some distance from water with beaver chew marks. The beaver are not over-ambitious or miscalculating. They need to keep chewing to keep their teeth from growing too long.” – Barbara*



**8 PIPELINE INTERVENOR: The Wild & Scenic Westfield River Committee submitted comments and a Motion to Intervene on the *Northeast Energy Direct (NED) Project* to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. The proposed pipeline project will cross the East Branch of the Westfield River and approximately 20 of its headwater tributaries. In addition, one of the proposed Compressor Stations is situated in close proximity to Westfield Brook – one of the important headwater tributaries supporting the state endangered Lake Chub which in Massachusetts is only found in the upper reaches of the Westfield River.**

**9 HIKES ALONG THE “HIGHLANDS FOOTPATH”:**

The Committee co-sponsored beautiful and stunning hikes to Gobble Mountain and Observation Hill, via Sanderson Falls and Newman March Trail, and along the proposed route of the “Highlands Footpath.” Over the past two years, trail enthusiasts and community members have laid out a proposed footpath connecting trails and communities along the Scenic Byways (Rte 20 & Route 112). Huntington’s Wild & Scenic Representative, Jeff Penn, shared the exciting progress made on the project being envisioned, explored, mapped out and proposed with support and guidance of the Trustees of Reservations, Pioneer Valley and Berkshire Regional Planning Commissions.



## WE APPRECIATE YOUR SUPPORT *and contributions...*

Scott Avery

Jess Applin

Bill Babcock

Lizzie Bean

Mark Bevan

Alvin Blake

Alison Bowen

Barbara Brand

Chet Brett

Ben Brown

John Burns

Dan Call

Bob Carlson

Dave Christensen

Matthew Coleman

Glenn Corbiere

Wayne Crouch

Debbie Daniels

James Doucette

Regina Egan

Gretchen Eliason

Matt Farnham

Art Feltman

Sarah Foley

Cindy Gaylord

Colin Gilbert

Jan Gwinell

Mariah Hall

Steve Hamlin

Bruce & Eileen Hart

Lynn & Kent Hicks

Tom Hoffman

Renata Hotysova

Mike & Andrea Howlett

Charlie Hunter

Richard Jablonski

Karen Karlberg

Joyce, David and Margaret  
Keith

Ned Kelly

Tea Kestinghandly

Scott Kossinke

Michael Kramer

Charles Landrey

Gianna Lanone

Rissa & Neil Larse

Steve Levine

Sally Loomis

Rebecca Lord

Jean & Michael Lowinski

Michael Madole

Lee Manchester

Gayle Manning

Kristen Martin

Dr. John E. McDonald, Jr.

Galvin Millikan

Lee & Andy Myers

Susan McIntosh

Gary Newman

Rita Nodwell

Julie Orzolek

Jen & David Parrish-Hill

Amy Perlmutter

Jodi & Eliana Pow

Sarah Prince

Mikhala Reedy

Amy Lynn Reifsnyder

Julie Richburg

Bill, Linda & Martha Rose

Liese Schaff

Virginia Sowers

Ann Sirignano

Maria Wallington

Kester Warlow-Harry

Bill Warren

David W. Whitcomb

Shirley Winer

Michael Wolski

Mike Young

### **Other Contributors:**

Alice's Kitchen at Honey Hill  
Homestead

Chester Railway Station  
Foundation

Community Access to the Arts  
Hilltown Artist Michael Wolski

Littleville Fairgrounds

The Old Creamery Co-Op

Rosecrans Foundation

Town of Huntington

Western Massachusetts Climbers'  
Coalition

Westfield State University —  
Westfield River Environmental  
Center

Westfield River Watershed Assn.



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COMMITTEE**

PO Box 393, Huntington, MA 01050

**We are in the River and on the Web!**

Visit our website at

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[coordinator@wildscenicwestfieldriver.org](mailto:coordinator@wildscenicwestfieldriver.org)

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