



# Musconetcong River News

Summer 2015

Published quarterly by The Musconetcong Watershed Association

Asbury, New Jersey

## Extra Protections Kick-In For The River

### State standards protect river during hot dry summer

By Beth Styler Barry

As you might imagine the hot, dry summer has kept flows in the Musky well below average for all but about a dozen out of the last 100 days. Paddlers avoid or complain about the river when it gets “bony” in dry weather and anglers are fewer and farther between. And if you think it’s rough on humans – just imagine what the fish are thinking! It just wasn’t a great summer to be a river.

The lack of rain has also resulted in a lower than desired water level on Lake Hopatcong up in Musconetcong River’s headwaters. When rain is scarce we know to expect a call from the lake community requesting to lessen the

amount of water passing through the dam which, by regulation, must be kept at 12 cubic feet per second (cfs). We are pleased that with an increased reliance on science-based decision making by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) as required in the 2013 Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan (Plan) there’s a lot less politicking and quicker clearer decisions are being made.

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) has participated in the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) since its inception in 2011. The CAC was formed by the DEP as one of the outcomes of a lawsuit by businesses on the lake against the DEP. MWA lobbied for a seat on this Council to ensure that the Musconetcong River and all of its uses and users were fully considered in the revision of the Plan. The CAC reached consensus on an updated plan in 2012, the plan was reviewed by the Lake Hopatcong Commission and was presented to and signed by the Commission of the DEP in 2013.

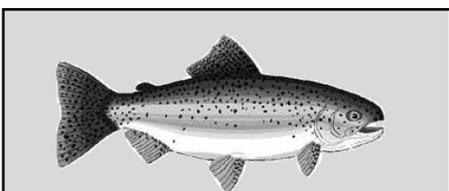
Each year the CAC meets to discuss successes or challenges in Lake management over the previous year and to discuss recommendations for the upcoming year. Recommendations that fall outside of the Plan are reviewed by the DEP. This year the CAC met on September 2, 2015 at the Lake Hopatcong State Park office in Landing and of course the lack of rainfall and the resulting low water level were key topics.

As expected, members of the CAC recommended reducing or eliminating outflow from the Lake when some critical low water elevation is reached on the

lake. However, meeting facilitator Kerry Kirk Pflugh, Manager of Constituent Services for DEP reiterated that “the DEP cannot damage downstream uses including the ecology of the Musconetcong River for the benefit of Lake Hopatcong. It is likely that low water levels in the Lake during the boating season will coincide with hot / dry weather patterns. Under these conditions maintaining passing flow out of the Lake will be critical, since it is likely that other tributaries to the Musconetcong will also be flowing at very low levels.”

Ms. Kirk Pflugh explained that there are three reasons that the DEP will not consider lowering the flow below 12 cfs outside of those conditions laid out in the Plan. “First, the DEP will not do anything that will violate the Surface Water Quality Standards. Second, there are downstream discharges into the stream, most critically the Musconetcong Sewerage Authority, that calculate the 12 cfs release into their discharge dilution. Last but not least, the minimum outflow of 12 cfs is based on the reconstructed flow history calculated by the DEP.

Bob Hudgins, Environmental Specialist with the DEP Division of Water Supply and Geoscience, discussed the calculations used to reconstruct, or give a best estimate of, the stream flows that might occur at the location of the dam if the Lake Hopatcong Dam had not been built. This was done by examining the flows in the nearby and similarly sized Rockaway River. Data from the Rockaway River was well suited because of similar geolo-



**W**arm, dry weather patterns continued throughout the summer. Stream temperature measurements on July 27, 2015 exceeded the daily maximum of 25°C for Trout Maintenance waters at all stations between Lake Hopatcong and Lake Musconetcong. When measured again on August 28 although a slight drop in temperatures was recorded two stations still exceeded the 25°C daily maximum. Current increased air temperatures and continued lack of rainfall will continue to elevate stream temperatures. - Lisa Barno, Chief, Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries Report to CAC September 2, 2015

**Extra Protections** *Continued on page 2*

# MWA Celebrates One of our Greatest Assets – Our Volunteers

By Val Thorpe

It was a sticky 87 degrees on Saturday, August 1, but that didn't stop our volunteers from venturing outdoors to enjoy a recognition BBQ on their behalf at the MWA River Resource Center (RRC). And we were happy to host it! Volunteers are the cornerstone of any successful non-profit organization, and we happen to know that ours are some of the best out there! It was a fun afternoon filled with food, stories, hiding from the sun, and kayak adventures in the mill pond.

Our grateful board and staff members happily prepared and served food, and assisted our adventurous paddlers

with the launching and docking of their kayaks. Thank you to all of our hard-working, dedicated, enthusiastic volunteers for all that you do to contribute to the success of the MWA and our shared watershed.

To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please call Val at 908-537-7060 or email [val@musconetcong.org](mailto:val@musconetcong.org).



photo by: Val Thorpe

*Patti and John Carno enjoy a relaxing paddle in the mill pond.*

## Extra Protections

*Continued from page 1*

gy and land use, both of which influence run off into surface water. The results show that the median flow in the summer months would be near very near to the 12 cubic feet per second called for in the Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan (the Plan). While pre dam conditions cannot be recreated Hudgins believes that, "12 cfs is a reasonable low flow number."

Mr. Hudgins also noted that, "A lot of research shows that we can expect summers to be hotter and longer. Annually local rainfall totals will be unchanged, however, the area will likely experience bigger storms and longer dry periods in between." These longer dry periods will mean more evaporation from the lake. Evaporative loss from Lake Hopatcong in summer is about 6 inches per month. The Lake loses 3.5 inches per month through the 12 cfs that goes through gate. An outflow of 8 cfs lowers the lake by 2.5 inches per month. Only regular summer rainfall will keep the lake at the desired level of about 9 feet at the dam. One inch of rainfall in the summer months equals about 4 inches in the lake. So, in a summer where the area gets less than 4 inches of rain per month the lake level will drop.

Ray Fernandez CAC representative from the Lake Hopatcong Alliance and owner of the Bridge Marina asked about the importance of the health of the lake. "Doesn't the ecological health of Lake Hopatcong matter?" Lisa

Barno, Chief, Bureau of Freshwater Fisheries replied, "There is far more resiliency in Lake Hopatcong by virtue of its size than in a smaller stream like the Musconetcong." Even at the lowest levels of the summer, aquatic life is still able to find adequate refuge in the deeper, cooler sections of the lake.

Jeff Hoffman, Acting State Geologist with the Division of Water Supply and Geoscience added that while the water that comes from Lake Hopatcong is not of the best quality, the volume is important. The additional water adds "carrying capacity" for temperature and protects water temperature from rising. On a hot day less water equals higher water temperatures.

The last hour or so of the meeting was dedicated to the annual drawdown of 26 inches and the every 5th year drawdown of 6 feet. This remains a controversial issue. Lake-front property owners showed photos of ice damage and made the case that property damage would increase if these drawdowns were reduced or eliminated. Marina owners believe that the drawdowns, particularly the six foot drawdown, puts the lake at too high a risk to refill in the spring and are therefore potentially harmful to business. The DEP's position is that because this is not an ecological issue but a property owner damage issue it will implement a change in drawdown rules only if all lake front towns come to the state showing they've passed a resolution supporting a change. At this time there is no such agreement. ☹

## MUSCONETCONG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

PO Box 113, 10 Maple Ave.

Asbury, NJ 08802

**908-537-7060**

[www.musconetcong.org](http://www.musconetcong.org)

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# Watching and Wading: --- Spotting Eastern Brook Trout

By Nancy Lawler

Monitoring our river's water quality allows me keep tabs on Mother Nature's calendar—and autumn is one of my favorite seasons. The chilly water forces me to give up summer's sneakers for hip boots, but the extra warmth lets me stand still and look around. I look through the wet piles of red, orange and gold leaves collecting behind logs and large rocks and find all kinds of insect larva chomping on them. These bugs will provide the buffet to celebrate a most important moment in the life of our native Eastern Brook Trout: spawning.

While mid to late fall and early snow spells death for many species, life is just starting to pick up for our beautiful little "Brookies" with their dark speckled backs and red bellies. The female makes a shallow depression of a nest or "redd" by moving gravel with her tail fin, while interested males compete nearby for a chance to get closer to her. When she lays her eggs (up to five thousand, depending on her size!) the winner gets to fertilize them. Baby trout or "fry" hatch in late winter—when microscopic plankton and aquatic insect larva are



photo by: John Parke, NJ Audubon

*River studies help us understand how changes in river habitat affect native Brook Trout*

most plentiful. The wild fish live for about three or four years; of course, only a few make it to adulthood—herons, kingfishers, otters, mink and snakes all dine on them.

Since they need very cold, clean water to live and reproduce, our Brook Trout is a "canary in a coal mine" species—their absence can be the first sign something is wrong. For example, when trees are cut along stream and river banks to make way for houses and parking lots, stream temperatures

rise from lack of shade and eroded banks add sediment to the waterways. Brookies vanish from those areas—and those communities also can become more vulnerable to flooding and drinking water pollution.

I don't see Brook Trout very often—maybe just dark shapes dashing around a rock or a splash at the surface when they grab a fly. If you spot one, consider yourself more than lucky—it's a sign that the river in your neighborhood is healthy. ☺

## What is a Rain Barrel?

By: Kyle Richter

A rain barrel is container placed under a gutter's downspout to collect rain water from the roof that would otherwise be lost to runoff. When rain water runs off of impervious surfaces such as driveways, sidewalks, and roads it picks up any pollution present on the surface such as fertilizers, pesticides, oil and other pollutants, and carries it along to the storm drains, which often discharge directly into our rivers and streams. Diverting runoff from your roof into a rain barrel decreases the impact of runoff on streams. A 1000-square-foot roof can shed 623 gallons of water during a 1-inch rain event. A single rain barrel will prevent 55 gallons of this untreated water from entering our waterways. Water stored in rain barrels can be used in a variety of different ways such as watering flowers, shrubs, trees, and lawns; washing your car; rinsing off hands, feet, muddy shoes, and landscape tools; and much more to conserve water, save money, and reduce runoff.

To learn more about Rain Barrels or to build one of your own, the MWA along with North Jersey RC&D will host a **rain**



photo by: Dan Ross

*Participants build their own rain barrels at a Workshop in May, 2015.*

**barrel workshop on Wednesday, October 21, 6:30-8:00 pm.** The cost to build a barrel is \$25. Space is limited to 8 participants. Save your spot and reserve your barrel by calling Kyle Richter at 908-574-5368, or email [kyle@musconetcong.org](mailto:kyle@musconetcong.org). Project funding was provided by an NJDEP Bureau of Environmental Analysis, Restoration and Standards 319h grant awarded to North Jersey RC&D. ☺

# Camp Musky is a Summer Hit!

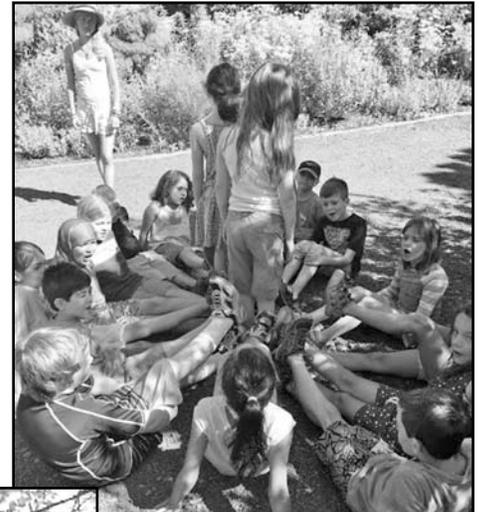
**By: Kyle Richter**

The month of July was filled with exciting, hands-on learning adventures as the MWA welcomed a record-breaking 52 campers to Camp Musky! Over the course of 4 weeks, campers aged 5-12 gathered each morning at the River Resource Center to set out on a day full of learning, adventure, teamwork and fun. Each day began with a morning hike to explore different habitats such as meadows, woods, wetlands, and river. We played games, crafted art projects, and spent the afternoon exploring the mighty Musconetcong River. At the end of each day, the campers documented their adventures by writing and drawing in their journals. Some highlights from each session include:

**Explores** (ages 5-6): Our youngest group of campers kicked-off the summer with a week full of fun. They learned about camouflage, explored different areas of the MWA property through a scavenger hunt, made their own bubbles, and had a blast learning about animals that call the Musky home!

**Stream Team** (ages 7-9): This half-day team enjoyed a week of hiking, shelter building, arts and crafts, an in-depth study of the Musconetcong River and the organisms living beneath the surface.

**Trailblazers** (ages 7-9): The first week of full-day campers spent their days exploring and working together to complete some team building activities. They learned about the power of the sun, building their own solar ovens to cook s'mores.



*"Trailblazers" enjoy a teambuilding exercise called 'Helicopter Rescue'*



*"Stream Team" works together to build a shelter in the woods next to the River Resource Center.*

**River Rangers** (ages 10-12+): The oldest campers rounded out our fantastic summer learning about what it takes to live sustainably, and the impacts we, as humans, can have on the environment.

Overall it was a great summer and together we accomplished a lot! MWA would like to extend a huge 'thank you' to our amazing volunteers, Rebecca Canright, and Alyssa, for their part in making this year's Camp Musky such a success. Be on the lookout for Camp Musky, 2016 registration information coming in April! 🌞



*"Explorers" show off the flag they created before heading out for a hike.*



*"River Rangers complete a macroinvertebrate study to determine the health of the Musky! Good News— We found a lot of organisms that indicate good water quality!"*

Photos by: Kyle Richter

## School's Closed Nov. 5-6 Camp Musky To The Rescue!

You don't have to miss work for the NJEA Teachers Convention! Let us help your child enjoy these days off at the beautiful MWA RRC where they will explore the outdoors, play games and craft some art projects. Fee: \$45/day, \$80 for both. Don't forget to pack a lunch! A minimum of 10 children required for this program to run, so please register early. Registration forms and additional information can be found at [www.musconetcong.org](http://www.musconetcong.org). For more information call or email.

# SAVE THESE DATES!

**Saturday, October 3: MWA's 13th Annual Wine Tasting 2:00-5:00 pm** It's a relaxing afternoon near the banks of the Wild and Scenic Musconetcong River. Sample over 40 wines from around the world and a variety of premium craft beers. Lots of snacks including smoked trout fresh from the Musky. Enjoy live music by Joe Janci, a silent auction, 50/50, and our traditional Duck Race. First 100 registrants receive a souvenir MWA wine glass! Location: Pavilion at Warren County Rod & Gun Club, 279 Asbury Bloomsbury Rd., Asbury, NJ. Ticket: \$30 pre-paid, \$35 at the door. Advance purchase online at [www.musconetcong.org](http://www.musconetcong.org) or by check, payable to MWA to: MWA, PO Box 13, Asbury NJ. Must be 21 or older to attend. (Permit No. 759)

**Saturday, October 17: Hike at Allamuchy State Park 10:00 am-12:00 pm** Treat your eyes to the beautiful fall scenery of NJ's magnificent Allamuchy State Park. Trails range in difficulty from easy to moderate. All hikers are welcome. Bring water and a snack to the Waterloo Road parking area at 10:00 am (see signs Sussex Branch Trail Parking signs on right.) MWA members are free, non-members are asked to donate \$3 (\$10 max/family). Call or email to register.\*

**Friday, October 30: Haunted Hike along the Musconetcong 7:45-9:30 pm** Drag your bones to our Haunted Hike along the Musconetcong. Self-guided tours will take place between 7:45 and 9:30 pm at the MWA RRC (10 Maple Ave., Asbury, NJ 08802). This promises to be a safe mischief night full of fun and fright for most ages (8 and up recommended). Suggested donation: \$7/person (max of \$20 per family). Call or email to register.\*

**Tuesday, November 3: River Talk "Fly Tying - The Basics": 7:00-8:30 pm** Fredy Deleon and members of the Ridge and Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited will review and give a demonstration, and answer any questions you might have about this unique form of fishing. It's a free presentation at the MWA RRC (donations are always welcome) but space is limited so please call or email to register.\*

**November 5-6, 2015 (9:00 am to 4:00 pm) SCHOOLS CLOSED!** Camp Musky to the Rescue for a Children's Nature Exploration Extravaganza: Let us help your child enjoy these days off at the beautiful MWA RRC. Details on Page 2 of this newsletter. Registration forms can be found at [www.musconetcong.org](http://www.musconetcong.org). For more information call or email.\*

**Saturday, November 28, 2015 10:00 am to 12:00 pm** Hike at Point Mountain: Burn off those Thanksgiving calories at our annual hike on the Ridge Trail at the Point Mountain Reserve. A scenic overlook provides a beautiful vista of distant mountains and farmland. The trail is diverse and challenging at times, and includes a steep and rocky incline. Good for novice and expert hikers. Bring a snack, water and binoculars to the gravel parking lot on Point Mountain Road, 0.3 miles from Route 57. MWA Members are free. Non-members are asked to donate \$3 (max \$10/family). Call or email to register.\*

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Meetup  
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Outdoor Activities

## Win A Kayak!

Old Town Heron 9 kayak - perfect for local rowers offering easy maneuverability and high stability on flatwater and slow-moving rivers. Prize package includes Carlisle Paddle and Extrasport Life Vest. Value: \$500. Purchase your \$10 ticket online at [www.musconetcong.org](http://www.musconetcong.org) under "What's Happening," in-person at the MWA River Resource Center, or at Paddlers Cove: 384 E. Washington Ave, Washington, NJ. Call MWA at 908-537-7060 with questions. The winning ticket will be pulled at the 16th Annual MWA Run for the River event on Sunday, May 1, 2016. You do not need to be present to win. Good luck!

For more information or to register for any of these events, please email [kyle@musconetcong.org](mailto:kyle@musconetcong.org) or call 908-537-7060, unless otherwise noted. MWA River Resource Center (RRC) is located at 10 Maple Ave., Asbury, NJ

## The Musconetcong Watershed Association

The Musconetcong River Valley is rich in scenery, history, natural resources, and recreational opportunities. The river rises up in Lake Hopatcong - New Jersey's largest spring-fed lake - and is shadowed by 1,000-foot Highland ridges and slices through a deep, limestone river valley, flowing swiftly to the Delaware River. Along the way the "Musky" passes by state and county parks, bustling towns, vital industries, historic villages, and some of the most productive farmland in the state.

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) is a non-profit organization formed in 1991 to protect and enhance the Musconetcong River and its related resources through advocacy and environmental education programs, scientific research and river restoration projects. The MWA scope spans the 158 square-mile Musconetcong River Watershed, and includes portions of four counties, and all or portions of 25 municipalities. The Musconetcong River became part of the National Wild and Scenic River System in 2006.

MWA members are part of a network of individuals, families and organizations who care about the Musconetcong River and its watershed. They are kept informed about issues concerning the river and its related resources by receiving quarterly issues of the *Musconetcong River News*.



PO Box 113  
Asbury, NJ 08802

## MWA Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Musconetcong Watershed Association in which I will receive membership benefits and publications. I have enclosed a check payable to **MWA** for the membership category listed below:

- \$20 Student
- \$30 Family
- \$50 Supporter
- \$100 Sustainer
- \$250 Steward
- \$500 Champion
- \$1,000 + Life Member

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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## Musconetcong River News

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