



Musconetcong River News

Summer 2009

Published quarterly by The Musconetcong Watershed Association

Asbury, New Jersey

MWA's Response to the Crisis on Lake Hopatcong

By *Beth Styler Barry*

It's hard to believe that a few months ago MWA was dealing with a situation that was, in part, brought about by a lack of rainfall. Very low levels in Lake Hopatcong, caused in large part by a 5-foot drawdown of the lake, were exacerbated by a dry winter and lack of spring rains. The drawdown, which begins after Labor Day every fifth year, allows for a dam inspection and for repairs of docks and sea walls. The drawdown typically ends by the end of October, and that level is then maintained until mid-December. Last year however, the release continued into the New Year and resulted in a total water loss of about 1.5 billion gallons and left the water level some 3-feet below normal.

Marina owners, lake residents and local officials were facing a season when fishing and boating just would-

n't be possible. In late March, New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) reduced the flow from Lake Hopatcong into the Musconetcong River from 7.5 million gallons per day (MGD) to the minimum flow allowed of 5.3 million gallons. The flow from the Lake was lowered, with NJ DEP consent to as low as 4.0 MGD as the spring wore on and the rains did not come.

A group of 14 businesses from the Lake Hopatcong area filed a lawsuit against the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in April, demanding the state cease discharging water from Lake Hopatcong.

Fearing the impact of a complete shut-off of the outflow at the lake, MWA appealed to members and others to write to NJ DEP Commissioner Mark Mauriello of the New Jersey to restore the outflow of the dam at Lake

Hopatcong to the 7.5 million gallons per day (MGD) and to "urge the Department to carry out its duty protect the state's vulnerable water resources for all citizens even when that protection comes at the expense of commercial and recreational interests." Over 75 letters were sent and submitted with other materials as the Deputy Attorney General presented the NJ DEP.

Needless to say the concerns over low water levels in Lake Hopatcong have been washed away by the downpours of June and July. However, the crisis brought to the MWA's attention that we did not know all that much about the 1.5 mile stretch of the Musconetcong River between Lake Hopatcong and Lake Musconetcong. So we did what MWA does best—we rolled up our sleeves and got to work.

Lake Hopatcong Emergency Monitoring Plan The MWA River Watcher Coordinator Nancy Lawler and I met to discuss the sort of data MWA would need to collect in order to assess water quality both at the outflow of the lake and at another location about a mile downstream. The test location was selected because of easy access and because it was representative of the 1.5 mile stretch in question.

River Watcher Volunteer Monitor Chuck Gullage began collecting data at the end of May and continued through

Continued on page 2

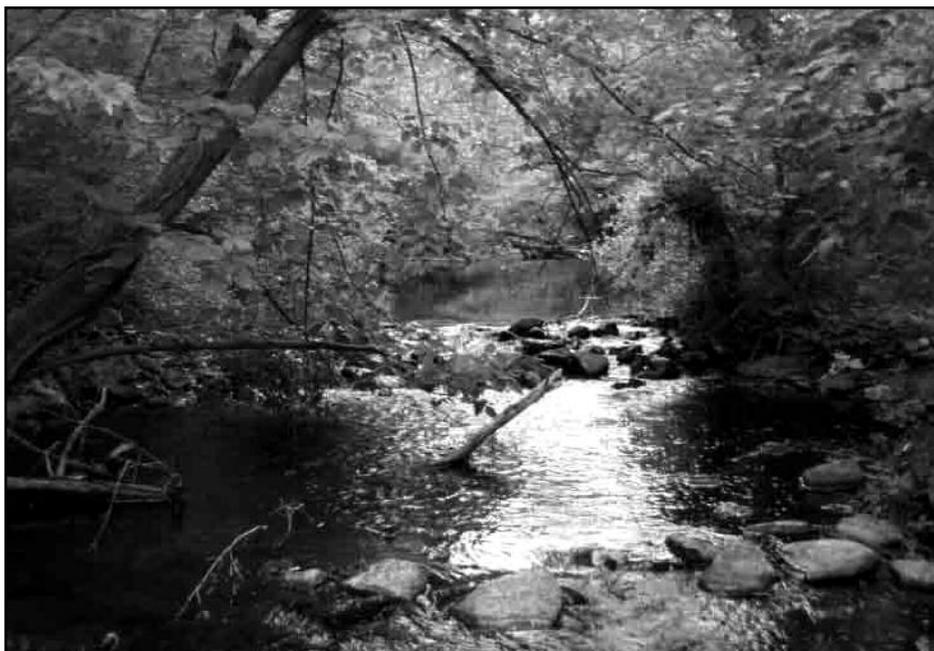


Photo by Chuck Gullage

The first half-mile of the Musconetcong River is the portion that would be most sensitive to varying outflow volume from Lake Hopatcong. If the flow were shut off entirely, this section of the river would be severely impacted.

'Lake Hopatcong'

Continued from page 1

the middle of July. Measurements included data on temperature flow and dissolved oxygen as well as stream depth and stream width. Outflow at the dam was recorded before each assessment to be sure that we could understand how these parameters change with flow. Analysis of data cannot be completed until MWA collects enough data during normal outflow to understand the impact of low flow on this stretch of river.

On-the Ground Survey MWA President Bill Leavens and River Watcher Volunteer Monitor Chuck Gullage took a day long boat and foot journey of 1.5 mile stretch to see firsthand if there were other sources of water that would continue to supple-

ment flow in the absence of outflow from the lake. They learned that decreased outflow from the lake would severely impact the first 0.5 mile of the Musconetcong River. After that stretch, spring fed tributaries and tributaries that drain this sub-watershed after rain fall, as well as ground water recharge, augment volume in the river.

Chuck Gullage reported "This (first half-mile) is the portion of the river that would be most sensitive to varying the outflow volume from Lake Hopatcong. If the flow were shut off entirely, this section of the river would be severely impacted." MWA believes that the first half mile of the Musconetcong River is an area that deserves protection from such risk.

In addition to fieldwork, MWA met with marina owners twice in the field and corresponded frequently with them via e-mail and phone. We are

grateful to them for taking time to share their knowledge and concerns with us. We also maintained contact with New Jersey Fish and Wildlife (F&W) staff to discuss their findings as they monitored conditions in the river. NJ DEP used information from F&W in the decisions made to lower or raise outflow last spring.

What's next? We will continue to monitor at the outflow of Lake Hopatcong as we have done quarterly for the past two years under the River Watcher program. We will collect data at the location downstream to establish what conditions are like at this site during the typical 7.5 MGD daily release. To play a role in the long term solution, MWA has requested that a representative of the organization be appointed to the committee that will review the Lake Hopatcong Water Level Management Plan. ☪

MUSCONETCONG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

PO Box 113, 10 Maple Ave.
Asbury, NJ 08802
908-537-7060

www.musconetcong.org

Trustee Officers

President, Bill Leavens
Vice President, Kim Hood
Secretary, Bill Harclerode
Treasurer, Peter Banta

Trustees

Jerry Bowers	Rosemary Kent
Richard Cotton	C.J. Koop
Erik Henriksen	Cinny MacGonagle
Robert Guenther	Henry Meltzer
Chuck Gullage	Mike Sedita
	Stuart Shafran

Staff

Executive Director
Beth Styler Barry
Administrative Assistant
Adrienne Kaczynski

Printing: Good Impressions, Washington, NJ



Photo by Chuck Gullage

MWA President Bill Leavens (pictured) and Trustee and River Watcher Chuck Gullage collected and carried out garbage from the uppermost reach of the Musconetcong River on their survey of the area.

Did You Know?

A study of the history of the name of the Musconetcong River reveals that, before 1700, the quality of the river was appreciated by the Lenni Lenape people. The Lenape name of a town located where Hackettstown is today was "Moschakegeuhannekoak," meaning "place of the clear stream." Long ago clean, clear water was desired by the native people much as it is today. Later, a 1770 British map shows the river as the "Muskanetkunk Creek." The suffix "kunk" means "place" in the translation of the oral Lenape language according to the modern Lenape-English dictionary. Pronunciation of "kunk" in oral recordings of Delaware Indian descendants of the Lenape sounds like "cong." Colonial Americans picked up on that sound to give the Musconetcong River its name. *Submitted by Bob Sheridan of the Musconetcong River Management Council Mr. Sheridan represents Hampton.*

Camp Musky a Happy Success!

What a pleasure it was to hear the sound of children's voices and laughter echoing up from the river and into the River Resource Center this summer. What a tremendous landmark in the life of the organization to be able to bring about this type of educational program.

Camp Musky kids had fun learning from counselor Megan Bubalis, a teacher at the Ridge and Valley Charter School in Blairstown, New Jersey. To quote an e-mail from one parent "Matthew is enjoying camp this week- he's been full of great stories and information to share with us after camp each day. (Yesterday we learned about stinging nettle, among other things!)... He has learned so much from Guide Megan—she has such an incredible breadth of knowledge about plants and nature that he has been amazed."

Campers explored the forest and learned about plants—some to be avoided, some edible and some with special uses that grow along the Musconetcong River on the trails near the RRC. Our younger children built fairy houses and couldn't wait to see what might appear in them each morning. Our older campers identified aquatic insects to determine the health of the river, built shelters and cleaned up trash from their camp area. Campers at each level took home a journal filled with an accounting of their daily activities.

We continue to receive e-mails about how much campers enjoyed their experience. They are all excited about our 2010 Camp Musky programs—and so are we! ☺



Photo by Beth Styler Berry

Our youngest campers, ages five and six years old, took an experiential journey to habitats and ecosystems along the Musconetcong. Campers learned about the plants and animals that live along the river in the Camp Musky "Explorer" day camp program.



Photo by Susan Bahr

Campers age 7 years to 9 years old participated in the "CSI River Side" program. Each day these happy campers participated in team building activities and problem solving missions centered on the trails around the River Resource Center.



Photo by Adrienne

Camp Musky "Survivor" campers, age 10 years and up, spent a time in the water learning about water quality and cleaning up the area around their camp.

Eagles and Blue Birds and Rufous-Sided Towhees—Oh My!

This year's hike at Merrill Creek Reservoir featured a special opportunity for participants. The group was able to watch—and younger hikers participate hands-on—in the banding of a nest full of blue birds. As blue bird parents observed from a nearby tree top, and then began to dive bomb the group, Merrill Creek naturalist Jim Mershon worked quickly to band the newest arrivals at the 290 acre preserve. Although blue birds do not migrate, collecting information from the birds yield valuable information.

The group also had the opportunity to see one of the resident eagles soaring high above the reservoir and learned that there are now 3 nesting pairs at the preserve. Jim Mershon demonstrated power of bird song to attract specimens using the Bird Jam application and special speakers on his iPhone. A male rufous-sided towhee came almost close enough for the group to touch in attempt to seek out the very vocal male that apparently had come in to his territory. (Yes, there's an app for that!)



A baby bluebird awaits banding at the Merrill Creek Reservoir Photo by Hillcrest Camera Club President Robin Phelps



We were happy to have members of the Hillcrest Camera Club (hillcrestcameraclub.tripod.com) join us on our hike. They were

Three lucky young hikers had the unexpected opportunity to help Naturalist Jim Mershon band a nest full of bluebirds on the MWA hike at Merrill Creek Reservoir.

Photo by Bill Leavens

pleased with the great opportunities to photograph the bluebird banding and the up close and personal encounter with the rufous-sided towhee.

If you haven't been to the Merrill Creek Reservoir, you should plan a trip to this outstanding Warren County resource. There is a Visitors Center and hiking trails that wander through the 290-acre Environmental Preserve which surrounds the 650-acre reservoir. Visit their website at www.merrillcreek.com. ☺

MWA – Heritage Paddling Trip

By Beth Styler Barry

A group of nine boats set out from the Heritage Conservancy's Route 57 Mansfield headquarters on the morning of July 18. Led by former MWA Executive Director John Brunner the group made the 12-mile trip to the MWA River Resource Center at a leisurely pace and enjoyed the beautiful summer day. Paddlers stopped for lunch at Port Murray/Point Mountain Road Bridge to enjoy lunch peppered with discussions of water quality and tales of other trips taken on the Musky and beyond.

The journey organized as a joint outing by Heritage Conservancy and the Musconetcong Watershed Association. Paddlers had the opportunity to practice higher level skills including safe passage around trees that were blocking

the river at Butler Park Road in Washington Township.

One boater was helped after her boat tipped and filled in the rapids just above the Changewater trestle bridge. Ron Swingle of Greenwich, who was acting as the sweep on the voyage acted quickly and was able to help the boater up and out of the water. The boat and all possessions were recovered and reunited with the boater.

Heritage Conservancy has produced a brochure outlining the highlights of the stretch between the headquarters of these two partner organizations titled "Recreating on the Musconetcong". The brochure is available on the Heritage Conservancy website, heritageconservancy.org. ☺

A group of nine boats made a 12-mile journey from the Heritage Conservancy headquarters to the MWA River Resource Center in July. The abundant summer rains made the paddle possible on this beautiful summer day.

Photo by Marian Sumner



Duck Races?

When I first saw "Duck Races" listed on the 2009 MWA Wine Tasting Event poster, I pictured a line of mergansers, wood ducks and mallards shoulder to shoulder at the start line. Unsure about how this would work, I asked MWA Administrative Assistant Adrienne. I have been informed that our imaginative fundraising team has cooked up what should be a very fun event for this year's Wine Tasting Event. Wine tasting guests may purchase a numbered rubber duck for a donation of \$5. The ducks will be released upstream of the Wine Tasting site. Spectators can line up at the river's edge and watch as the ducks cross the finish line. Volunteers will be in the water with nets to make sure that no rubber ducks are released into the wild! Just another great reason to be at the 7th Annual Wine Tasting Event. ☺

SAVE THESE DATES!

Friday, September 25 -

7:30 p.m. - Star Gazing with the N.J. Astronomical Association

Join MWA and the New Jersey Astronomical Association at the River Resource Center for a night of star gazing. We'll start the program 7:30 p.m. and the best viewing will begin at the end of twilight which is at 8:00 p.m. There will be telescopes on site or you can bring your own. This is a free event for MWA Members, non-members pay \$5 per person with a \$10 maximum per family. Please call or e-mail to register - beth@musconetcong.org or (908) 537-7060.

Sunday, September 27 -

1 - 4 p.m. - 7th Annual MWA Wine Tasting Event

Join us for another relaxing fall afternoon at the Musky Trout Hatchery, located at 279 Bloomsbury/Asbury Road, Asbury, New Jersey. This beautiful site is located on the banks of the Wild and Scenic Musconetcong River. Taste a variety of imported and domestic wines and sample an array of delicious finger foods prepared by cooking instructor Cheryl Karcher. This year we are proud to feature hors d'oeuvres prepared using produce grown on Musconetcong Valley farms and Trout from the Musky Trout Hatchery. Come out and enjoy good company and foot movin' music from Jam-Bone. Donations: \$25 per person. Advance tickets are available at Perryville Wine & Spirits, located just off Rte 78W Exit 12, and online at musconetcong.org. Call (908) 537-7060 for information. ABC Permit No. 10001492

Saturday, October 10 -

10 a.m. - 12 - Noon(ish) Hike at Musconetcong Gorge

Come out and hike the beautiful Musconetcong Gorge. This preserve, part of the Hunterdon County Park System encompasses 425 acres and has trails that are sometimes steep and rocky with views of a scenic waterfall. The trails that we will use range from moderate to slightly difficult, they take advantage of the smoothest grounds but are steep and rocky in some areas. A highlight of this hike will be viewing the 36-foot high Warren Glen dam, the biggest dam on the Musconetcong River, which was once used to power the mill. MWA members are free, nonmembers are asked to donate \$3. Call (908) 537-7060 or e-mail beth@musconetcong.org for details, directions or to register.

Saturday, November 28 -

10 a.m. - 12 Noon(ish) Annual Hike at Point Mountain

Each year MWA members and others set aside the Saturday after Thanksgiving to burn off those extra calories by hiking the trail at the Point Mountain Reserve. We look forward to having an expert along to speak to us about the special features of the 700-acre Point Mountain Reservation. MWA members are free, nonmembers are asked to donate \$3. Bring a snack, water and binoculars if you'd like. All are welcome, novice and expert alike. Call (908) 537-7060 or e-mail beth@musconetcong.org for details, directions or to register.

Note: If you are not receiving e-mail reminders for these events it means that we do not have a current e-mail address. If you'd like to receive reminders and occasional "Musky News Briefs" please contact beth@musconetcong.org.

- ◆ Duck Races?
- ◆ MWA Heritage Paddling Trip
- ◆ Eagles and Blue Birds and Rufous-Sided Towhees—Oh My!
- ◆ Camp Musky a Happy Success
- ◆ MWA's Response to the crisis on Lake Hopatcong

What's Inside:

Musconetcong River News



Asbury, NJ 08802
PO Box 113



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*.

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:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Steward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Champion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Life Member | |

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Mail to:

Musconetcong Watershed Association
PO Box 113, Asbury, NJ 08802