



# Musconetcong River News

Winter 2011-2012

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Asbury, New Jersey

## Finesville Dam Removal Frees Up More River Miles

By Beth Styler Barry

The Finesville Dam, which spanned the Musconetcong River from Pohatcong Township, Warren County to Holland Township, Hunterdon County, was removed over the course of a week beginning on November 10th. The process leading to the removal took four years and included a Feasibility Study, an Environmental Assessment, a number of public meetings and a special agreement with the NJ State Historic Preservation Office. Like the Riegelsville dam removal which took place over the summer, an archaeologist was onsite during the removal process to document any findings of historical significance.

The Finesville Dam that was removed in November was a nine foot high, 109 foot long concrete dam built in 1952. The earliest Finesville Dam was originally built around 1751 to

power an iron forge; later dams were rebuilt several times on the same site.

Like other dams removed by the MWA and partners, this removal was initiated by the property owner. All of the dams on the Musconetcong River are obsolete, none of them produce power and none of them were ever designed to attenuate floodwaters. They are a liability for those who own them. When a dam owner decides to pursue removal there is financial assistance available from many organizations working to restore our nation's rivers.

MWA and funders including, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife (USFW), American Rivers and National Oceanographic Atmospheric



Archaeologist Michael Gall of Richard Grubb Associates sketches a timber from the pre-1952 dam which was used as an upstream frame for the concrete dam built in 1952. Archeological monitoring was overseen by ShayMaria Silvestri, NRCS Resource Specialist, NRI and Cultural Resources.

**DAM REMOVAL** Continued on page 2

## The Floods of 2011

By Beth Styler Barry

We all have our "Floods of 2011" stories; living without power, closed roads and closed schools. But the root of the flooding began long before the first of Hurricane Irene's raindrops fell. Those of us familiar with the Musconetcong River know that, in a typical August, there are many places where it is possible to cross the river by jumping rock to rock without getting wet. That was not the case this year.

In a September 29th Star Ledger article, Mitchell Gaines, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Mount Holly, said "Some places already had record (monthly) rainfall before

Irene." The unusually wet summer "set the stage, saturating the soil so when the new rains came with Irene, the rainfall hit the ground and just ran off into the streets, creeks, streams and rivers." And then came Tropical Storm Lee, and after that the unnamed storm of late September.

Travelling up and down the river I continuously heard stories that began with the phrase "I have never seen..." And for everyone under the age of 60 or 70 years old that is probably the case. According to the state climatologist at Rutgers University, David Robinson, "The [rainfall] totals are nothing short of epic. The average statewide rainfall

— about 22 inches since August 1 — appears to be a once-in-a-millennium epochal event. What we have recorded recently is so far off the charts that statistically it looks like it's something that occurs every 1,000 years," Robinson said of the rainfall totals for August and September. (By Richard Khavkine, The Star-Ledger September 28, 2011)

While the fall storms brought record-breaking velocities, it is true that some reaches of the Musconetcong River have seen higher water. During some storms, the Delaware River reaches its high water peak before or at the same time as the Musky. When that happens, the Musky rushes toward the conflu-

## DAM REMOVAL *Continued from page 1*

Administration (NOAA), Watershed Institute and Conservation Resources Inc. worked over four years with local residents and stakeholders from both Holland and Pohatcong Townships.

### Why remove dams?

**Public Safety** The Finesville Dam has already proven fatal. In 1989, a 29 year old man lost his life when his canoe went over the dam and in 2003, following a heavy rainfall, a 58 year old man who was kayaking lost his life in the hydraulic roller effect at the Finesville Dam. Dams on the Musky and other rivers present hazards to paddlers and anglers.

**Fish Passage** Removal of the Finesville Dam, the first obstruction

upstream of the river's confluence with the Delaware River was critical to reestablishing migratory fish passage on the Musconetcong River. There is a need to restore the connectivity of the Musconetcong River for the benefit of aquatic species including native diadromous fish species (such as American eels), and to improve habitat for other native and naturalized fish populations such as trout and bass.

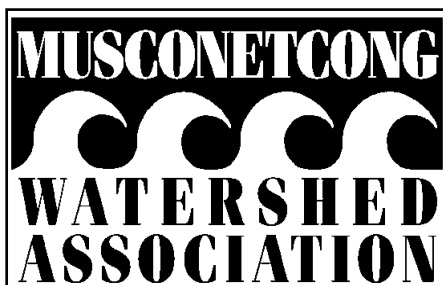
**Flooding** The dam at Finesville, like most other dams on the Musconetcong River, raised the hydraulic level of the River during flood events, increasing the vulnerability of local lands to flooding. The dam pool or mill pond occupies part of the natural floodplain of the river. Dam removal creates access to flood plain area and allows the river to swell considerably during heavy rains before it begins to reach homes. According to a 2009 feasibility study done by Princeton



*Removal of the Finesville Dam began on November 10, 2011. Gleim Environmental Group of Carlisle PA removed the dam using a design by Princeton Hydro engineers of Ringoes, NJ*

Hydro there will be as much as 1.73 foot decrease in the flood depth for a 10 year flood and 0.71 foot decrease in the flood depth for a 100 year flood.

Work will continue at the Finesville site for another year or so as banks are leveled and the riparian area is planted with native trees and shrubs. The Musconetcong River Restoration Partnership will meet at the site in January to have a first-hand look at how the site is performing and to assess any additional work that may be required. ♻️



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

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## 2011 FLOODS *Continued from page 1*

ence with the Delaware but when it reaches the raging Delaware it's like hitting a wall; the Musconetcong has nowhere to go. When this happens the river backs up and even appears to flow in reverse. Luckily, during the three storms of the fall of 2011, the level in the Delaware River did not peak until after the Musky had begun to drop.

There were many areas, from the upper reaches of the Musconetcong to very near the confluence that saw record flows or record volumes or both. Many residents of the watershed saw property damage, many lost trees and some even lost family vehicles. The wettest year on record certainly left its mark on the Musconetcong Watershed. ♻️

## MWA'S EMERGENCY FLOOD RESPONSE INCLUDED WATER TESTING AND CLEAN UP



The MWA responded to record-breaking floods in the fall by organizing an emergency water testing program to help residents test their drinking water. More than 50 families took advantage of discounted testing for both Total Coliform and Nitrates. Testing was done by QC Laboratories.



Flooding left stream banks and roadside littered with debris. The MWA arranged with Warren County Road Department for an emergency Clean Up. We are grateful to the many people who pitched in to help.

# Gauging River Safety: WaterAlert

By Nancy Lawler, MWA River Watcher Coordinator

Did you know that you can find out how high or how fast the river is, right now? The United States Geological Survey (USGS) has stream gauges that measure the height and flow rate of a river, and then displays the data on the USGS website. Looking at the site allows you to find out what is happening on a river quickly and safely. USGS has two gauges on the Musconetcong River, at the Lake Hopatcong outfall and at Bloomsbury.

Want to know when the river reaches a certain height? Subscribe to a great service called WaterAlert. WaterAlert allows you to get data from the gauge by email or cell phone

text. For example, during Hurricane Irene, I had WaterAlert send me an email when the river at the Bloomsbury gauge rose to near flood stage, which is six feet. I also have the gauge send me an email when the river might be too low for me to kayak, at two feet. Since I can look at data on any stream gauge in the country, I can keep informed about other rivers I might need to know about.

To find out about your favorite river's stream gauges, consult <http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/rt> and use the interactive map to find the gauge. To subscribe to WaterAlert, scroll to near the bottom of the gauge webpage and click on "Subscribe to WaterAlert". Then--just follow the instructions! ☺

## Double or Triple Your Impact!

Increase the impact of your donation to the Musconetcong Watershed Association with matching funds from your employer! Many employers have gift-matching programs, in which they will match part or all of your contribution to MWA. If you or your spouse works for, or is retired from, a company or organization that matches charitable contributions, your gift to the MWA

could be increased by two or three times its amount.

The MWA has received matching gifts from companies such as IBM, Forest Laboratories, AT&T, Prudential, Verizon, Pfizer and others. Check with your human resources office to learn if your company will match a gift to MWA – and if they do please take advantage of it – it makes a difference!

## Meet Your Ambassador!

The Musconetcong Watershed Association is happy to be hosting an AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassador from now until June of 2012. The Ambassadors program is a community-oriented stewardship program designed to raise awareness about water issues in New Jersey. Through this service program, Watershed Ambassadors work with community organizations on partnership projects such as rain gardens, stream clean-ups, restoration projects, and give interactive presentations on water topics. Ambassadors also monitor the local rivers using visual and biological assessments with volunteers that they train with volunteer monitoring protocols.

Our Ambassador is Lauren Smith, a Musconetcong Watershed native, from Warren Glen in Pohatcong Township. Lauren graduated from Susquehanna University in May with a Bachelor's of Science degree in Earth and Environmental Sciences. Lauren says, "The AmeriCorps program is an excellent opportunity for engaging the citizens of my own community into caring more for our local waterways. I am really excited to be able to work in the watershed that I grew up in, especially because we live in such a beautiful area of New Jersey. The chance to spread the word about watersheds through hands-on learning and volunteering is going to be so much fun!" Lauren will be assisting our Association in a variety of ways, including presentations, water quality monitoring, and projects such as restoration work on our trail and aspects of the Finesville dam removal project.

If you know an organization that would benefit from an AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador educational presentation or volunteering opportunity, please do not hesitate to contact Lauren. She can be reached by email at [ambassador@musconetcong.org](mailto:ambassador@musconetcong.org), or by office phone (908) 537-7060. It is a fun learning opportunity for ALL ages!





Photo by Chuck Gullage

*Fantastic weather brought 25 hikers out for the 2011 Point Mountain Hike. We were delighted to have lots of visiting family this year. Hikers hailed from Utah, Florida Washington DC, Iowa and Kansas.*



Photo by Marie Almeida

*MWA Trustee Rich Plumpton along with fellow musicians John "Barless" Pellichero and Brian Bridge provided music at the 9th annual MWA Wine Tasting.*



*In October a group of 16 local home schooled students experienced the MWA Watershed Education program. In this photo, students sketch and classify macroinvertebrates from a sample they pulled from the river.*



*After a lesson about the meaning of finding certain aquatic insects in the Musconetcong River, it is time to identify organisms.*

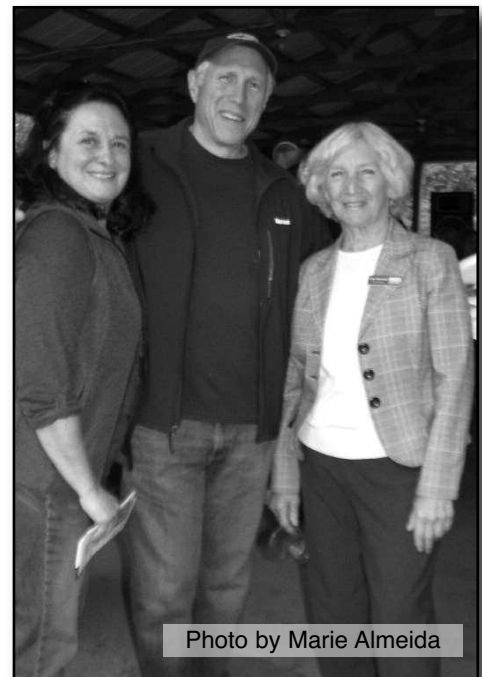


Photo by Marie Almeida

*MMA Vice President Cinnie MacGonagle stops for a chat with MWA members Linda and Richard Cervino at this years Wine Tasting*

# SAVE THESE DATES!

- **Saturday, January 14, 10-11:30 a.m. Saxon Falls River Trail Hike** - Join us for this easy, flat hike that is perfect for young children, families and those ready to come out of hibernation. We'll search for animal tracks and homes as we explore a trail that runs right along the Musconetcong River. The remnants of the Morris Canal can be seen alongside the Musconetcong River. The abundance of water along this trail makes it a great location for viewing birds that live in or hunt along the river. Directions: Take CR 517 south to Bilby Rd. and turn left. Go to "T" intersection and turn left which is CR 604. Proceed north about 2 miles to Saxton Falls, which is on the right side of the road. We will meet in the small parking lot.
- **Tuesday, January 31, 7:00 p.m. River Talk: The Floods of 2012, Hackettstown Municipal Building 215 Stiger Street · Hackettstown, NJ** Join us as we take our River Talk series on the road. Our guest speaker will be Robert Reiser of the United States Geological Service (USGS) NJ Water Science Center. Mr Reiser will discuss the record breaking flooding in the area and show us the many interesting uses of the data collected by the USGS, which maintains three gauges on the Musconetcong. Email [adrienne@musconetcong.org](mailto:adrienne@musconetcong.org) or call (908) 537-7060 for information or to register. Snow date February 7, 2011.
- **Tuesday February 28, 7:00 p.m. Call of Life Facing the Mass Extinction.** MWA will be showing the award winning documentary from the Species Alliance. Join us for the showing of this film and a discussion about how we can each play a role in reversing the destruction of species and ecosystems. Email [adrienne@musconetcong.org](mailto:adrienne@musconetcong.org) or call (908) 537-7060 for information or to register.
- **Saturday, April 14, 9:00 a.m. – noon 20th Annual MWA Spring Clean Up** Come out and help at the Annual Spring Clean Up. Each year we count on MWA members, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Trout Unlimited members, local citizens and kids from environmental clubs to help us pull tons of trash from local roadsides and stream banks. Afterwards participants gather at noon at the MWA's River Resource Center in Asbury for hot dogs and sodas. E-mail [adrienne@musconetcong.org](mailto:adrienne@musconetcong.org) or call (908) 537-7060 for information.
- **Sunday, May 6 - 12th Annual MWA Run/Walk/Ride for the River** Join us for our usual 4 mile Run/Walk with a day full of new and exciting activities. Please watch the website for details.
- **Monday, July 16 – 1st Annual MWA Golf Outing** - Playing to the 9's. This new event will be held at Hawk Pointe Golf Course. \$99 per person per round. Bring your foursome to play the front, back or both! More details to follow on our website.

**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](mailto:beth@musconetcong.org).

- ◆ Save These Dates
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What's Inside:

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## 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: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

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