

Pawtuxet River Rag Spring 2018

The newsletter of Friends of the Pawtuxet and the West Bay Land Trust

PAWTUXET RIVER EARTH DAY CLEAN-UP: SUNDAY APRIL 22

Join us from 9:30 am to noon for a clean-up along the Pawtuxet River Trail. Meet at the RI DEM Pawtuxet Supply Depot at 230 Warwick Ave., Cranston, 02905 (across from Stop & Shop). Please bring gloves, but we'll supply other materials, as well as water. This event is suitable for adults and supervised kids. Feel free to drop by for any amount of time you can spare for this scenic walk along the river. 2018 marks the 27th year of the clean-up!

WBLT CLEAN-UP: SUNDAY APRIL 29

Meet at 9:30 at the hay field on Burlingame Road, ¼ mile east of its intersection with Hope Road. Garbage bags provided. Contact Doug Doe (dwdoe@cox.net) for more information. Last year, members of the WBLT cleaned up the Knight Farm property along Burlingame Road, spending about three hours harvesting trash from the hay field east toward the golf course.

FREE TREES TO GOOD HOMES!

If you own property in Cranston, you could get a free tree courtesy of the City of Cranston. The non-profit Rhode Island Tree Council administers the program, which is returning for its fourth year in 2018. The only caveat is that the tree must be planted within 25 feet of a public right of way (i.e., your front yard, not your back yard). You can also suggest a public location for a tree. Since the program's inauguration, 120 residences have received trees (Red Oak, tulip-tree, Sugar maple and Maple are common species). The trees are valued at approximately \$250. For more information, see the RI Tree Council site www.ritree.org/ (click on "2018 Cranston Neighborhood Planting Program"). You can also email the Tree Council at ritree@ritree.org, or call (401)-764-5885. **The deadline for completed applications is April 15, although the supply of trees may be exhausted by then.** If you have a suggestion for a publicly-owned space that could use a tree, contact Steve Stycos (SStycos@cranstonri.org), or Jeff Baron of Constituent Affairs in the Cranston mayor's office.

COMMUNITY GARDEN

Cranston's only community garden, the Edgewood Community Garden at Cherry Woods, is located behind Edgewood Highland Elementary School on Pawtuxet Avenue. The garden is run by the West Bay Land Trust and the cost for a 4 X 16-foot plot is \$20. New gardeners are welcome, but spots go quickly. Contact Lisa Gibb at lisagibb2@verizon.net for more information.

EDGEWOOD DOESN'T WANT CUMBERLAND FARMS

A Cumberland Farms gas station has been proposed for the NW corner of Park and Warwick Aves. The project will increase traffic, threaten pedestrian safety, and have a negative impact on the immediate neighbors' health due to gas fumes. Moreover, the presence of a gas station will make the 40 homes in a 300-foot radius ineligible for first-time buyer loans from the VHA and HUD. The project was rejected in 2015, and remains out of scale for the neighborhood. "Edgewood Doesn't Want Cumberland Farms" is opposing the project. Find them on Facebook, or email nocumberlandfarms@aol.com. The Planning Commission will issue their recommendation on April 3. The proposal goes to the Ordinance Committee on April 12, and unless continued, will have full City Council hearing with public comment on that date.

PROJECT TIMBERDOODLE: AN AMERICAN WOODCOCK CENSUS

URI Ph.D. student Erin Harrington is part of a team who have created Project Timberdoodle, a citizen science project aimed at estimating Rhode Island's American Woodcock population. Those interested can attend a training/orientation session on Tuesday April 3 or Friday 6 from 6-8 pm in the Weaver Auditorium at URI's Coastal Institute. Look for Project Timberdoodle on Facebook, or email (e_harrington@my.uri.edu) for more information.



PAWTUXET VILLAGE FARMERS MARKET

The market opens May 5. Vendors include The Local Catch (fresh fish), Weatherlow Farms (pastured meats), Baffoni's Poultry, plus fruits and vegetables from Pak Express, Blue Skys Farm, gC Farms, and Barden Family Orchard. Other edibles include bread from Olga's Cup + Saucer, bagels and pizza from Little Falls Cafe, honey from Fruit Hill Apiaries, nuts from the Virginia & Spanish Peanut Company and Bolt Coffee.

GREEN CALENDAR

Sunday April 22 (9:30 -noon). Pawtuxet River Earth-Day Clean-up (see details at top of newsletter).

Saturday April 28 (10 am – noon). Edgewood Waterfront Preservation Association's Stillhouse Cove Cleanup. Ditch work, trash and invasive plant removal, garden work with the Edgewood Garden Club, and maintenance activities including storm-drain clearing and sidewalk sweeping. All ages are welcome (parental supervision for children required). All supplies will be provided including water, gloves, trash bags, bug spray, sunscreen, and tools. Please wear appropriate foot wear - no flip-flops.

Sunday April 29 (9:30 am). WBLT Clean-up: Burlingame Road in western Cranston, ¼ mile east of its intersection with Hope Road.

Saturday May 5 (9 am - noon): Pawtuxet Village Farmers Market Opens. The market is open every Saturday until late October and is located in the Rhodes on the Pawtuxet parking lot, Rhodes Place, Cranston. More info on the Facebook page and <http://pawtuxetmarket.com>

Monday May 14 6:30 pm: Horseshoe Crab Walk. Save The Bay Restoration Coordinator Wenley Ferguson will lead a walk in Stillhouse Cove to explain the annual horseshoe crab mating ritual. Meet at southern end of Stillhouse Cove (corner of Ocean Avenue and Narragansett Boulevard) at 6:30 pm. Rain date is Tuesday May 15 at 7 pm.

Saturday May 19: Pawtuxet River Plant Walk. Naturalist Sandy Jacobi will lead a plant walk along the Pawtuxet River trail. Meet at the market table at the Farmers Market at 10 am.

Saturday June 2 (8 am to noon): Goodwill electronics and textile collection (in the parking lot behind the farmer's market).

Saturday June 9: Farmer's Market moves to William Hall Library parking lot, 1825 Broad Street, due to the Gaspee Day Parade. If you drive, avoid Park Avenue and Pawtuxet Village. Farmers appreciate Gaspee Day customers because attendance is lower than usual.

Friday June 15: Firefly walk at 8:45 PM, meet at the lower Rhodes on the Pawtuxet parking lot. A half-hour walk to see the firefly mating ritual. Bug repellent, long sleeves and long pants recommended. Please do not bring jars, nets, dogs or noisy electronics.

Saturday September 15: International Coastal Clean-Up Day.
Check the Save the Bay site for local clean-ups.

Saturday October 27: Last Farmers Market for 2018

Did you know that the land comprising Meshanticut State Park was given to the Metropolitan Park Commission in 1910, the same year Cranston became a city? The 20-acre parcel had been owned by businessman John M. Dean, and formed part of his Cranston farmstead. Dean Parkway owes its name to the eponymous furniture manufacturer and real estate developer.

KNIGHT FARM TRAIL DEDICATION

The WBLT hosted a trail walk and dedication of the Knight Farm Trail on June 3, 2017 (National Trail Day). The trailhead is off Laten Knight Road near its junction with Beechwood Drive. The trail is a 1.5-mile loop through historic farm and woodland areas and boasts a new footbridge constructed by Steve Stycos and Bill Baddeley. Steve procured a grant from the DEM for the lumber for the project. The trail has been in progress for several years, and many volunteers cleared and blazed the trail, and provided other help.

Walkers on the trail, and elsewhere, are asked to keep pets leashed as rambling dogs trample plants and disturb wildlife. Clean up after pets, and help keep trails clean by bringing a small bag to collect occasional litter.

PARK VIEW MIDDLE SCHOOL OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

The formerly derelict area in front of Park View Middle School is now home to 20 trees and two perennial beds, as well as picnic benches, chairs, and a "blackboard" mural painted on the wall by PVMS students. Much of the work planting, mulching, watering, and weeding the space has been performed by Park View students, staff, and parents. This space is open to the public, and will only improve as the trees mature. The project was made possible by donations of trees, funds, and materials by the Rhode Island Tree Council, the Cranston Conservation Commission, the Cranston Teachers' Alliance, the Department of Environmental Management, the City of Cranston, the Cranston School Department, and the Edgewood Garden Club, as well as individuals.

Do you know that Arbor Day is celebrated on the last Friday in April? The holiday was first observed in 1872 in Nebraska City, Nebraska as a result of efforts by pioneer settler Julius Sterling Morton and his wife Caroline, transplanted Detroiters who found their new home sorely lacking in trees.

CRANSTON SOLAR FACILITY UPDATE

Despite opposition by the West Bay Land Trust and private citizens, in 2017 the Cranston Planning Commission approved a 10-megawatt solar array for 840 Hope Road in western Cranston. At first blush, a solar facility seems desirable; however, the location is an active farm in the middle of the Cranston Historic Farm Loop. Another array ("Gold Meadow Farms") on 60-acres of formerly forested land off Lippitt Avenue is currently under construction and will be permanently ringed by chain-link fence. A third site of 60-80 acres has been proposed for the same area.

In 2015, the Cranston City Council passed initial performance standards in response to the first Hope Farm Solar application. These were to provide a modicum of guidance until a full plan had been vetted. The standards, drafted by the WBLT and Councilman Steve Stycos, and backed by public hearing testimony from land trust members, set tough noise standards and require solar companies to post a bond to pay for removal of the solar facility when its useful life ends in 30 years. The standards also prohibit removal of top soil from the site, and allows top soil to be disturbed only to the extent necessary to build the project. The developers have not abided by these modest requirements or DEM mandates in their development of the Lippitt Avenue site. The DEM has inspected the site twice this year, and has sent the owners and developer a letter of "Significant Non-Compliance" enumerating their failures in complying with their permits.

The WBLT and Cranston Conservation Commission are advocating for a comprehensive solar and renewable energy ordinance that will allow for development of non-fossil fuel energy in the city, while at the same time preserving agricultural land, green spaces, and woodlands. Not only do large-scale solar arrays destroy local ecosystems, by removing plants, wetland buffers and topsoil, they make the area more susceptible to flooding. Without a clear and cogent alternative energy policy, there is little guidance for appropriately locating these facilities. Sheila Dormody

of the Rhode Island chapter of The Nature Conservancy has recently drafted a one-page "Rhode Island Principles for Renewable Energy Siting" that provides some guidance in this area.

The WBLT is calling on citizens, especially those in western Cranston, to be vigilant regarding such developments. It is important to attend City of Cranston meetings, and ask questions regarding energy project siting proposals, and the compliance of developers with the regulations currently in place.

Doug Doe has compiled photos and maps of the Lippitt Avenue site at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/cranstonsolar>. Contact Doug (dwdoe@cox.net) for further information. The Providence Journal's March 18, 2018 article "[Worry over solar sprawl spreads across Rhode Island](#)" provides a good summary of the issue in Cranston, and state-wide. ecoRI news also has a 2016 article on the situation in Cranston: "[Cranston Approves Hosting State's Largest Solar Farm.](#)"

FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Thanks to our 2017 contributors: Dennis & Kathleen Duffy, William Gillen, Steve Stycos and Christine Herbert.

DONATIONS

___ Yes, I'd like to help. My contribution to Friends of the Pawtuxet is enclosed.

___ Yes, I'd like to purchase a tree to be planted on public land in the memory of _____. Enclosed is \$150. Please make check payable to the West Bay Land Trust, and attach a brief description of the person for inclusion in a future newsletter.

Name _____ Email _____

Address _____

Please mail this form & your contribution to Friends of the Pawtuxet, 37 Ferncrest Ave., Cranston 02905. Contributions to the West Bay Land Trust and to Friends of the Pawtuxet are tax deductible.