



# FRENCH RIVER LOG

Volume 5 Number 2

June 1, 2010

Welcome to the June 2010 issue of the French River Log, the newsletter of the French River Connection. You are receiving this because at some point you gave us your email address, and we have been sending you announcements and meeting minutes. There is information about how to unsubscribe at the end of this newsletter.

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## Board Retreat Focuses on Long Term Organizational Strategies

In March, the board spent a Saturday morning on retreat at the Black Tavern in Dudley, not to talk about our current programs and projects, but about how we can make our organization stronger and more enduring. The event was facilitated by John Monroe from Greenleaf Partners, who you may remember, delivered the two years of technical assistance that we received from the National Park Service for the French River Greenway. Many topics were raised, but the three that got the most air time are these:

How can we involve more students and young people in the organization?

How can we keep the organization in the public eye?

How can we develop more leadership and spread leadership responsibilities more widely?

The board will be defining specific actions to address these needs.

## Leovich Landing Receives Funding



The French River Connection has been awarded a \$6020 grant from The Last Green Valley to complete the development of Leovich Landing in Oxford. There was a lot of competition for the available funds; we are the winning 25%. The application was supported by letters from Senator Moore, the Appalachian Mountain Club, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, and the Oxford Selectmen. We are also grateful to J&D Civil Engineers for preparing the plans on a very heavily discounted basis. The grant has to be matched by a like amount of in-kind donations of labor, material, or equipment. We have had a wonderful response to this from Ron Rheault Construction and others, and much of the lighter work will be done as a boy scout Eagle project

scheduled for September 25.

The project also received a \$1000 donation from Wal-mart, secured by Carol Colena for the Dudley Conservation Land Trust's Leovich Landing account. Thanks to Carol for her effort.

Permitting for the project is expected imminently, with receipt of a determination by the state that we don't need a Chapter 91 waterways permit. The next step is to sign a contract with The Last Green Valley which will enable us to submit bills for reimbursement and start to count in-kind donations.

The main features of the project are a canoe-kayak launch, a fenced parking lot, picnic table, new sign, replacement of invasives with native meadow plants, and stormwater control. Watch for schedules of work days and requests for help. Please consider pitching in.

## Mussel Protection

One of the requirements of our French River Park project is that we have a plan approved by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife for the protection of triangle floater and creeper mussels in the adjacent river bed. Both are listed in the state as species of special concern. While they are widespread in the state, the majority of populations consist of fewer than ten individuals, and their long term viability is not well understood.

These mussels are sedentary filter feeders that spend most of their lives anchored to the bottom. Their larvae become mobile by attaching to the gills of fish. They prefer river reaches with low to moderate flow and sand or gravel riverbeds. Triangle floaters especially have some tolerance for standing water and have been found in lakes. These mussels are found from North Carolina north to Canada. The Creeper can be found in the eastern half of the United States and Canada. In Webster, the mussels have been found in the river from approximately Church Court to a point below the Wastewater Treatment Plant outfall.

Our approved protection plan, in addition to the usual steps to keep sediment out of the river, requires an expert to search the river bottom, record the locations of any mussels found, transport them and place them in the river bottom upstream, and return one month and one year later to see how the relocated mussels are faring. This has to be done within 10 days of the start of work, and can only be done in the summer and early autumn.

## Making the Perryville Trace Better



Andrew LaBonte, this was completed in April.

Another problem area is the narrow causeway between the river and an uncertified vernal pool, which on occasion is underwater from the river at flood stage, or the pool after heavy rain, or both. The bank has been undermined by beavers which contributes to the problem. In 2009, we built this up but it wasn't quite enough. Trail users put small logs down to keep their feet dry, but it hardly seemed safe.

On May 15, eight students (pictured above) from the Shepherd Hill High School Environmental Committee spent the morning building up the causeway by adding flat stones found on-site. Now the causeway is essentially covered with natural pavers, so that even if it does become wet it will be solid underfoot. In addition, committee members wired approximately 40 trees to keep the beavers at bay. The group was led by teacher Judy Nawrocki. Thanks to the committee for a productive morning of hard work.

We never expect the Trace to be completely dry. When it rains hard for several days there will be temporary and hopefully passable puddles, and it may flood if the river surpasses flood stage. And of course, rapid snowmelt will make it worse. But if its walkable 99% of the time, that should be enough.



### The Battle of the Beavers Goes On

So far this year we have protected about 100 riverside trees from beavers by fencing them with welded wire generously provided by Home Depot. This makes 300 over the three years of the program, but there are thousands more to go. At least the beavers aren't getting them all, and we find this is a good activity for young people. If anyone would like to become a leader in our beaver aggravation and discouragement program, please contact [Ken](#), he'll get you started.

### Where is it?

The following appeared in the Massachusetts Spy newspaper on August 29, 1832, and was provided by Mike Branniff.

#### TO CAPITALISTS AND MANUFACTURERS

*Will be sold at Public Auction, on the premises, on Thursday, the 27<sup>th</sup> day of September next, at ten o'clock forenoon. "FRENCH RIVER MANUFACTURING ESTABLISHMENT." situated in Oxford, (Mass.) containing 190 acres of Land, a Factory, about 80 feet long and three stories high, a large Machine Shop, Saw Mill, six large Dwelling Houses, and other buildings thereon.*

*The fall of the River on the premises is about twenty five feet, constituting a privilege of great power and value.*

*Also, will be sold at the same time and place, all the MACHINERY in said factory, consisting of about 1400 Spindles, thirty four Looms, and all the necessary preparations. The sale is to be made by the Administrator of the late proprietor of the premises, Willard Arnold*

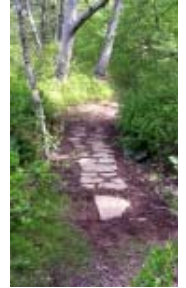
AHAB ARNOLD

Where is it? Send us an email if you know

### On the Calendar:

General Meeting June 9 at 7pm at the Dudley Senior Center on the first floor of the town hall. This is the last general meeting until November. Come and bring a friend.

National Trails Day June 5 9am to noon. Help restore washed out trails at Hodges Village. Meet at the multi-use area to the left off Clara Barton Road. You can just show up, or contact [John Grenier](#) or Ranger [Ken Hester](#). Pizza and soda afterwards.



Thompson CT French River cleanup July 24 in the morning. Thompson Together's Environment Committee makes a real event out of cleaning the river, with a picnic following. We'll be responsible for Perryville to Wilsonville, which has been cleaned several times but not last year. This is a very pretty section of the river, so we can tug on those tires in lovely surroundings. Contact [Ken](#) if you want to participate, and watch for further announcements.

Dam Trail Race August 7 8am-11am approximately. This year there will be two races simultaneously, so we expect many more runners. We need people to park cars, manage food, and man water stops. Race Director John Grenier is doing a great job of making this a first class event for our benefit. Let's give him all the help we can. We also need donations of baked goods for prizes. Email [Ken](#) or [John](#) to sign up. It's fun.

French River Day September 18 3-6pm. Our annual picnic for members at a site to be determined. Enjoy the company of your friends and colleagues, and no one will mention working on the river.

Leovich Landing Boy Scout Workday September 25. Save the day. This is when the Boy Scouts intend to descend on the Landing and transform it in one day. It's not clear what we'll need to do that day, but our help will be needed, as it will on some yet to be scheduled days before then. Watch for further announcements

Always on the Calendar: Visit us on the [web](#), read our [blog](#). And please, [consider joining](#) the French River Connection. Grants and some donations we receive are for very specific projects. It's memberships that enable us to have insurance, pay for filings and permits, and keep us in stamps, envelopes, paper and ink, and workday donuts, all of which we need to do the real work.

### **Don't Forget the Bike Raffle**

Bike raffle tickets are still available and will be right up until the drawing at the Dam Trail Race August 7. The bike is a Men's or Women's Specialized Carmel Hybrid, to be sized for the winner, furnished by Southbridge bicycle. Tickets are \$5.00, or 3 for \$10.00.

[Learn more about the bike and order tickets.](#)

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