

Will the State Restore Our River?

Find out at the Weir River Watershed Association's Annual Meeting - Thursday

November 10, 2011 - Weir River Estuary Center (333 George Washington Blvd Hull MA) at 7 p.m.

Special guest speaker will be Julia Blatt of the [Massachusetts Rivers Alliance](#).

Ms. Blatt will speak on the state's ongoing efforts to balance water withdrawals for human use with keeping rivers flowing. The state, river advocates and water suppliers have been negotiating for over a year to come to agreement on how to balance the needs of water for people and wildlife. The state intends to issue a water management policy in the coming weeks. Ms. Blatt has been at the forefront of these negotiations speaking on behalf of rivers and those who care about them.

Because we are relatively water rich when compared to other parts of our country it is hard to believe that in some places we have a water shortage. However, in 2005 the Weir River Watershed Association successfully petitioned the state to list the Weir River as a "Highly Stressed Basin" due to the over allocation of water resources in this river system. Stream flow data taken by watershed association volunteers and from state scientists show that parts of the Weir River system are impacted by withdrawing more water than it can sustain. Particularly during the summertime, when demand can rise by 1.5- 2x over wintertime demand, there is evidence of these impacts through lower than predicted normal flows and even no flow. This "Highly Stressed Basin" classification has made it very difficult to authorize further withdrawals from the basin but it has not required restoration of those lost flows.

For reference a total of 4.12 million gallons of water per day on average are withdrawn from the Weir River basin serving 38,000 people with drinking water. There are two water supplies that use the Weir River Basin – the largest withdrawal of water (about 85%) is Aquarion Water Company who supplies water to the towns of Hingham and Hull and parts of Cohasset. The remaining 15% of the withdrawals supplies a portion of the town of Norwell and golf courses in Hingham.

In 2006 the USGS installed an automatic stream flow gage near the Leavitt St. Bridge in order to monitor daily stream flows on the Weir River. Unfortunately this stream gage fell to the state's budget ax in 2009. Currently stream flow is not being measured in the Weir River to determine how it is faring.

Our river is not alone in this issue – many eastern Massachusetts rivers are degraded in part due to water withdrawal impacts including the Jones River in Kingston, the First Herring Brook in Scituate, the Neponset River to name a few...but it is also not the only or in some cases the largest issue facing our rivers. Dams, undersized culverts and stormwater pollution from paved surfaces all are contributing to their degradation from the perspective of the river species that rely upon on them.

However the question of how much water to pump from our rivers — and how much to leave for the fish —has never been more urgent than it is today. The decisions that will be made on this issue will govern water use in our state for at least the next 20 years. Please join us for what is sure to be an education on this issue for all on Thursday November 10, 2011 at 7 pm at the Weir River Estuary Center 333 George Washington Blvd Hull. This event is free and open to the public. To find out more visit our website at www.weirriver.org

By

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