



Androscoggin River
Watershed Council

Vol. 4, No. 1

Winter 2002

Flowing Waters



Bill Hanson, a wildlife biologist for FPL Energy Maine Hydro, holds a 7-week-old eagle chick after climbing a tree in western Maine.

Balancing act

Story by
Ashley Bies
ARWC Summer
Intern

Ashley lives in Woodstock, Maine, and is a first year Environmental Studies student at Marlboro College in Vermont.

Three scientists are keeping an eye on the health of the Androscoggin River watershed.

Bill Hanson, a wildlife biologist for FPL Energy Maine Hydro, still knows how to climb trees. Most people don't continue with this sort of activity much past childhood, especially those who go to work for large corporations such as FPL Energy, but Bill performs a special role for his company.

FPL operates most of the hydroelectric dams on the Androscoggin River, and Bill has been working for the company for over 20 years studying the health of wildlife in and around

the impoundments behind FPL's dams. If that means scaling 90-foot pine trees to determine the mercury levels in eagle chicks, so be it.

Mercury is a particular concern because of its toxicity and tendency to become concentrated, or to bioaccumulate, as it moves up the food chain. It is considered to be the most hazardous pollutant presently found in the Androscoggin. Bill takes blood samples from

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Androscoggin River Watershed Council Steering Committee

Job opening

Executive director,
part-time,
Androscoggin River
Watershed Council

Please call
603-466-2524
for more
information

The mission of the
Androscoggin
River Watershed
Council is to
improve
environmental
quality and
promote healthy
and prosperous
communities in the
Androscoggin River
Watershed.

Newsletter editor:

Chuck Knox
cknox@DES.state.nh.us
Newsletter designed and
produced by
Oakland Communications
oakland@exploremaine.com

Large Business

Mike Hoover
FPLEnergy
Portland ME

Scott Reed
Mead Paper
Rumford ME

Vicki Gammon
International Paper
Jay ME

Non Profit

Christine Walker
North Country Council
Bethlehem NH

Nancy Perlson
Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust
Oquossoc ME

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Androscoggin Land Trust
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Bob Danderson
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Roland Viens
City of Berlin Water Works
Berlin NH

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Steve Wight
Sunday River Inn
Newry ME

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Psychologist
Auburn ME

Leon Ogradnik
Retired
Harpwell ME

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Lake Umbagog National
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Errol NH

Kay Nickel
USDANatural Resources
Conservation Service
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New Hampshire Department
of Environmental Services
Concord NH

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Maine Department of
Environmental Protection
Augusta ME

Jeff Stern
Oxford County Soil and Water
Conservation District
Oxford ME

Executive Committee

Chair
Marcel Polak
Appalachian Mountain Club
113 Main St.
Gorham NH 03581
603-466-2524
Fax: 466-2470
mpolak@amcinfo.org

Vice-Chair
Ray Danforth
Retired
Shelburne NH

Treasurer
Ferg Lea
Androscoggin Valley
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Calendar

Jan. 24-25 — Tools for
Watershed Protection: A
Workshop for Local Government;
Boston; contact: Ellen Barros at
Horsely & Witten Inc., 508-833-
6600 Ext. 101, or by email at
ebarros@horsleywitten.com

Jan. 27-30 — Water Sources
Conference & Exhibition: Reuse,
Resources, Conservation; Las
Vegas, Nev.; contact:
www.awwa.org/02sources or call
800-926-7337

Feb. 3-5 — Inorganic
Contaminants Workshop; San
Diego, Calif.; contact: Susan
Gunzer at 303-347-6210 or email
sgunzer@awwa.org

Feb. 18-22 — Conference on

Stormwater and Urban Water
Systems Modeling; Toronto,
Canada; contact: Lyn James at
519-767-0197 or email
info@chi.on.ca

Feb. 25-March 1 — 11th
International Conference on
Aquatic Invasive Species;
Alexandria, Va.; contact:
www.aquatic-invasive-species-
conference.org/ or
profedje@renc.igs.net

Feb. 27-March 1 — Fifth
National Mitigation Banking
Conference; Washington, D.C.;
contact: www.terrene.org/mitiga-
tionbanking.htm or 800-726-
4853

March 4-6 — Water Quality
Conference: Agriculture and the
Environment; Fort Worth, Texas;
www.extension.agron.iastate.edu

/aged/waterquality/MainWQ/wqm
.htm

March 11-13 — TMDL
Environmental Regulations
Conference and Exhibition; Fort
Worth, Texas; www.asae.org
March 25-26 — Tugis 2002: 15th
Annual Geographic Information
Science Conference; Towson,
Md.;

www.cgis.towson.edu/tugis2002
March 30 — 7th International
Wildlife Law Conference;
Washington, D.C.; Wil Burns at
650-703-3280 or
asilwildlife@pacbell.net

May 5-10 — 9th International
Symposium on the Interactions
between Sediments and Water;
Banff, Alberta; Dr. Ellen Petticrew
at 250-960-6645 or
lasws@unbc.ca

Not in my backyard

Rivers and lakes are affected not only by what we put directly into them but by anything that runs off the surrounding land when it rains.

As water runs off the land during a storm, it picks up pollutants such as lawn and garden chemicals and fertilizers, silt and sand, auto fluids, litter, and animal wastes. Depending on where you live, these pollutants then flow through ditches or storm drains where they ultimately find their way into a stream, river, lake, or other nearby surface water.

Preventing pollutants from entering our waters can start right in your own backyard. The next time there is a heavy rainstorm, watch where the water goes in your yard. If you live in a developed area, follow the path of the water to the nearest storm drain. If you live in a rural area, follow the water to a culvert or low area where the water runs off your property into a stream or wetland.

Once you know the path of water in your yard, try to reduce the amount of water running off your property. Remember that when water has the opportunity to soak into the ground, the soil, sand, and plants capture pollutants before they flow to the surface waters and ground waters. In addition, water soaking into the ground will also help recharge the groundwater supplies used for drinking water.

Here are a few backyard tips to help prevent runoff:

- * Direct downspouts from roofs and patios toward flat, well-vegetated areas or into gravel-filled seepage pits rather than toward paved areas.

- * Catch water from your roof gutters in a rain barrel. This allows runoff from your roof to seep into the soil when it is dry and saves

you water. Be sure to put a screen over the top to keep out egg-laying mosquitoes.

- * When possible, keep paved areas to a minimum. Use bricks or blocks set in sand, stepping stones, gravel, woodchips, or other porous material where a hard surface is desired.

- * Protect existing trees and vegetation,

and consider naturalized landscaping, using native plants. The native species tend to establish easily and need less water and care than exotic plants.

- * Pay special attention to sloped areas. Be sure these areas are protected with vegetation, mulch, or turf to prevent erosion.

- * Wash your car on grass or gravel instead of the driveway or street. Or better yet, take it to a car wash where the water gets treated and recycled. This will help keep soap, scum, and oily grit away from the storm drains and waterways.

Since stormwater picks up pollutants as it flows over the land, another way to help keep the rivers and lakes clean is to keep the pollutants from getting onto the ground in the first place.

Try these suggestions to minimize your adding to runoff pollution:

- * Fix oil and other engine leaks in your car. Never pour oil or other toxic chemicals into the ground or storm drains. Used oil can be recycled at most town or city public works departments or recycling centers.

- * For gardening or landscaping, test your soil before applying fertilizer to avoid applying more than you need. If you must fertilize, apply a slow release nitrogen fertilizer.

- * Keep leaf and yard waste, and animal waste away from wetlands and surface water. Compost yard waste, and properly dispose of pet waste.

Free electronic newsletter

Greenbytes
(<http://www.epa.gov/region01/ra/gb/index.html>)

is a free electronic newsletter that EPA emails to subscribers twice a month. The newsletter includes a timely feature story on a specific environmental issue, listings of upcoming meetings, press releases and information on its newest Web pages.

Send an email to: wintrob.paul@epa.gov with your first and last name and a sentence indicating that you would like to receive *Greenbytes*.

AVCOG has new Web site on aquifer

The Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments (AVCOG) has been working with the water districts in the Oxford Hills area and has developed a Web site that provides information on the Little Androscoggin River Valley Aquifer, the source of the public drinking water supplies in the area.

The site also provides information on what homeowners and businesses can do to help prevent pollution of their groundwater resources. Many of the tips also tell how to protect surface waters.

Check out the new site at littleandro.com

Balancing

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a variety of animals to check for mercury. Loons are especially important to him. Since they only eat fish, they do a very good job of indicating how much mercury is in the water behind FPL's dams.

When he is not taking blood samples from the wings of understandably impatient loons, Bill's work also keeps him busy crawling around ice caverns studying ornery beavers. The varying water levels behind some of FPL's dams at times create large gaps between winter ice and lakebed. Since he wondered how beaver are affected by this variation, Bill has climbed right on in and crawled around

down there for a while. (The beaver were fine).

During the summer you can find him sloshing around in rivers and streams, tracking secretive rainbow trout surgical-

ly implanted with radio transmitters. He's trying to figure out their habitat preference and the extent of their range.

Occasionally, a radio signal leads Bill up trees to nests, only to discover that this particular trout met an untimely end at the talons of an osprey. But Bill doesn't mind. It's all part of what he loves — understanding nature and figuring things out.

Forest ecologist

Peter McKinley is a forest ecologist within a few months of finishing his doctoral thesis on the foraging preferences of songbirds. He is trying to determine which trees they prefer to hunt in and why.

Had he been asked 10 years ago what his future career would be, he'd have said either a research or teaching position.

Why has he chosen to work for Hancock Land Co., a sixth-generation, family-owned Maine timber business that currently manages

over 20,000 acres of forest land, including 6,000 in the Androscoggin watershed? Why is he working in the wood industry and not against it?

Peter feels that he can make a significant difference at Hancock. Having owned their land for over 100 years, the Hancock family has a longterm commitment to its health, and they are not solely motivated by current profits.

Hancock opposes destructive practices such as forest liquidation, and tries to avoid causing any more disturbances to their land than would occur naturally. They also seek to sustain healthy populations of every species found in their forests. This is particularly important to Pete, because the findings of his doctoral research indicate beech trees, a species which is commonly eliminated from forest land because of its low commercial value, are particularly important to foraging songbirds.

Working for Hancock as a forest ecologist, Peter finds himself in the unique position of serving as co-lands manager, having an equal say in all management decisions along with the head forester. This puts him in the unusual situation for an ecologist of having some control over the management plans and harvesting practices employed in logging operations.

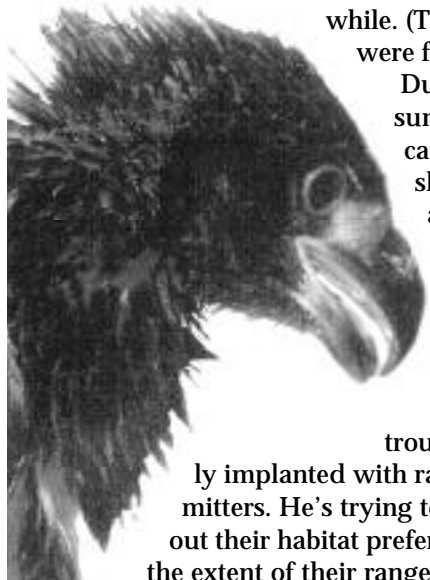
But being a lands manager at Hancock doesn't exactly mean cufflinks, a mahogany desk and a Mont Blanc pen. Whether he's supervising the field crews, planning for a logging operation in a new area, or marking property boundaries solo in a thundershower, Peter usually manages to keep his hands dirty and his brow beaded with sweat.

Appalachian Mountain Club

David Publicover, Forest Ecology Ph.D., works in the research department of the Appalachian Mountain Club. His specialty is creating maps of ecologically significant areas, using the GIS database he has assembled through the course of his 10 years with the AMC.

His focus is on the "Big Woods" of Northern New England, including the Upper Androscoggin Valley, with the goals of promoting sustainable forestry and establishing permanent protection for important ecological areas.

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New AMC guide maps the Androscoggin

Hot off the presses is an Appalachian Mountain Club publication entitled "Androscoggin River — Map and Guide."

Graphically depicting the river's 167-mile course from Umbagog Lake in New Hampshire to Merrymeeting Bay in Maine, this guide provides a wealth of information about the Androscoggin ecology, its history, and its current use.

Moreover, it marks and describes each public access spot along the watercourse, a feature that will prove invaluable for those who wish to delight in the Androscoggin's many boating, fishing, and other recreational opportunities.

With the Androscoggin River's re-emergence in recent years as one of New England's natural jewels, this AMC guide is a treat for all river-goers.



The two sided 24x26 Tyvek maps can be purchased for \$7.95 at most local Androscoggin Watershed outfitters, outdoor equipment dealers, and bookstores. Or you can order it from AMC at 800-262-4455. Shipping and handling is \$3.50.

Mead receives Governor's Awards for environmental excellence

The Rumford Mill initiated a monitoring program in 1978 that has helped the company reduce wastewater.

The Mead Paper Division, Rumford Mill, recently received two State of Maine Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence in the categories of Pollution Prevention and Environmental Stewardship.

Committed to protecting human health and the environment, and to utilizing resources in a responsible and sustainable manner, Mead focuses on pollution prevention as part of its total productivity improvement process.

The Rumford Mill, located along the Androscoggin River, initiated a monitoring program in 1978 for the purposes of measuring and tracking losses to the mill sewer system. The program has grown and evolved through the years to achieve its current level of excellence.

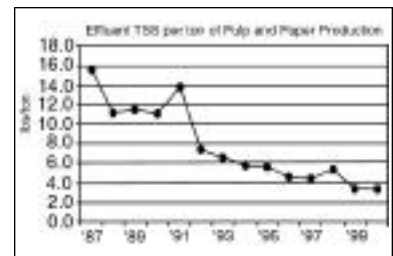
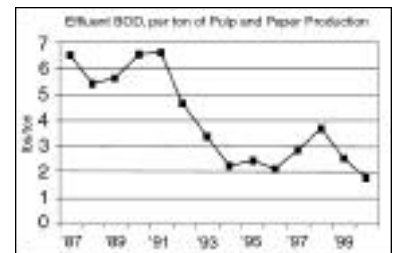
Rumford's program is now a leading example of Mead's Resource Effectiveness Initiative across the corporation. Mead's concept of resource effectiveness is the integration of waste minimization into the facility planning process in order to realize the cost savings (often hidden or indirect) of pollution prevention.

How does this translate to the environment? A more efficient production process results in less wastewater and pollutants. This contributes to more stable, higher efficiency operation of the mill's wastewater treatment plant. This in turn results in decreased discharges to the Androscoggin River.

Since 1987, the average discharge of BOD (a measure of oxygen demand) and TSS (total suspended solid particles) per ton of production has dropped by 67 percent and 70 percent, respectively (see graphs).

Mead is also very proud of the Environmental Stewardship award presented to the facility's Emergency Response Team (ERT). The all-volunteer team was nominated for the award by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection.

The ERT is recognized as a leader in western Maine for the training and skills available for response to emergencies in the Rumford Mill as well as throughout Oxford County.



Floating on the Androscoggin: A paddler's delight

Artists wanted

The Androscoggin River Watershed Council is holding an art contest for next summer's Canoe Trek poster. The themes for the image are rivers, paddlers, and summer. Sketches are due by the end of January. Once chosen, the artist will have until the end of March to finish their work. There is a payment for the winning artist. For more information or a copy of the contest guidelines, contact Sue Lincoln at 207-824-4627, or by email at slincoln@nxi.com

By Sue Lincoln
ARWC Canoe Trek Coordinator

"Wow, I didn't know this river was such good paddling," continues to be a common refrain on the annual Androscoggin River Source to the Sea Canoe Trek.

Last July, the Androscoggin treated participants to three weeks of beautiful paddling. Awareness of what a great community and recreational resource the Androscoggin represents was a common theme over the entire Trek.

Launched July 5 on the Magalloway River in New Hampshire and finishing 21 days later at Fort Popham near Bath, Maine, this year's Trek was a great success. Participants had fun, learned about the river and its history, and became more knowledgeable about the concept of a watershed.

Structured as a series of day trips, the Trek was free and open to the public. Trek 2001 was the sixth annual voyage down the 167-mile river. Participation throughout the Trek was remarkably even, averaging 35 people

per day. Sixty-three percent of Trek paddlers live within the Androscoggin watershed. Another 31 percent were New Hampshire and Maine residents outside the watershed.

Special thanks are due to section leaders, presenters and sponsoring organizations. Their generosity and enthusiasm for the river were shared freely with all who came along. Each day a volunteer section leader led a group from a specific put-in to the day's take-out. Special guests gave on-river talks about fisheries, Abenaki history, pollution prevention and other topics. Many local organizations hosted picnics for hungry paddlers.

The Trek has grown into a popular, well-attended event that furthers many of the Council's goals. It provides an opportunity for showcasing the river's role as a recreational and community resource.

There's something special about getting out on the river and experiencing its beauty and magic — seeing those silver maples, bald eagles and great blue herons up close.

For more information on the 2002 Trek, visit our Web site at www.andro-watershed.org

Balancing

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Much of his energy is put into advocating for ecologically sustainable land uses, working in cooperation with other conservation organizations, land trusts, public agencies and grassroots groups to create better forestry practices throughout the Northeast. He has worked for many years helping to develop policies on issues such as forest management and ecological reserves, and he has assisted both public and private landowners within the watershed in conducting ecological inventories on their lands.

David would like to see large contiguous blocks of land maintained as forest, and he hopes that a network of protected government and privately owned areas will one day be set up to allow species to migrate from one area to another.

Dave has a special interest in old-growth forests. His love for big trees is driven by an understanding of the ecological importance of old growth as habitat for some of the native species depending upon them for survival. The pine marten, goshawk, and several warblers species have all declined dramatically as a result of the almost total elimination of old growth from New England.

He thinks that a strong forest economy must be maintained, but with greater emphasis placed on the local production of high value products and on reducing the amount of raw logs exported from this region.

He also emphasizes the need for coordination in the regulation of development across state lines, a project in which he believes the Androscoggin River Watershed Council can play a role. However, he firmly believes eco-

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The pine marten, goshawk, and several warblers species have all declined dramatically as a result of the almost total elimination of old growth from New England.

N.E. EPA under new leadership

After 12 years at the helm of the N.H. Department of Environmental Services, Bob Varney recently stepped down as its commissioner to become the administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region I, an area that encompasses the six New England states.

Appointed by President George W. Bush, Bob will be working closely with EPA Administrator Christie Todd Whitman to help shape environmental policies and programs as the country begins the new century.

Respected for his active and far-sighted leadership, Bob Varney "consistently approached New Hampshire's environmental

challenges with vision and long-term perspective," noted Gov. Jeanne Shaheen.

"During the course of his tenure, the state received acclaim for such programs as lakes protection, drinking water protection, air quality control, underground storage tank management, toxic release reduction, brown-fields redevelopment, and the closure of unlined landfills," she said.

The governor also observed that Bob was particularly successful at forging bonds of cooperation with the public, private, and non-profit sectors, while maintaining a constant focus upon the ultimate goal of environmental protection.

"Under his dynamic and tireless leadership, he initiated and oversaw the implementation of a host of strategies and programs designed to protect New Hampshire's public health and environment."

— Gov. Jeanne Shaheen

Balancing

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conomic development must be balanced with the protection of undeveloped tracts of land, and especially the preservation of critical ecological habitat.

Dave's vision is one of a forest unified around values not always matching those of pure economic gain, values which sometimes put the survival of an endangered pine marten ahead of the felling of an economically valuable pine tree.

Join now!

Make a difference!

Androscoggin River Watershed Council

Yes, I want to be a member and support the Androscoggin River Watershed Council.

The benefits of membership include:

1. Participation in a bold collaborative effort to improve environmental quality and promote healthy and prosperous communities in the Androscoggin River Watershed.
2. Voting rights for election of the Steering Committee and changes in the by-laws.
3. Periodic newsletters and other educational materials about the Watershed.

Membership categories — Please select one:

Individual_____	\$15	Not-for-Profit organizations_____	\$50
Small Business_____	\$50	Municipal Units_____	\$50
Large Business_____	\$50	State/Federal Agencies_____	\$50

Checks should be made out to the Androscoggin River Watershed Council and sent to: Androscoggin River Watershed Council, c/o AVCOG, 125 Manley Road, Auburn ME 04210

Please include your name, organization or business, address, phone/fax and email address.

At present, the Androscoggin River Watershed Council is under the fiscal non-profit umbrella of the Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments. All contributions are deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

ARWC gets prestigious award

The organization was cited for vision, bringing people together.

This fall, the Androscoggin River Watershed Council was honored by receiving a special award from the Western Maine Alliance, a public interest group based at the University of Maine at Farmington.

Presented the Alliance's King Cummings Leadership Award at a ceremony held in Rumford, the Council was commended for its "continued commitment to bringing people together to work towards a common vision: economic prosperity, natural resource conservation, and educational excellence in western Maine."

Accepting the award on behalf of ARWC was Council Chair Marcel

Polak. Noting that "we're building a sustainable organization to promote the continued renaissance of the Androscoggin River because of its important ecological and economic values," Marcel expressed his pleasure at such a distinction being bestowed by the Alliance.

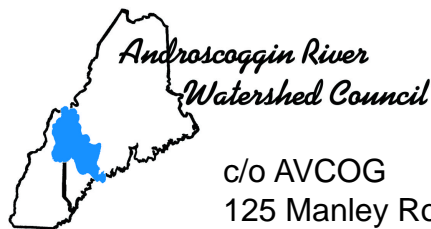
Every two years, the WMA honors a non-profit organization in its five-county area that reflects its mission to improve the quality of life and strengthen the regional identity of the western mountains region of the state. The award is named for H. King Cummings, a founder of the Alliance.

WMA's Peggy Willihan said that the ARWC was chosen for its diverse board and the organization's ability to "bring together many voices and many communities to find common

ground for capacity building and sustainability of the western mountains region."

The ARWC was officially organized in 1999, following Marcel's initiation several years earlier of a Source to the Sea Canoe Trek, an event that today involves hundreds of people from far and wide. He noted that the canoe trek highlights that the river provides a "common thread" for many "diverse interests," a thread that transcends political boundaries and geographic areas as it courses its way from the mountains of Maine and New Hampshire to the coast.

WMA's award further serves to underscore the value that many people place in the traditions and natural landscape afforded by the Androscoggin watershed.



c/o AVCOG
125 Manley Road
Auburn ME 04210

On the Web at andro-watershed.org

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