



Wheatley River Improvement Group

January, 2011

5 GREAT REASONS TO ATTEND THIS YEAR'S AGM

THURSDAY, JANUARY 20TH, 7:00 P.M., WHEATLEY RIVER HALL, (Storm date – January 27th)

1. Find out about exciting developments in our watershed from Chair, James Kemp and Coordinator Tracy Gallant.
2. Have your say on issues that matter to you and share your ideas with your neighbours.
3. Meet old friends and new residents who share your concerns.
4. Renew your WRIG membership and/or become a new member. WRIG needs you!
5. Learn *HOW ISLANDER'S PERCEIVE PEI'S FARMERS* from Guest Speaker and Rustico resident, Lorraine MacKinnon.



All watershed residents, WRIG corporate and individual members and fellow community groups are welcome to join us to learn of your watershed group's 2010 accomplishments, of the ongoing challenges we face, and to invite residents to become more involved as we plan for and work toward a restored, healthy and sustainable watershed community.

Extra added attraction this year is our special guest speaker, Rustico resident Lorraine MacKinnon, Agronomist and MBA Graduate of the University of Guelph. Her work and study has always involved direct relationships with farmers and her interests lie in the continued viability of PEI farms. Lorraine's remarks are taken from the recent report of her research, *"IN THE LIMELIGHT OR UNDER THE MICROSCOPE: HOW DO ISLANDER'S PERCEIVE PEI'S FARMERS?"* All of this plus refreshments too!

State of the River

A regular feature reporting on the health of our river.

Well, if there is anyone in our watershed who hasn't experienced the recent damage to our stretch of coastline as a result of heightened weather activity, we would be very surprised. A good many of us were out in the throes of the storms, hanging on and having a look around. How could you not be awed by the almost frightening extremes of nature. Experts tell us that these extreme weather patterns will continue to increase in both intensity and frequency so we would all be wise to prepare accordingly. Then again what the heck could one really have done? This is a lot bigger than any of us. It's what climate change and global warming look like!



Wheatley River five times its usual width. Wheatley River Bridge mere inches from submersion. Rusticoville Bridge closed with downstream reinforcements swept away. Oyster Bed Bridge closed for ten days with guardrails gone and stone gabions eroded to the pavement's edge. Climate change is more than an abstraction. It's here and our feet are getting wet. Our weather is getting warmer, rain and snowfall patterns are changing and sea level is rising.

The report, "CANADA IN A CHANGING CLIMATE" tells us that the Maritime Provinces will experience temperature and rainfall increases. Coastal communities will experience more frequent and stronger storms and the impact, along with rising sea levels and increased storm surges will make coastal areas more susceptible to erosion and infrastructure damage. The evidence suggests that there is sufficient knowledge to start adapting to climate change now. It has also been said that the cost of NOT adapting is greater than the cost of adapting. The goal is to be flexible enough to change as the climate changes. We need to make choices that help protect our 1800 km of shoreline (where we lose up to 2.5 meters annually to erosion) and to enact policies, land-use planning, bylaws, emergency measure operations plans, and community plans across the province. And we need to do this now.

Tracy Gallant, WRIG Coordinator

Letter from the Chair

I am sitting here, writing this letter as I watch the Canadian Junior Hockey team play the Gold Medal game and thinking how proud I am to be a Canadian, and how lucky I am to live here in Prince Edward Island. Sure, we lost the game, but at least we tried, and that is what life is all about... trying. The same applies to working with our watershed, we may not get everything we want, or as quickly as we want, but the important part is to keep trying. That is why I am so proud to be a small part of a tremendous group of individuals that are so committed to improving the environmental condition of our watershed. I personally would like to thank everyone that helped out during the past year, and challenge everyone to continue their support and hard work.

All around us we see the beauty of winter, and the land and streams appear to be at rest, but the recent storms certainly should reinforce the fact that the watershed is far from resting. So too, the Wheatley River Improvement Group is far from resting. This is the time of year that we have our Annual General Meeting, and a time for you to come out and show your support, or share your concerns with us.

Besides that, we have an extra special event planned for the end of the month – Partnering with the Hunter/Clyde Watershed Group and the PEI Model Forest Network we will be hosting a **WINTER WOODLOT TOUR AND WORKSHOP on the Buffalo Road on Jan. 29th**. This is a free and fun half day outdoor event where you are sure to learn something useful and interesting from the professionals leading the tours. You can step back in time to experience horses harvesting timber and old hands instructing how to tap maple trees. You might pick up some tips and tricks on maintaining your chainsaw and your woodlot, should you be so fortunate as to own one.

We would encourage all to come out and be a part of these upcoming events, and to hear of the exciting plans for the coming year.

2010 has been a tremendous success thanks to the efforts of many members of this watershed, and especially because of the efforts of those that established this group, but our work is not done and we still need the help of everyone living here.

WRIG is involved in many endeavors such as community and school environmental education programs for students from elementary to university, a unique pilot nitrate study, summer field work and stream improvements, trail development, riparian assessments and the list goes on. Some of these might be of interest to you and if you have expertise to share, we welcome it.

We would welcome anyone with suggestions or an interest in helping out, to contact us. But in any case, get out and enjoy the beauty of winter. We truly should be proud of the Wheatley River Watershed, and feel fortunate to be a part of it. Happy New Year!

James Kemp – WRIG Chair.

Wheatley River Pilot Nitrate/Nutrient Management Project – Next Steps

WRIG is very pleased to have been one of two watersheds targeted for the province's Pilot Nitrate Project. Our Board of Directors showed little hesitation in agreeing to participate in the management of this innovative project. It is good to see this constructive action taken in response to the concerns of

our communities over the deteriorating water quality in our bay, estuary and river.

WRIG's objective is to produce a draft nitrate reduction plan for our watershed that has the support of landowners, businesses, farmers and residents, a plan that will result in significant reduction of nitrate inputs, with the goal of **substantially reducing or eliminating anoxic events in our surface waters, and improving the quality of groundwater throughout the watershed.**

So far, we have worked on educating and familiarizing our steering committee with recommendations contained within the *2008 Report of Commission on Nitrates in Groundwater* and related recommendations in the *2009 Report of the Commission on Land and Local Governance*. We have also participated in education sessions conducted by the province's Technical Advisory Group made up of experts from DEEF, the PEI Federation of Agriculture and the PEI Department of Agriculture.

Now underway is the next important step in the process. Our steering committee is in the process of soliciting participants to form a *Nitrate Study Working Group*, comprised of local producers, business operators, residents, WRIG Board Members and staff. This working group, representing a cross section of stakeholder groups in our watershed, will work with a facilitator through a series of meetings over the course of the winter, in order to determine realistic targets for nitrate levels in the watershed, and propose means of achieving those targets.

We have engaged the highly qualified Rob Reddin to take on the role of facilitator. The process will include a series of four weekly meetings, **beginning Feb. 16**, followed by a full-day summary meeting to make additions and revisions to the draft plan.

At the end of March, WRIG hopes to present the draft Nitrates Plan for Wheatley River Watershed for discussion with our partners. Since public awareness of the result of this process will be a top priority, we have set the additional goal of developing and distributing a watershed resident's handbook to aid in implementation of the plan.

If you are a producer with an Environmental Farm Plan and are interested in joining our working group, we encourage you to contact WRIG as soon as possible and welcome your participation.

Contact Tracy Gallant – TraLou@pei.Sympatico.ca or call #963-2394 for more information or to enlist in the working group.

WINTER WOODLOT TOUR AND WORKSHOP

**Sat., Jan. 29, 9:00– Noon, (Storm date- Feb. 5^h)
Buffalo Road, Rustico. (Watch for the signs)**



Wheatley River watershed, along with the sub-watersheds adopted by WRIG, consists of 88.19 hectares. We have 21.9 % woodland with the rest of the area made up of 1.4% wetlands, 69.5% agricultural land and 7.2 % (and growing) residential land. Enhancing our woodland to increase biodiversity and protect our ground and surface water is a very good thing indeed.

Forests and small woodlots are essential to a healthy functioning watershed. Woodlands are home to wildlife populations as well as areas for the production of timber and non-timber forest products. Forested buffer zones hold our soil and protect our water.

An old proverb has it that, "*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago and the next best time, is right now.*" And "now", in fact, is a perfect time to learn more about preserving and enjoying private woodlots and public woodlands throughout PEI.

Join us for this free and fun winter event hosted by The Wheatley River Improvement Group, Hunter/Clyde Watershed Group, the PEI Model Forest Network Partnership and the PEI Department of Environment, Energy and Forestry's Wildlife and Forestry Division. You don't have to own a woodlot to participate, but small woodlot owners will find interesting and beneficial ideas.

Learn from forest technicians and wildlife experts about chainsaw maintenance, what to cut, where to cut and why, about our local population of coyotes and woodland animals in winter, and how to tap maple trees.



Learn how to make maple syrup. Tour a 25 year old white spruce plantation and witness the fascinating method of timber harvest using teams of Haflinger horses. Try snowshoeing. Enjoy a cup of Tim Horton's Hot Chocolate while experiencing PEI's beautiful woodland in winter.

For more information or directions please call:

Robert Chandler, PEI Model Forest Network Partnership at 368- 4803

Tracy Gallant, Wheatley River Improvement Group at 963-2390

Andrew Lush, Hunter/Clyde Watershed Group at 964-2272

Cory & Kerri, WRIG Interns

In conjunction with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Cory Zyla from western Canada and Kerri Wheatley from PEI have been working, first with WRIG and now with La Asociación Comunitaria Unida por el Agua y la Agricultura (ACUA) in El Salvador.

Kerri reports (in part):

"Who knew it was so cold in El Salvador? We have been here for approximately 6 weeks now, and it has only rained twice, at night. All of the projects at ACUA fall under one of three development programs: sustainable water resource management, environmental risk management, and sustainable agriculture. I will be working with all three main programs, as well as with the administration. Travelling to the neighboring communities has allowed me to see more clearly the different types of work which take place within our organization."

And Cory has this to say (in part):

"The focus of my work in El Salvador is two-fold: 1) the management of water resources and soils in the Estero San Diego Watershed and 2) making plans for current and potential risks (i.e. landslides, contamination of water, flooding).

The watershed covers an area of approximately 82 km², slightly larger than the 69 km² of the Wheatley River watershed. Many similarities exist between the two. For example, in both places it is understood that lasting change can only be achieved through community participation; conflicting interests exist between farmers, residents, government and industry; the actions of an individual or group in one part of the watershed are likely to have an impact on others in another part.

So far, the experience in El Salvador has been particularly positive and beneficial. I am looking forward to applying skills I have learned in Canada here in El Salvador and vice versa when I return."



www.WheatleyRiver.ca

Watch for changes and updates to our website at this new URL address. The upgraded site will be designed to engage members, residents and stakeholders in the Pilot Nitrate Management Project and in other issues that concern us all. It's under construction and coming soon!

WRIG Thanks

We are very proud of the concern and care our residents show for this watershed, as well as the support our group receives for the work we do. First we want to once again thank our funding supporters:

- PEI Department of Environment Energy and Forestry and each of its divisions
- PEI Wildlife Conservation Fund
- PEI Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

And as always, our membership, landowners, and the dynamic WRIG board who made 2010 another great year.

Please Consider Joining Our Membership

Individual or Family **\$10.00**
Corporate or Supporting **\$50.00**
Simply clip this out and mail it to:

The Wheatley River Improvement Group
c/o Pierre-Yves Daoust
RR #3 Hunter River, PE
COA 1N0

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____
Email - would you like to be notified about upcoming WRIG meetings and events? _____

YES _____ No Thanks _____

Please visit us online at...
WRIG.Blogspot.com