



Mill River Wetland Study Group *Newsletter*

VOLUME XXXI, NO. 1
June 2010



MRWSG Study Group Director's Report

It is good to be bringing out a newsletter again, after a two-year hiatus because of having had no one to take up the role so well-filled by our former editor, Mary Beth Colleran, who is now teaching full-time in Bridgeport.

It is also good to be presenting a newsletter filled with good news from the new Study Group Team formed by our Trainers, Scheduler and other program staff. This team has made the program run more smoothly with major changes they conceived and implemented to improve all aspects of our training and guiding on the River-Lab trails. The revised indoor and outdoor trainings were shorter, combining concept coverage with trail point explanation, as guides had requested. We cheer these steps forward that have stirred such immediate enthusiasm and gratitude from our guides. Revising the Gear Manager position so that one person handles the gear for all levels, and acquiring a larger gear storage space were also important helpful steps this year.

These valuable refinements are another vital step forward in the ongoing revision started in 2005 of the River-Lab classroom and trail materials, initiated and carried out by Anne Weinrod and her Curriculum Revision Team to more closely align the River-Lab curriculum to the State of Connecticut's new science standards. Teachers to whom we have spoken on the trails have told us that they love the new classroom materials and the way new classroom learning is reinforced by trail activities so carefully worked out by Anne and former Outdoor Trainer, Alex Moran.

Anne plans to complete this project next fall. A full tribute to her genius and generosity will be the focus of our December issue.

Our formerly frequent scheduling dilemmas due to weather uncertainties were almost completely resolved by developing a River-Lab "weather team" system. Using a weather website and with the help of Burr School guide El Wood for the Grade 5 trips, we came out with a 95% record of accurate weather advising for trips on all levels this year.

I am thrilled also to announce the decision of one of our most dedicated guides, Lynn Shavinsky, to join me as MRWSG Co-Director. She is a wonderful person, hard worker, and very enthusiastic about the program. It is going to be a pleasure to work more closely with her.

I would also like to acknowledge the great job done by all the School Captains in finding guides from their schools this year. Our decision to drop the former three-trip minimum and allow these volunteers to commit only to as many trips as they were able to fit into their personal schedules, plus the shortened training times, also encouraged enrollment.

Our December 16 Holiday luncheon at Perry's Mill was a warm and pleasurable event for all those able to attend. The food donated by Lucy's Kitchen and the Captains was a treat, and the gathering was a good opportunity for guides to get some answers to all the questions that stir in their minds as they view the Mill from the trails across the river.

Charlene Brauns-Schindler

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Indoor Trainer's Report 2009-2010

This year MRWSG training staff has been involved in adjusting the River-Lab Program materials 3-5 to more fully meet the needs of our volunteer guides. As times change these needs have changed. So we set about making the program more streamlined and easier to navigate. For some time, Amy Armstrong, MRWC Office Manager, has been using her unique vantage point as liaison between River-Lab guides and the program coordinators to collect comments and suggestions from Captains and guides. She targeted a need for improved communications and clarification of policies and procedures and took action! Early in the summer of 2009 she called together a group of guides—both experienced and new—for a lunch meeting. The feedback provided by Andrea Metzner, Colleen Barker, and Michelle Stearns, (and Lynn Goddard via e-mail) helped define our primary goal: to attract and retain guides by improving the River-Lab experience for them.

Our first task was to assemble a committed Study Group Team. As Indoor Trainer, I helped plan the strategy; Lenka Biardi came on board as Outdoor Trainer for all levels; and Colleen Barker agreed to take on scheduling for all levels. Rounding out the team was Cindy Leighton, taking on gear management. With Study Group Director Charlene Brauns-Schindler providing continuity and the broad perspective gained in her many years of dedication to MRWC and River-Lab, we were ready.



The team identified key challenges, divided up responsibilities and got to work. Gear Manager, Cindy, had arguably the messiest and most laborious job. Undaunted, she rolled up her sleeves and dug in! With the support of former Outdoor Trainer now Program Development Director Alex Moran, Charlene, and Amy A., Cindy located, repaired, cataloged, organized, replenished, and delivered gear for all levels. She demonstrated that being petite was no handicap in handling the big gear transport/storage van. Cindy's "at-your-service" attitude meant she got the job done with a smile and a kind word for everyone. Simply put, trips could not have run without her!

Lenka approached outdoor training with both her logical eye and unshakable sense of purpose. Realizing that small details make a big difference, she implemented a number of changes to make the trail system more navigable for guides. Placing flags at trail points, creating checklists and forms, and revising trail materials made guiding easier for the volunteers. (Guides loved the organism cards for RL3). She also put in place a set of procedures for structuring trainings and trips that made things easier for the program administrators. It has been a win-win!

Colleen certainly did not know what she was getting into when she agreed to come to lunch one day to chat about her first year guiding for RL5. She left with a job that would put her front and center among the guides at all grade levels. Building on the online-scheduling system piloted by Charlene in spring of 2009, Colleen committed herself to the daily challenge of staffing each and every River-Lab trip. She worked directly with guides and school Captains, listening to them, encouraging them, and addressing their concerns. She demonstrated a clear understanding that the new generation of volunteers needs communication and flexibility, and she provided both with a welcoming style that made guides feel appreciated. We will greatly miss Colleen as she moves on to a full-time job.

I had been Indoor Trainer for a year and had already started the process of streamlining training by spring 2009. After listening to feedback from guides, it became even clearer to me that they needed to be able to hit the trail with practical training and materials that required less preparation time in light of their busy family and work schedules. The trail cards introduced for Grades 3, 4, and 5 have been extremely well-received by guides—a major factor in easing up the at-home preparation time. "These cards are fabulous!" said long-time guide, Leslie Donahue—a sentiment we heard time and again. Look for more improvements to come as we continue to shorten and retool indoor training!

Perhaps our most significant improvement this year has been the revamping of the "river-lab.org" website. Guides now have a resource they can tap anytime for training information, FAQ's, forms, schedules...everything they need to be successful River-Lab guides. We hope this website—a work in progress—will make it easier to recruit guides and meet their needs along the way. Amy A. created an enormous amount of content which she deftly organized for this site. Her behind-the-scenes knowledge and grasp of the overall situation has been essential. She has continually reminded us all that, without guides, River-Lab is not possible. Amy DeLardi, a Fairfield parent and owner of Infinite Web Designs, has done a superb job of developing and maintaining this website.

The Study Group Team, with Charlene's leadership, has implemented these improvements in one short year, while maintaining the vision and integrity of the River-Lab Program as Joy Shaw conceived it. An empowered and collaborative group, we are dedicated to the program that means so much to us and to Fairfield's students. We invite you to join us.

A huge "thank you" is due all the guides who have helped and encouraged us along the way. It is the guides who are on the front lines and who most often come up with the best suggestions and solutions. This year alone, guides contributed the idea for RL4 vocabulary cards and adapted student observation sheets, along with many other sensible trail recommendations. We appreciate their time and dedication to River-Lab, and we will continue to try to make River-Lab work well for them.

Amy Borruso



Outdoor Guide Trainer's Report 2009-2010

The fall season got underway smoothly, thanks to our new Gear Manager, Cindy Leighton, and all of our guides—experienced and new. Cindy took on an enormous job of organizing, repairing, and replacing gear and tackled it fearlessly. She was our Gear Manager for all levels for the first time this year. Having one person dedicated to that task was a positive change in the organization of the study-trips themselves.

A few changes were made to the trail system. On all grade levels, new marker flags denoted each trail point—a request made by many guides over the past years. Specific changes to RL3 study-trips included vocabulary flash cards and a sing-a-long to help students memorize new words. This year, students were also using new, colorful organism photo cards on the trail in addition to some of the animal models.

The RL4 and the later RL3 study-trips finished with the weather cooperating nicely this fall, although we did have a few early, chilly mornings.

The RL5 spring program on the river got off to a stormy start. March storms wreaked havoc

on the trail and on the guide-training schedule for this level (See "Grade 5 River-Lab Guide Training" page 5.) The storms uprooted and felled very large trees along the trail and caused numerous days of flooding. Trainings were cancelled because the trail was not accessible. The excessive flooding brought Eroding Bend even more dangerously close to Sturges Road. We will all be watching to see how nature responds to these changes and how it will affect the look of the trail and the open space as time goes on.

After all this rain, later spring turned out to be beautiful. Although the study-trip format for RL6 involved many changes, both students and guides dealt with them positively.

Anne Weinrod and Alex Moran, with guidance from Fairfield Public School Math & Science Curriculum Leader, Walter Wakeman, implemented changes to the RL6 curriculum earlier this year which helped to make the study-trips more student-directed.

It has been a year of notable changes for River-Lab, as this program continues to evolve with the times and the challenges of nature.

Lenka Biardi

STUDY GROUP NEWS

Mill River Wetland Study Group 2009-2010

Officers

Director: Charlene Brauns-Schindler

Scheduler

RL3: Colleen Barker
RL4: Colleen Barker
RL5: Colleen Barker
RL6: Colleen Barker

Captains

Assumption: Charlene Brauns-Schindler
Burr: Martha Curtis
 Emily Price
 Ann Green
Dwight: Rachel Stott
Holland Hill: Jim Accomando
Holy Family: Kay Walshe
Jennings: Donna Walsh
McKinley: Margaret Diaz
Mill Hill: Amy deLannoy
N. Stratfield: Leann Ratner
Osborn Hill: Lynn Goddard
Riverfield: Malini Vyas
St. Thomas: Nancy Sargent
Sherman: Michelle Stearns
Stratfield: Mary Ellen McKee
 Lynn Shavinsky
Fairfield Woods: Mary Hogue
Ludlowe: Kathleen Stauffer
Tomlinson: Amy Dutter
 Lynn Kelly

Floater: *
 * Unfilled at press time

River-Lab Program Director: Joy Shaw
Director of Program Development: Anne Weinrod
Indoor Guide Trainer: Amy Borruso
Outdoor Guide Trainer: Lenka Biardi
Gear Manager: Cindy Leighton
Newsletter Editors: Joy Shaw, et al.

Web site: www.River-Lab.org
E-mail: River-Lab@juno.com

River-Lab Highlights

Summary:

During 2009-10 school year, 277 volunteers guided 540 study-teams. A total of 3,321 students participated in the River-Lab Program.

RL3 Study-Trip Leaders

Jim Accomando, Charlene Brauns-Schindler, Amy deLannoy, Karen Duffy, Warren Joblin, Reini Knorr, Peter Kraus, David McKinnis, Tricia Money, Ellie Pinson, Nancy Sargent, Dean Schneble, Lynn Shavinsky

RL4 Model Leaders

Lenka Biardi, Charlene Brauns-Schindler, Lisa Caramico, Amy deLannoy, Lynn Goddard, Reini Knorr, Tricia Money, Dean Schneble, Lynn Shavinsky, Deb Stapleton, Michelle Stearns

RL5 Floodplain Microscope Lab Leaders

Charlene Brauns-Schindler, Amy deLannoy, Mary Hogue, Kara Mead, Tricia Money, Ellie Pinson, Christine Sander, Dean Schneble, Jose Walewski

The dates for fall training are being worked out at this time, and we expect final information to be available to guides later this summer.
We hope that you all have a good summer and will want to either continue forward to another level or again guide the level you enjoyed this year.

Mill River Wetland Committee, Inc.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Officers

Holly Clancy, President
Charlene Brauns-Schindler, Vice-President
Martha Murphy, Treasurer
Jennifer Titrud, Recording Secretary

Members of the Board

Mary Blossfeld-Chung
Roberta Clark
Donna Gallo
Jason Helmbold
Jeanette McMahon
Diane Rossiter
Anne Weinrod

RIVER-LAB STATS SUMMARY FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2009-2010

| Level | # of Trips | # New Guides | # Experienced Guides | # Students | # of Guided Teams | # of Students/Team |
|---------------|------------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| RL3 | 45 | 74 | 26 | 894 | 203 | 4.4 |
| RL4 | 43 | 41 | 25 | 898 | 164 | 5.5 |
| RL5F | 45 | 49 | 26 | 912 | 129 | 7.0 |
| RL6 | 12 | 32 | 4 | 617 | 44 | 14.0 |
| TOTALS | 145 | 196 | 81 | 3,321 | 540 | 7.7 |

GIFT PLANNING FOR MRWC

MRWSG's financial needs are met by MRWC, Inc.

Does your will include the Mill River Wetland Committee? Please contact (203) 259-1847 or e-mail River-Lab@juno.com for more information on how you can **leave your legacy.**

Grade 5 River-Lab Guide Training 2009-2010

Editor's Note: This column is contributed by the guide volunteer who substituted for the regular, all-levels Outdoor Guide Trainer when she was on a trip abroad

The parent volunteer guide training for River-Lab 5 was revamped in a number of ways in 2010. Lenka Biardi, our regular all-levels Outdoor Trainer, along with the MRWSG Team, sought to make training very trainee-friendly. They made all training and trail materials available online and marked all trail points with color-coded flags that corresponded to the color-coded guide trail material. In addition, each guide's backpack included a set of trail cards with information to be used by students and a second set of trail cards with more in-depth information to be used by the guides. Even with background information minimized, each guide was able to lead a student team through a designated set of trail points with adequate instruction for their performance of the learning activities. This was very comforting and empowering for many guides who had previously felt overwhelmed by the wealth of background information and their lack of adequate time to internalize it all.



Spring rainstorm scene, March 30 at 9:34 a.m., cancelled second day of RL5 guide training: Photo by Reini Knorr, looking up the flooding river toward Sturges Road Bridge from the parking lot by the pump station.

The outdoor training sessions had a rocky start as Mother Nature dealt us a series of wildly destructive spring rainstorms. Nearly every outdoor training date had to be rescheduled, but six hardy souls did brave the inclement weather, wading through boot-high water to learn the trail points. In this manner, we conducted six outdoor training sessions with a total of 52 guides attending. The RL5 training focused mainly on identifying the trail points and mastering the procedures of taking the

water samples, as well as measuring the water-flow rate and being able to see and observe closely the organisms being studied by the students. A major focus was also on how to keep the students' attention and turn the study-trip into a shared experience that allowed them to be fully active participants. The two sets of trail cards proved incredibly valuable in achieving that goal. The guides who participated in the trainings were highly motivated. Many said that their appreciation for the river basin system was raised to yet another level.

Reini Knorr

Gear Manager's Report 2009-2010

A major accomplishment this year has been bringing all of the gear for RL3, 4, 5 and 6 under one roof. Until this year, it had been stored in a variety of different places. Now it is all together and organized by grade on shelves in a new storage unit at Westy's. There is even space enough in the larger unit (approved by the Board in the spring) for a small work area where the gear can be pulled together prior to the start of each level.

The fact that the gear function has been centralized, that gear is organized in one place, and that there is a manager designated as responsible for it on an ongoing basis, has two main benefits. It frees River-Lab staff to focus on their primary responsibilities and helps ensure that our volunteer

guides are consistently and reliably provided with the necessary trip equipment. Other benefits are that the gear is now readily accessible, in good repair, and therefore easier for successive gear managers to manage.

In summary, getting control of the gear has made the trips run more smoothly, which has generated a lot of good will. Together with all other positive changes that have taken place this year, the new and improved gear-handling ensures that River-Lab will continue operating at its best possible level for many years to come.

Cindy Leighton

Trails Chairman's Report 2009-2010

The Fairfield Conservation Department needed only a call from Study Group Director, Charlene Brauns-Schindler, to get their open space crew over to the River-Lab area to tend major trail clearing needs. They handily cut a path through the roughly 3-foot diameter Catalpa uprooted and laid across our Excavated Road trail, and likewise dealt with the maple felled alongside by the major winds and flooding events of last April. This response was well in time for our spring RL5 guide training schedule and greatly appreciated. (See Scheduler's Report, Page 11.) Trail-trimming capacities relied on in spring of 2009 to prepare for RL5 use were not quite up to the challenges laid before us by the April 2010 storms!

Closeness to the trails that this position allows has prompted the following thoughts to be shared:

We humans impact the trails and grounds about us even in the River-Lab study area on Mill River.

As we walk and talk on the trails where we learn and teach about a river system, we do not think about the way that nature takes care of our trails.

...a carpet of leaves in fall to help us slip-slide along on our third and fourth grade trips...

...washing the trails clean with tumultuous spring floods...

...drying everything off in summer...

...sending enrichments from the river system to the estuaries and Long Island Sound...

...establishing the land again as long as we leave it alone...

As we enjoy these trails, we need to remain respectful of our intrusive presence, taking only pictures and leaving only footprints.

Tyge (Mark Tygesen)

MRWSG's New Co-Director

Lynn Shavinsky, who has volunteered to take on MRWSG Co-Directorship with Charlene, joined us as both guide and Stratfield Captain in fall of 2008. She has guided at all levels over the past two years and remained Captain for this past academic year.

She shares with us some snapshots of her guiding experience.

"I was nervous...would they pay attention? Would they ask me things I did not know? Would they even care about what I was discussing?... The bus pulled up, I took a breath, smiled, and said, 'Hi, Class. Welcome to the Mill River Lab program,' and off we went. We walked through muddy trails with squeals...talked about animals so small the students had to squint to see them...and watched a group of ducks paddling as hard as they could to get out of the swollen river current. The group argued over who would take a sample, carry a bucket, even toss a stick to measure the rate of flow between poles. Then amazingly, we were running to the bus...with lots of 'awww, I don't want to go' or 'this was so cool!' It was over. The hour had flown by. I knew more than I thought I did, and my group really did have a great experience. They left and I left feeling that we had been a part of something good that would stick with us in many ways for years to come..."

Lynn's selected trip highlights.

Stratfield Grade 4: The rain. There is nothing more fun than for students to make it rain on the runoff model. There is never a frown or dry sleeve in the group.

Stratfield Grade 5: The tree. After the huge windstorm (spring '10), the power of nature was seen in the root ball of a healthy tree pulled up along the path.

Osborn Hill Grade 5: The hydra. The teacher had challenged the students to find one in their samples. When they did they were so excited they paraded every other class in to take a look. It was for them like the discovery of a new species!

STUDY GROUP AWARDS & RECOGNITIONS

The following were recognized for their guiding contributions during the 2008-2009 school year.



5-YEAR KINGFISHER PIN RECIPIENTS (Badge recipient with a minimum of 5 years service and 30 study- trips.)

DOREEN BAKER joined in 1995 as a Riverfield guide and has led 38.5 study-trips. She was awarded her badge in June 2009.

LESLIE DONAHUE, an Osborn Hill guide since 2001, has guided 31.5 study-trips. She received her badge in June 2005.

ANDREA METZNER has led 31.5 study-trips since she began guiding for Dwight School in 2002. She was awarded her badge in June 2006.

KINGFISHER BADGE RECIPIENTS (Fully- trained guide with 3 study-trips per level and a minimum of 10 study-trips.)

MICHELE AUTORE started guiding in 2002 for Sherman School. She has led 16 study-trips.

DOREEN BAKER, See 5-Year Kingfisher Pin.

ANN MARIE BRUCIA, began guiding for Riverfield School in 2002 and has led 26 study-trips.

LOUISA CORELL, a North Stratfield guide, has led 18.5 study-trips since joining River-Lab in 2002.

AMY LUCIANO started guiding in 2001 for Stratfield School. She has led 18.5 study-trips.

MICHELE SNAPPER has guided 20.5 study-trips. She started guiding for North Stratfield School in 2002.

ADDITIONAL RECOGNITIONS — Top Scoring Guides

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Charlene Brauns-Schindler | 24 study-trips | Tricia Money | 36 study-trips |
| Lynn Goddard | 21 study-trips | Denise Spencer | 23 study-trips |
| Reini Knorr | 27 study-trips | Mark Tygesen | 47 study-trips |

The following were recognized for their guiding contributions during the 2009-2010 school year



15-YEAR GOLD KINGFISHER PIN RECIPIENT (Badge, 5-Year Pin and 10-Year Pendant recipient with a minimum of 15 years service and 96 trips.)

ANNE WEINROD began guiding in 1990 at Stratfield and North Stratfield. She earned her badge in 1996, her 5-Year Kingfisher Pin in 1998, and her 10-Year Kingfisher Pendant in 2003 with 125.5 study-trips.

5-YEAR KINGFISHER PIN RECIPIENT (Badge recipient with minimum of 5 years service and 30 trips.)

AMY deLANNOY joined as a guide from Mill Hill in 2005. She has guided 38 study-trips and was also awarded a Badge this year.

LYNN GODDARD has led 61.5 study-trips since joining as a guide from Osborn Hill in 2005. She also received her Badge in 2010.

REINI KNORR started guiding in 2005 for Stratfield School, also earning her Badge in 2010 with 63 study-trips.

MICHELE ONOFRIO, an Osborn Hill guide since 2004, has led 32 study-trips. She earned her Badge this year.

KIM PALMER began guiding for Dwight in 2004. She has led 31.5 study-trips and received her Badge in 2008.

MARK TYGESEN joined as a Mill Hill guide in 2005. He earned a Badge in 2007 and has led 144.5 study-trips.

KINGFISHER BADGE RECIPIENTS (Fully- trained guide with 3 study-trips per level and a minimum of 10 study-trips.)

MEGAN BOCHANIS started guiding in 2005 as a Mill Hill guide and has guided 15 study-trips.

KATE CROARKIN has led 11 study-trips since she began guiding for North Stratfield in 2006.

PAM DALE joined as a guide from Dwight in 2004. She has led 17.5 study-trips.

AMY deLANNOY See 5-Year Kingfisher Pin

MARILYN DONAHOE, a Burr guide, has led 26 study-trips since she joined in 2005.

AMY DUTTER began guiding for Mill Hill in 2004 and has led 15.5 study-trips.

MARY HOGUE joined in 2004 and has guided 24.5 study-trips.

MAUREEN KANE started guiding in 2003 as a guide from Riverfield and has led 22.5 study-trips.

REINI KNORR See 5-Year Kingfisher Pin

LAURA MALONEY has led 20.5 study-trips since joining as a guide from Burr in 2003.

CINDY MCHUGH joined as a guide from St. Thomas in 2000 and has led 22 study-trips.

MARY ELLEN MCKEE, a Stratfield guide, has led 27 study-trips since she joined in 2005.

(continued on page 8)

KINGFISHER BADGE RECIPIENTS (CONTINUED)

HETTY NEROD has guided 20 study-trips since joining as a Dwight guide in 2005.

MICHELE ONOFRIO See 5-Year Kingfisher Pin

LISA PERRET joined in 2003 as a guide for Jennings and has led 13 study-trips.

NANCY SARGENT began guiding for St. Thomas in 2006 and has led 17 study-trips.

LYNN SHAVINSKY started as a Stratfield guide in 2008 and has since guided 38 study-trips.

KATHLEEN STAUFFER joined in 2006 from Stratfield and has led 19 study-trips.

KATIE TRAYNOR, a St. Thomas guide, has led 12 study-trips since joining in 2006.

DONNA WALSH began guiding for Jennings in 2006 and has led 23 study-trips.

ADDITIONAL RECOGNITIONS — Top Scoring Guides

| | |
|----------------|----------------|
| Tricia Money | 23 study-trips |
| Lynn Shavinsky | 24 study-trips |
| Mark Tygesen | 41 study-trips |

2009-2010 River-Lab Guides

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Maureen Abrahamson | Ellen Dunn | Virginia Korzilius | Sharon Pistilli |
| Jim Accomando | Amy Dutter | Peter Kraus | Peter Porazzo |
| Masuma Ali | Patti Dyer | Ed Kuryluk | Scott Powell |
| Alejandra Arana | Amber Egervari | Sara Kwon | Emily Price |
| Mary Baker | Mark Elletson | Jennifer LaFalce | Moira Price |
| Steve Baker | Erol Eyikan | Suzanne Laginestra | Sydney Raha |
| Colleen Barker | Barb Fallon | Eileen Landry | Leann Ratner |
| Karen Bassett | Johanna Farrell | Carol Langeland | Linda Raymond |
| Jill Bebey | Vicki Ferrara-Loris | Lauren Lanham | Kelly Reed |
| Jane Becker | Chris Fellows | Randi Lauro | Debbie Reynolds |
| Jim Biardi | Shane Fisher | Laura Lawlor | Tracy Roberts |
| Lenka Biardi | Tom Fitzpatrick | Cindy Leighton | Steven Rodier |
| Jennifer Biondo | Susan Fora | Michael Lengel | Emmett Ryan |
| Wendy Bleggi | Tara Forrest | Colleen Lerman | Patti Salazar |
| Megan Bochanis | Nancy Fox | Kim Lindstrom | Christine Sander |
| Sarah Boccarossa | Alyssa French | Deborah Lipschitz | Nancy Sargent |
| Amy Borruso | Nicola Fuller | Dawn Llewellyn | Laurie Schmidt |
| Charlene Brauns-Schindler | Kristin Galletta | Karen Lynch | Dean Schneble |
| Janet Brogan | Sarah Galluzzo | Liz Lyons | Missy Schramm |
| Eileen Brown | Deb Garskof | Leah Malloy | Liz Schwinn |
| Susie Byrne | Jenny Gillis | Robert Martin | Lynn Shavinsky |
| Renee Caiola | Lynn Goddard | Tammy Martin | Brian Sikorski |
| Diane Capasso | Chris Gombos | Christine Masi | Janice Sikorski |
| Lisa Caramico | Julie Gottlieb | Stephanie Mastino | Olivia Sims |
| Robert Caramore | Marjorie Glass | Paul McCarthy | Renata Singh |
| Tabitha Carter | Ann Green | Tom McCay | Hillary Sollinger |
| Nicole Cassidy | Catherine Groell | Kelly McGovern | Sam Sorrentino |
| Kathleen Chandler | David Gunn | Mary Ellen McKee | Ann Spinka |
| Aimee Chartier | Akshay Gupta | David McKinnis | Ken Spinka |
| Taryn Cholakian | Marnee Harke | Jennifer McLaughlin | Deb Stapleton |
| Teresa Cole | Ashley Harris | Kara Mead | Marianne Starrett |
| Annie Coolidge | Cheryl Heinzman | Claudine Mears | Kathleen Stauffer |
| Sue Coyne | Jen Hinkle | Michael Meehan | Michelle Stearns |
| Diane Creamer | Amy Hios | Anne Mele | Rachel Stott |
| Kate Croarkin | Mary Hogue | Ana Mezei | Stacey Sullivan |
| Susan Cronin | Kim Hoover | Fran Milici | Subha Sunder |
| Martha Curtis | Holli Horine | Kathy Mills | Eileen Tarney |
| Pam Dale | Christine Howard | Caryn Mirgorodsky | Martha Terry |
| Lisa Damp | Chris Huckins | Steve Miserocchi | Missy Townsend |
| Patti DaSilva | Ava Hunter | Monica Moeser | Angela Toner |
| Meg Day | Sofia Ibanez | Tricia Money | Katie Traynor |
| Zsuzsanna Deer | Dina Inchoco | Colleen Murphy | Mark Tygesen |
| Amy deLannoy | Mike Jehle | Linda Murphy | Cristin Vahey |
| Deanna DelPrete-Bookas | Christine Jefremov | Bridie Murray | Caroline Vella |
| Erika Deutschlander | Warren Joblin | Hetty Nerod | Bernie Verghese |
| Ann Devine | Karen Johns | Laurie Nilson | Jose Walewski |
| Kerri Devine | Molly Johnson | Nadine Nizet | Donna Walsh |
| Margaret Diaz | Jill Kellerman | Gwen Noto | Desiree Walton |
| Eric Dieffenbach | Lori Kempton | Katie O'Grady | Bob Westervelt |
| Debbie Dies | Emily Kerns | Kate O'Mahony | Michele Whelan |
| Jon Dilley | Teresa Kerrigan | Jane Oravec | Christyn Whitney |
| Maria DiPierro | Alicia Kennedy | Christy Ottaviano-Ohe | Rebecca Williams |
| Dana Donahue | Maureen Kiernan | Kim Palmer | Cathy Winter |
| Leslie Donahue | Guylaine Kinney | Marc Patten | El Wood |
| Trish Donelan | Reini Knorr | Gretchen Patterson | Kate Worrell |
| Dinal Doshi | Tricia Korbl | Robin Phillips | |
| Karen Duffy | | Ellie Pinson | |

Curriculum Development Report 2009-2010

In our quest to provide a quality environmental science curriculum that meets the needs of students, teachers, and guides, the Curriculum Writing Team was hard at work again this school year revising the previously revised Grade 6 study-trip. The content remained much the same (plus four added activities) but was rewritten so that each trail point could be done by students with minimal input by guides. This structure requires students to be responsible for gathering of the data, encourages ownership of the procedure, and allows the student to be “scientists”, using the discovery process. This structure also requires fewer adults than an elementary River-Lab study-trip—a plus for the busy lives of our volunteers. This format is a departure from the traditional way that students experienced a River-Lab study-trip and the way in which River-Lab guides interfaced with students.

This new direction required the Curriculum Writing Team to put themselves in the position of the student. Directions had to be step-wise and very clear as to what the students were to do at each trail point. Each site’s tasks had to be able to be done in less than fifteen minutes, but yet each site had to have enough to do to keep students engaged. We replaced the term “trail point” with “discovery site” to further foster the idea that students were to make a discovery about the estuary at each site. In their classrooms during their study of the unit, students were prepared by their teachers on both content and skills necessary to work in a small group (2-4) independently of an adult.

Training for the guides was focused on the procedures students would be using, so that guides could help the students problem-solve during the study-trip. At indoor training, guides were given an overview of the content and how it related to the many activities students would be performing. The guides were also shown the gear to be used at each trail point. At outdoor training, Lenka Biardi, the Outdoor Trainer, had guides performing the trail points as if they were students.

An added burden both financially and logistically for River-Lab was the amount of gear required to carry out the study-trip. Fortunately, we had hired a Gear Manager, Cindy Leighton, earlier in the year, and she ordered and organized the gear. We had to hire Study Group Director Charlene Brauns-Schindler as an assistant for this level, because it was impossible for Cindy to be at two estuaries at once.

Generally, this new RL6 format worked well. Guides understood their new role, and, as parents of middle-schoolers, they appreciated that their students were working independently to gather data. Students were engaged and “doing quality science,” as reported by Walter Wakeman, the Math and Science Curriculum Leader for the Fairfield Public Schools, after he had gone out to view students during a study-trip. As with any new format, various adjustments will continue to be made. These will be completed in time for the River-Lab 6 study-trips next spring.

Anne K. Weinrod

PINSON FIRST TO ACHIEVE 20 YEARS SERVICE

At the 2008 Volunteer Appreciation Picnic on June 4, Ellie Pinson was recognized for **twenty years service** as a River-Lab guide. Ellie is the first person to have achieved this length of service. She joined MRWSG as a River-Lab guide in 1988, received her Kingfisher Badge in June 1990, her 5-Year Kingfisher Pin in June 1993, and her 10-Year Kingfisher Pendant in June 1998. When she was awarded her 15-Year Kingfisher Pin in June 2003, she was one of only six guides who had achieved that mark in the thirty-six years of the River-Lab Program.

Ellie has logged **532 River-Lab study-trips** as a guide, as Demonstration Station Operator (for the RL6 winter unit currently displaced by the No Child Left Behind requirements), and as Lab Leader for RL5 spring unit. She also served as our technician in producing numerous river basin models, designed by Joy Shaw for use in RL3 classrooms to introduce students to the parts of a river basin system.

Throughout past years, Ellie has repeatedly stepped up to do whatever was needed for River-Lab and/or MRWC. Whether she is working with students in the River-Lab Program, volunteering for MRWC fundraising activities, or providing advice and guidance for other volunteer guides, Ellie has been a major part of the success of River-Lab for twenty years.

MOORE 2008 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



Diane Rossiter presenting Ellen Moore with the 2008 "Volunteer of the Year" award.

Ellen Moore was honored as the 2008 Volunteer of the Year. Ellen's service to River-Lab began in September 1988 as a guide from Riverfield Elementary School. She received her Kingfisher Badge in June 1990, her 5-Year Kingfisher Pin in June 1993, and her 10-Year Kingfisher Pendant in June 1998, with a total of 258 study-trips.

Ellen served as a River-Lab Scheduler, School Captain and Outdoor Guide Trainer and as a member of the MRWC Board of Directors in 1995 and 2000.

Study Group Director, Brauns-Schindler, Marks 20-Years of MRWSG/MRWC Service

Charlene joined the Mill River Wetland Study Group as a guide in the fall of 1989 and has not been without a significant administrative responsibility in this organization since that time. Whenever there was no one in line to take on an essential position, whether School Captain, Scheduler, MRWSG Director—even MRWC President—Charlene would make herself available and be gratefully received in the necessary role. She has twice served as MRWSG Director, the title she presently holds along with the Vice-Presidency of the Mill River Wetland Committee.

Charlene earned her Kingfisher Badge in 1994, her 5-Year Kingfisher Pin in 1995, her 10-Year Kingfisher Pendant in 2000, and her 15-Year gold Kingfisher Pin in 2004. She has guided 498 River-Lab study-trips.

To say that Charlene is a mainstay of this program is putting it mildly. As Curriculum Development Director Anne Weinrod has noted, Charlene has been especially appreciated for her unfailing smiling responses in all matters and her genuine kindness. In honor of her twenty years of service, we are in the process of designing a new (and useful) commemorative award. We will have it to present to her at our December "Holiday" luncheon, at which we hope to have a strong attendance by our guides to cheer her achievement.

River-Lab 2009-2010 Scheduler's Report

From this Scheduler's perspective, the 2009-2010 highlights come from those volunteer guides who were willing and able to dedicate their time and talent to doing multiple study-trips. This year's program owes a huge debt of gratitude to Charlene Brauns-Schindler, Tyge, and Tricia Money for the multitude of times they guided, study-trip led, model led, and lab led. (See guiding statistics, page 4.) Their dedication was a major part of the success of this year's program.

We completed the shift to an online scheduling calendar this year. This system was tested for RL6 in spring of 2009. Charlene designed a Yahoo calendar and explained how to manage it. This calendar was terrific in that it allowed anyone involved to see all the details of each study-trip whenever he or she needed to. It gave guides and Captains the ability to schedule themselves at home with their family calendars. Many of us found this system essential. Its use was not, however, as widespread as hoped for. This may simply be because it is a new system that will take some time for everyone to catch on to using. In staffing the study-trips, this Scheduler relied completely upon the school Captains. They recruited all the guides, communicated their training dates, and compiled and sent detailed information to the teachers and to this Scheduler, making my job easier. Amy deLannoy, the Mill Hill Captain, executed this role magnificently. She deserves a memorable highlighting in this year's report.

The RL6 program was completely revamped. The changes were enormously effective but complex. This Scheduler could not quite picture how it was all going to work, but, with Alex Moran's help, a trip-planning sheet was designed that mapped out "zones" and helped get all guides assigned to their specific zones. It was a beautiful sight when it all came together.

It was a privilege to be part of this program this past school year. It amazes me how many good people come together to make this program the success it is. It is a far bigger operation than I ever realized. Each person's involvement is in depth and asks a lot of him or her. There is no room for slackers at any level! Knowing that the resulting effect is in the way all those young students are helped to see nature and their surrounding backyards as important, valuable, and in need of their care and protection is the most important aspect of the program for me.

Colleen Barker



