

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Current Issue Summary 2008

Coach: Brian Dempsey

Acton is a large town with a population of around 20,000. There are several recreational areas in town, but only one is diverse enough to be widely used. Nara Park is the most publicly used recreation area. There are two soccer fields for casual games. There is also a man-made pond where Community Education offers swim lessons and families can relax on the beach. Many adults use the mile and a half trail to run or walk for exercise. There is also a playground for small children, and an outdoor stage for music concerts, movies, and town festivals. The hill is also used for fireworks on the fourth of July. Nara Park is built on an old landfill, so it is an efficient use of town land and resource management. It is the most dynamic recreation area in town. The others are specified and generally unused.

We chose to focus on the Acton Arboretum because we felt it had the highest potential for improvement. Acton's Open Space and Reaction Plan already affects many of Acton's recreation areas, but the Arboretum is not included in these plans. Additionally, on team visits to the Arboretum, people were scarce, despite the nice weather. With over two miles of trails, a bog, a picnic area, an herb garden, several ponds, and an esker, it surprised us that such beautiful space was not busy with people enjoying the day. In fact, the only people we encountered were a couple walking their dog and a group of teenagers eating pizza on the worn down picnic tables. And after Mo stepped on dog droppings, we found ourselves carefully inspecting the ground instead of enjoying nature. Clearly this space is underappreciated.

Cathy Fochman, president of the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, described recent developments and expansion, including the production of self guided tours. The pamphlets have maps with numbered labels that correspond to different ecosystems along the trails, and there is a short description of each spot. She also explained environmental issues with the Arboretum not related to use. Several areas are infested with invasive species, such as Multi-flora-rose, Purple Loosestrife, and Norway Maples. In addition, some of the bridges and boardwalks are deteriorating with time.

We began to look for ways to solve these issues. First, we devised a way to spread publicity about the Arboretum and its attractions. We would like to build off the Arboretum pocket packs by creating a series of online podcasts to accompany the pamphlets. These podcasts would feature one ecosystem per episode and describe its features more in depth, describing wildlife and specific features. We feel this would be an easy way for many to enjoy the area and publicize the resources the Arboretum has to offer. In addition, we want to establish letterboxing within the 53 acres. Letterboxing would be similar to geocaching, but instead of using a GPS, directions to the box could be found online. Each box would be hidden near a different ecosystem and contain related materials, such as small books explaining the habitat or fun activities to try, in addition to stamps for kids to collect. These interactive activities would motivate kids to come to the Arboretum.

Another solution to the weaknesses of the Arboretum is to organize and provide community service opportunities to students. Many colleges look for individuals who are involved in the community, and teens are always looking for way to boost their hours. If groups of high school or junior high kids volunteered to clear out loosestrife, or repair walkways, or even to clean up dog waste, the Arboretum would benefit from their efforts, and more kids would be outside

Of all the recreation areas in Acton, the Arboretum has the most room for improvement. Acton's plans for recreation don't consider the Arboretum, and yet there are many issues with the Arboretum: It lacks publicity, it has dog feces on the ground, and it has invasive species. Solving these problems requires a long-term plan, and as a team, we have schemed a podcast system and a letterboxing system as first steps. We hope to inspire

Acton's citizens and take steps to remedy Acton's nature deficit disorder.

Ashland High School

Coach: Christine Scott

Team: Caroline Correia, Gabbi Tetschner, Pete Cunningham, Kayla Thornquist, Carl Mueller

Ashland is a small town in Middlesex County of Massachusetts with a population of around 15,000. The town is located 22 miles southwest of Boston and is a primarily residential suburban area. Ashland is 12.9 square miles and 12.4 square miles of the town is land the remaining .5 square miles is water sources throughout. Ashland is located on the Sudbury River which supplies many of the bodies of water in the area. The Nyanza Superfund Site is also located in our town, and has caused several problems with contamination of water in our area.

The town of Ashland is home to many outdoor recreational facilities. Northeastern University Warren Center has a dog park complete with tennis courts. Bodies of water in Ashland include Reservoir Pond, Cold Spring Pond, Ashland Reservoir, Hopkinton Reservoir (state park, swimming pool), Sudbury River Reservoir, Indian Brook, Cold Spring Brook, Stone Park, Ashland State Park and part of Hopkinton State Park. The town also has many sports fields located at all public schools in the town. Pittaway School has an outdoor playground; Warren School has two baseball fields, two soccer fields and a playground; the Mindess School has one soccer field, one softball field and a playground; the Middle School has four tennis courts, and one softball field. Gyncel Park has two baseball fields, while the Ashland recreation Center has one soccer/lacrosse field.

Our class conducted a survey to see what people in Ashland do for outdoor activities. The top three forms of recreation were skiing, fishing and golfing, but do to the lack of open space areas for those activities, people go outside of Ashland to participate. The majority of the people answered that space was the largest problem followed by laws and restrictions and also distance abiding to their outdoor recreation. A question on the survey asked the people whether they would participate in these activities if they were provided in Ashland, and everyone replied "yes". The most popular activity in the survey that can be done in Ashland currently was fishing, so the group decided to focus our project on promoting and assisting fishing in Ashland.

To help promote the outdoor spaces that are available in Ashland our group decided to make products that display the options Ashland residents have with outdoor recreation. We initially wanted to sell travel mugs for coffee to branch off of our project last year which looked at the Styrofoam coffee cups being used at local coffee shops. Last year we looked at using reusable products for our daily activities. However it was harder to find a supplier for travel mugs so we decided to sell other reusable product shopping bags. Currently there is a movement in grocery stores and retail stores to promote reusable bags, so the group felt this would be a great opportunity for us. The bags were made on cafepress.com. There we were able to put two images on the shopping bags, one a map of Ashland with icons that indicate what type of activities can be done in certain areas throughout Ashland, on the other we used a simple logo for the bags.

With these tubes there will be a dramatic change in and around the areas where these tubes are put up. The tubes are composed of a 2 foot piece of PVC, an elbow, and a screw off bottom too allow easier access to the line. The tubes are an easy way to recycle and eliminate the amount of fishing line that is discarded on the shores of our local fishing areas. This fishing line can wind up in many bad places like nests of almost every bird, duck bills, and in the gills of every type of fish. I talked to many supervisors of multiple state parks like, Hopkinton State Park and Cochituate State Park, and I am working on getting them in Ashland state park. The fishing line after collected is placed in a pre packaged box which is then shipped to Berkley fishing Line Company where it is melted down and made back into plastic bates and tackle boxes. I talked to the supervisor at Hopkinton State Park and he agreed to take over the responsibilities of the tubes when there is no one left to take care of them at Ashland high school. And right now the only place that has these tubes is Hopkinton state park.

Once the reusable shopping bags are manufactured we plan to sell them at various locations around Ashland at specific times through out the year including Earth Day and Ashland Day. Also, to proceed with the fishing line

project Pete will be taking care of the stations at the three locations until he goes to college. At that time the Ashland and Hopkinton State Park director Jim will take over and care for the fishing line collection stations. Overall, we feel that by taking these measures we can greatly impact and promote the health of our local environment in Ashland.

Barnstable High School

Coach: David Gorrill

We are the Barnstable High School team from Barnstable, Massachusetts. Our project took place in the town of Barnstable which includes the villages of Osterville, Centerville, Cotuit, Marstons Mills, Hyannis, West Barnstable, and Barnstable Village. For our project we identified misuse of conservation areas with unauthorized trail blazing and garbage dumping. Our main example of this is West Barnstable Conservation Area; an 1114 acre wooded area with fifteen miles of documented trails. Through meeting with many different people we came to the conclusion that the best way to bring excessive trail blazing and garbage dumping to an end would be to organize a volunteer group that would record unauthorized trails and fix them; like a trail maintenance crew.

We went about our current issue research by contacting and meeting with people within the Town of Barnstable; like Eric Strauss, Heather McElroy, Scott Blazis, and Jonathan Way. We explored the Trail of Tears in West Barnstable Conservation Area as well as the whole of West Barnstable Conservation..

Throughout this year we have learned many things. For instance, we all learned how to measure trees with a hypsometer, do dissolved oxygen and nitrogen tests, identify soil profiles, and studied animal skulls. We also learned that hard way that if you want something done, you have to do it yourself due to some difficulty in collecting surveys.

We are writing this report as a group the Thursday before the Envirothon, and we have found that we still have much to do. We still have to assemble our poster, practice what we're going to say, and review our wildlife, forestry, and soil information.

Overall, we've had a ton of fun this year researching and studying for the Envirothon, and we are definitely going to miss our weekly group meetings, coach, explorations, and learning.

**David Prouty High School
from Spencer & East Brookfield**

Summary by team member Alisha LeBlanc

Coach: Mary McLaughlin

Summary of Issue: The town of Spencer has not taken advantage of and publicized its beautiful trails. We propose that the town and its residents take a special interest in locating and mapping these trails and enjoy nature.

At the beginning of the Envirothon season, do you remember what a soil chart is? I pause and cock my head to the side too. Let's not forget the new members who are looking at the Coach like they have six heads. I think that's how every year starts, no matter how long you've been on the team. This year was full of opportunities to explore our community through hiking, despite the crazy weather. This is mainly how we studied our issue; we took personal hikes of the trails we were going to discuss. Personally, it was the first time I've ever been hiking and it may have been for some of the others. Tip: always wear comfortable and sturdy shoes, it is totally worth it. The group had the chance to meet a number of residents of Spencer who were long-time residents and very knowledgeable about the specific trails. Despite the active approach we took to studying our recreation project, there was never enough time during the last week. May is always a busy month for students with proms and sports and the beautiful weather distracting everyone. It was very hard at times to keep everyone on project when you're trying to finish your presentation astutely in so little time. I think that's really when your nerves get grated. I think if we had the chance, our group would like to have planned things out in a more timely fashion so that when this last week came, we would totally feel comfortable and prepared because sometimes one would feel like, "What are we talking about again?" But, as always, a strong group always pulls it together in the end.

**Doherty High School
Worcester**

ENVIROTHON STORY 2008

Coach: Stacey Hill

Two-sentence Current Issue Summary:

In Worcester, there are a great number of recreational opportunities but not enough people taking advantage of them and not enough funding to support them. To address this, we plan to organize an “Evening in the Parks” program during which local families will spend an evening outside participating in nature and fitness activities.

The rest of our story:

PLACES

As part of Envirothon preparations, we’ve visited many places. First, we went to Newton Hill and hiked and learned about its history. Then we took the city bus to the Cascades, where we met with a man who taught us about the Cascades and helped us in our quest to master tree identification. Following our visit to the Cascades, a few team members got together and hiked Boynton Park while practicing our tree identifying skills. Between those meetings, we went to the workshops at the Ecotarium and UMass Amherst.

PEOPLE

Colin Novick, Director of the Greater Worcester Land Trust, led us on a hike through the Cascades. Sean Dwyer, Program Coordinator for the Worcester Parks Department, talked to us about using partnerships to develop park programs. We interviewed Dr. Dacey, a teacher at our school, about what recreation was like when he was young and how spending time outdoors has changed. Rick Miller, Coordinator of Friends of Newton Hill, led us on a hike through Newton Hill. Deb Cary, Director of Broadmeadow Brook, the MassAudubon sanctuary in Worcester, presented a slide show on our parks at the Ecotarium and guided us on the East Side Trail. Siobhan Fleming showed us how to “orienteer.” All of these people provided information and helped us develop skills that we can use in this year’s competition.

SKILLS

During our research on Outdoor Recreation and from studying for the Envirothon, our team has learned some valuable skills. One day, Jim Lafley came to Doherty to help our team identify skulls and animals. Also, from going to the Ecotarium and UMass workshops, we learned how to identify trees and measure them correctly from Joe Perry. We also learned about orienteering. Our team not only has learned skills relating to the environment, but we have learned social skills as well. We have learned how to communicate with our teammates. We have also learned how to make a proper presentation.

COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECT

In partnership with Worcester’s Department of Parks and Recreation, we plan to hold an “Evening in the Park” in a neighborhood park near our school. It will take place on Monday, June 9 from 5:30pm-7:00pm. This is an event in which neighborhood families can come together and be outside. There will be activities including crafts, a nature scavenger hunt, and pick-up wiffle ball games. Another school club, PEACH, will create a Heart Fitness Trail for the event. These evening programs have occurred in other neighborhood parks, and we hope ours will be a success.

Written by team members; compiled by Coach Stacey Hill

**Greater New Bedford Regional High School
Envirothon Stories**

By: William Duff and the Environmental Science and Technology Shop

Coaches: Lawrence Carlesi and Christopher Pires

This is the Environmental Science career major in the school Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School and our students come from the towns of Dartmouth, Fairhaven, and New Bedford. The issue that we encountered when dealing with recreation in our community is that our urban environment has caused us to have very little open space and with what we have the many people that use these recreational venues leave there trash everywhere and that is slowly damaging these places and makes them less useable. We as a group go out and clean some of these recreational venues (like the shoreline) and are out to teach the people about what they are leaving behind when they recreate. The project in which we clean the shoreline is called Adopt-a-shoreline and the statistics we collect are going on the trash bins in order to show people what they are throwing away.

We as a group visited Buttonwood Park and the Acushnet Cedar Swamp to gain information at these large areas of open space in our community of New Bedford. Buttonwood Park is the largest and relatively newest park in New Bedford and it offers the most diverse selection of recreational activities. The Park has a zoo and it has a multitude of sports fields and courts to choose from and it also has many monuments to honor the different people and types of people who have done and stood for honorable things. This park is not only the largest and newest; it is also the most popular park in the city. The Acushnet Cedar Swamp is the largest piece of open space in the city and it is probably the most underused space in the city. The swamp is a vast area of land that is located near a pond and is filled with vast amount of trees. The area is under the surveillance of the state and the Department of Conservation and Recreation, so they lay down some regulations and take care of the area once in a while but other than that they have done nothing with the area. There is trash build up all along the road next to the area and there are no walk paths or anything to do in the area.

We have continued with all of our previous projects that have involved recycling and have started new ones like recreate responsibly and GIS openspace mapping. The two projects that are the mainstay for our current issues presentation is recreate responsibly and Massachusetts GIS openspace map updating. Our team has done so much this past year weather it be continuing our past projects or starting new ones. We do what we need to do in order to help the environment and help our community to become a better place.

Springfield, MA

Envirothon STEMs May 2008

Coach: Jenni Manfredi

In the city of Springfield MA, the students tackling environmental matters (STEM) at the High School of Science and Technology, has had the opportunity to help educate, promote, and make better use of all the bountiful outdoor recreational space Springfield had been blessed with. Our team researched the community's vision of ideal recreation and their dream park and what we could do to help turn those dreams into a reality, while preserving the environment.

Because our community is inside a city with exceptional traffic noise and pollution, it is difficult to create a healthy environment for wildlife. However, to help replace the forests that once flourished in the valley where Springfield has been built, numerous tree planting events have taken place. **We are the third city in the United States with the highest number of trees.** These trees not only help create better air for the city, but also help beautify the streets creating homely feelings and respect for the environment among the community. We are also recognized as one of the top cities in the US with the best tap water system.

We made contact with Judy Blake, the director of "Keep Springfield Beautiful" and volunteered in the 4th annual fall and spring clean ups as well as the annual CT river cleanup. We were also able to attend the first annual City Green Forum Conference to listen to a discussion of our city's five-year plan to going green. There we were able to talk with the mayor and meet Patrick Sullivan, the director of Parks, Recreation, and Building management. He came to one of STEM's meetings after school where we were able to share our ideas and community research with him. He enjoyed it so much that scheduled to meet with us again and work with the school on projects in the future. We were really excited when he said he would like to start meeting with us Tri-annually.

We have been able to make connections to the community by creating a survey, which helped gather information on the community's thoughts while educating them at the same time. We used gave this survey to a wide variety of ages at the high school and at the Green Day Festival where we were able to present our project.

We have encountered many frustrations throughout the year. Two of our dedicated members left the team and it has been a difficult challenge to accomplish all the things we wanted to do. It was also hard to find days that everybody could meet after school, often leaving e-mail as our main alternative to communicate with each other. To counter act our loss we decided to outreach to other Springfield schools to encourage more involvement in STEM. Although it has been very frustrating and tedious year, we have been able to create a lasting mark on STEM in this year's project by creating respectable relations with "Keep Springfield Beautiful" and also the city hall, something that has never been done before. STEM looks forward to working with Keep Springfield Beautiful, Patrick Sullivan, and other Springfield high school's, on projects that will better serve our community.

Amanda McCabe
Joshua Dutton
Bonnie McLaren

LAWRENCE ACADEMY
Groton, MA

Envirothon Story 2008

Coach: Michelle Ruby

The Lawrence Academy team this year chose to focus on the current conflict between recreation and wildlife conservation at Surrenden Farm, a piece of land recently purchased by the town of Groton. We recommended that the town keep the most sensitive portion of the land closed to the public (trail-free), and that trails be built along existing paths in the other portions of the land. We first became aware of the conflict as I discussed the upcoming Envirothon this winter at lunch. One of the staff members at school is a member of the Groton Conservation Trust (GCT), which purchased half of Surrenden Farm while the town purchased the other half. She told us about the current debates within the conservation community about how the land should be used and what sort of access should be allowed.

As we started our research, we ran into all sorts of problems. At first, we had trouble finding information about the land. We realized we should talk to people on the Trails Committee and on the Surrenden Farm Land Use Committee, but the hours that we were able to make phone calls were not the hours that people were available. We also realized that the lists of committee members that we had were out of date. We found minutes from committee meetings on the town's website and tried to contact the people mentioned. As it turned out, we sent many emails and made many phone calls with little response. We tried calling our MassWildlife District Office, but only found out which streams and lakes had been stocked with trout. Because of the season, MassWildlife was especially busy. We also discovered that getting specific information about which endangered species inhabit a property is both difficult and costly. Eventually, we made contact with Ed McNierney, who is on the GCT board and was very involved in the purchase of Surrenden Farm. He also happens to be the parent of a student at our school. He was able to give us more specific information about the history of the land and the current controversies. In addition, he explained that one of the best ways to protect endangered species is to keep quiet about the location of populations.

As we continued our research, we took some time to explore the property. We were able to join with the outdoors club one afternoon and canoe along the western border of the farm. We discovered first-hand one of the problems of public access and recreation when we attempted to climb out of our canoes onto a trail along the property and were confronted by several barking dogs. Shortly, a woman who was a professional dog-walker came along and tried to get the dogs under control. She said she was out there every day and never saw anyone, so she usually lets the dogs off the leash. This could pose a problem for wildlife. In fact, we found out from long-time residents that an adjacent area used to be called the bird sanctuary, but now there are very few birds because there are so many dogs.

One of our biggest challenges as we worked on our current issue project was figuring out how to narrow our focus. We were quickly able to say that we wanted to focus on this property, but deciding how to go about doing that was hard. One of the biggest helps was our communication with Barbara Ganem, the town's Conservation Assistant. She was able to suggest to us that a review of the scientific literature about wildlife and recreation would be useful to the Conservation Commission as they construct a land management plan. We are on the way to having that done and hope to present it to the town this spring.

**Leicester High School
Envirothon Summary
May 6, 2008**

Advisor/Coach: Joanne Bernier

Outdoor Recreation and the Environment

This year, our Envirothon team chose to focus our efforts on recreational facilities within our town. We began our research with a review of the places we like to spend our time. We quickly realized that we enjoy being outside and have many opportunities within the town of Leicester.

Our research lead us to interview with a Conservation Committee member, the town planner, a member of the Parks and Recreation Committee and a park ranger who services our town. Several life long residents added their input and shared their historical perspective with us. We listened to their ideas and experiences and decided to focus most of our attention on a piece of town owned property called "Hillcrest Country Club".

This property was purchased by the town several years ago to protect it from being built upon. Besides its beautiful rolling hills and pristine woods, it also serves as a recharge area for 42% of the town's drinking water facility- Henshaw Pond. This land is abundant with wildlife and opportunity to explore the great outdoors. We developed a series of recommendations that we would like to see implemented within this property.

1. Develop biking trails that would include a mountain bike trail which could be used for snow shoeing and cross country skiing in the winter.
2. Create two recreational fields along with the current golf course to allow children to spend time on the property and opportunity for sporting enrichment.
3. Create an educational trail identifying with placards both flora and fauna which would could be used by the schools as a devise to interest children in the botany surrounding them.
4. Improve existing recreation fields at Burncoat Pond, Rochdale Park and Community Field.
5. Finally, we hope to improve the Leicester side of the Burncoat Pond Sanctuary located in Spencer/Leicester and owned by the Massachusetts Audubon.

Respectfully submitted by the 2008 Leicester Envirothon Team,

Dylan Baker
Marcela Jimenez
Julie Johnson
Thomas Killoran
Jessica Robinson
Aris DeMarco

Millbury Memorial High School

OUR STORY

Coach: Terry Hamilton

This year, The Millbury Envitohon Team is from the Millbury High School's Environmental Council. We

discovered that Millbury's Current Issue is that recreational areas such as passive recreation parks, are not being used to their full potential. Our team plans to advertise our parks on Millbury's local access channel, clean up or plan the future clean-up of parks, and work with town officials to make the parks in Millbury more user-friendly with the addition of new signs and perhaps increased parking.

Our team is made up of very dedicated individuals who focused much of their time on our Current Issue as well as their own subtopics such as wildlife, forests, water, and soils. Team members include the leader of the team; Christina Ferretti, veteran Envirothon-er; Alison Pinto, new members Kelly Croteau, Deanna Meserve; and last-minute-team-member Sam Millet. If it weren't for the latter three individuals to step up to the plate, the Envirothon would not have been possible for Millbury this year. The Millbury Envirothon Team was not made up of its permanent members until two weeks before the competition date. We had potential members drop out of the team after only a few days into the team meetings, but we recovered quickly and caught-up during a week of work dedicated to Envirothon.

During our April vacation, the team met every other day and had two to three hour meetings. We also ate lunch together, discussed our topic until we were sure it was solid, and visited at least two parks a day. The Millbury Parks we visited were Davidson Sanctuary, Jacques Field, Dorothy Pond, The Millbury Bike Path, and the Martha Deering Estate. Some of our team-members also visited the nearby Purgatory Chasm in Sutton, which the Environmental Council helped clean last year. We were sure to take plenty of pictures which we plan to share during the roundtables.

Of course, since the group has not been together for a very long period of time, we still have plenty of tasks to complete. We made surveys about parks in Millbury which we still need to pass out to students at the High School; then the team needs to calculate the results of the survey to help out with our Current Issue. The Millbury Envirothon Team also needs to meet with Town Hall more than the three times that we already have in order to get more information on what the officials at Town Hall believe could happen to make Millbury Parks more inviting.



**Mohawk Trail Regional High School
Shelburne Falls
Envirothon Stories**

Coach: Philip Lussier

It is my first year participating in the Envirothon and going into this I did not know what to expect. At the first conference I was hit by the number of schools participating but also the amount of knowledge I would need to obtain to compete. After the initial shock, I got very excited to start thinking of a project. Being from a very rural part of Massachusetts, I knew that our community project would be different from other schools. Our problem would not be finding recreation but which recreation opportunity to choose. We finally decided on the Deerfield River and, seeing what we were able to come up with for an issue, I am interested to see what other teams have done. Envirothon was a fantastic experience that I would not mind participating in again.

I had a lot of fun going to the workshops held about Soils, Water, and Forests. The lecturers were really knowledgeable and great at answering questions. I always wanted to know more about the Deerfield River and its usage and this was the perfect opportunity! Talking to the owners of Zoar Outdoor Adventures was really eye-opening. They talked about the problems they encounter with the river and how they are handled. I had a lot of fun leaning more about the environment and meeting new people!

Participating in the Massachusetts Envirothon this year has been interesting and informative. Our project, Recreation of The Deerfield River through Charlemont Massachusetts, allowed us to appreciate and understand the diversity of recreational opportunities within our communities. It also helped us become aware of work that has been put into the Deerfield River to allow it to be used as heavily, recreational wise, as it is today. We learned not only the background of the Deerfield River and its recreations but how to interview, having participated in interviewing myself. Also, as we are representing our communities it is exciting that they are supporting us, as we are in newspaper articles and will be displaying our poster board at the annual River festival in Shelburne Falls.

While doing research for our Envirothon project I learned many things I did not know about my local community. It brought the Deerfield River to my attention, and made me realize how fortunate I was to have such an easily-accessible river to use for recreational purposes such as tubing, rafting, and swimming. Every summer I always tube down the Deerfield at least once, and often swim in it several times at many different locations.

I was given the opportunity to go on a rafting trip with Zoar Outdoor, which was an awesome experience. Since we went in late April I had to wear a wetsuit for the entire trip. It did not dampen the experience at all, although they did look very awkward. Other members of the Mohawk Outing Club went on the trip, and we all suited up and headed out on the river. We had an outgoing raft guide who made the trip very fun. We all fell into the water when he tricked us into "leaning," causing everyone to go overboard, which is always a thrill. Rafting down the Gap was the most exciting part of the trip, because it is a Class III rapid. It was a little scary because the intense power of water was plainly seen as the raft was thrown around in the water. Getting caught on rocks was also interesting, and required team work to get unstuck. I now see that the Deerfield River, although very close to home, is a very unique river that should not be taken for granted.

My experience with the Envirothon thus far has been a positive one. I enjoyed traveling with my team mates to the conferences and meeting new people. I also found that I learned a lot more about my community as a result of the research project and I learned a lot of information about the wildlife in Massachusetts. I think it is important to know what animals live around you. I look forward to the competition and the Frisbee games afterwards!

Brogan Austin, Eve Lytle-Rich, Nicole Sessions, Kelsey Schmidt and Molly Taylor

**Monson Environmental Action Team
Monson High School
Monson, MA**

Coaches: Leslie Duthie and Jennifer Ohop

The Monson Environmental Action Team's focus this year is to permanently protect the 150 acres of privately owned land where the Monson High School cross country trails and some town historical sites are located. These lands are a special area for our team and community and we propose to purchase this land with the help of the state Self Help Grants for Open Space, the Monson Conservation Commission, the Monson Community Preservation Committee and by making people and other students aware of this important resource.

Monson is a town that has 28,800 acres of land with 8,000 people living throughout it. The town is bordered by hills on either side of a central valley. Our team has come to the conclusion that Outdoor Recreation is being active outside. Monson has various recreational areas that are provided to the public:

- θ· Hiking biking, and ATV trails
- θ· Swimming and camping areas
- θ· Baseball, softball, lacrosse, and soccer fields for both recreational teams and varsity school teams
- θ· Basketball and tennis courts
- θ· Skate Park
- θ· Track and field area

We are able to sit in our back yard or porch and look up and see the stars at night, unlike some of the other towns. When walking on the trails or other open space throughout town you can listen to the birds sing and to the babbling brook without hearing the cars racing through the streets.

Our team talked to Tim Pascale, the director of Monson Parks and Recreation. He feels that recreation is important because a lot of kids today sit around on the couch watching TV. By providing outdoor programs kids will be able to get exercise and enjoy the outdoors. He also has some future plans on expanding the both the organized programs and other hiking, biking and recreational activities for the community.

Our team visited Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, walked on the Cross Country trails behind the Monson High School, and observed wildlife (a beaver) at the Kolowrat Farm Conservation Area within our town. We also had the opportunity to try dog-sledding during our winter vacations, something new for many of us.

Monica Morin
M.E.A.T.

Newton North High School

Coaches: Barbara Gibson and Anndy Dannenberg

The Charles River Country Club and Its Effects on the Charles River: Newton North Science Team

The increasing residential, commercial, and institutional development has had a significant impact on Newton, most notably, the loss of open space and the effects of traffic. There is tension between development pressure fueled by escalating land values in Newton and the public's commitment to preserve Newton's open space and unique features. Newton's Open Space and Recreation Plan consists of balanced policies that take into account public's recreation needs, development and conservation.

Outdoor Recreation Issue that should have a high priority:

We chose to focus on the aquatic habitats for the current issue project. Although Nation's Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) has implemented effective measures to greatly reduce point source pollution in Newton, water pollution from non-point sources, such as storm water runoff, remains a major problem. The affects of water pollution in Newton are best exemplified by the changes in Hammond Pond's wildlife habitat due to Department of Public Works' storm water drain to Hammond Pond from Route 9.

Where is the issue? Is it tied to a specific place? The Charles River wildlife habitat is greatly affected by the sporadic pollution from street drainage and overfertilization from lawns and golf course fairways.

Therefore, the outdoor recreation issue that we decided to focus on is overfertilization of one of Newton's three private golf course fairways: the Charles River Country Club. The western-most portion contains about 280 feet of Charles River frontage. The most direct results of overfertilization of the Charles River Country Club are increased pollution of the drinking water that the Charles River Watershed provides to man~ communities in Boston and adverse effects excess nutrients have on the river's habitat.

The Charles River and its associated groundwater systems are primary sources of drinking water for several communities upstream of Newton such as Bellingham, Franklin, and Milford. Thus, regulating pollution in the river in Newton will not affect the drinking water quality in these communities. However, it is still very necessary for the city to accept a role in monitoring and improving the quality of water. First of all, additional nutrients can have harmful effects on riparian and riverine ecosystems. Moreover, lowering pollution levels of Charles River will add to the river's recreational and aesthetic potential. The river is currently classified as Class "B", which is defined as "fishable" or "swimmable" by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection using parameters such as biological oxygen demand and ammonia concentration. However, the water running through Newton often exceeds the pollutant limits for Class "B." Also, many such as Rebecca Scibek, a volunteer coordinator with the Charles River Watershed Association, agree that Newton can serve as a model for communities like Milford further upstream in managing fertilizer and nutrient pollution.

Immediate action needs to be taken, however, because pollution from overfertilization leads to cultural Eutrophication. Nutrients such as phosphates in fertilizer often serve as limiting nutrients in aquatic ecosystems. When excess phosphates are added, the ecosystem's primary productivity can skyrocket leading to an algal bloom and this eventually leads to decreased dissolved oxygen concentration due to an explosion consumers and detrivores in the water. Many aquatic organisms cannot survive at oxygen concentrations below 2 ppm. In summary the Biological Oxygen Demand increases as the dissolved oxygen decreases in concentration.

In the Charles River blooms of blue-green algae Cyanobacteria have been present for years. They grow best in calm shallow warm water. In addition to creating hypoxic condition the bacteria secrete toxins, such as hepatoxin, which are harmful to humans as well as animal life. For example if water containing bacterial toxins is ingested it can lead to symptoms such as vomiting nausea and stomach ache.

The upper parts of the Charles must also be considered. The Caribbean National Forest case study illustrates the

importance of considering both upstream and downstream effects, in managing pollution and damming. Many organisms in the forest streams spend some part of their life cycle in the Ocean, including Atyid shrimp, which return from the Ocean as juveniles. Increased populations in shrimp have been linked directly to decreases in algal standing crop by transfer experiments. Damming of rivers draining the forest siphons almost 50% of the water to municipalities. This causes increased Atyid Shrimp larvae mortality (decreased juvenile recruitment) and an increase in algal standing crop throughout the river. Links between populations at the headwaters of the Charles and those at the mouth can mean similar effects compared to those of damming rivers in Puerto Rico.

Overfertilization and damming degrade the wildlife habitat of the Charles River, and any type destruction of ecosystems needs to be stopped as soon as possible.

Nipmuc Envirothon Team

Nipmuc Regional High School Towns: Upton and Mendon

Coach: Michael Maloney

Current Issue Project: Our current issue project is aimed at getting kids active in community outdoor recreation. We believe that if outdoor recreation is introduced to young kids, they'll continue to engage in it throughout their lives.

Storyteller: Lauren Fragoza, Adam Parlin

While hiking in the Upton State Forest, we decided to go geocaching. There are a few spots in the Forest that are known for geocaching, which is when you take a GPS system and plug in coordinates to find hidden boxes creating different prizes. Other 'players' hide these boxes in random areas and tell people about them so that they can be found. While we were searching for one of the boxes, the trail we were on began to diminish. Once the trail became too small to hike on, we realized that we were on a bushwhacked trail. We stopped geocaching and attempted to find our way out of the Upton State Forest. On our way out from the Upton State Forest, we stumbled upon a granite pillar. We checked to see whether or not it was on the list; it wasn't. One of our members, Adam, recalled hearing from Ellen Arnold about four unmarked pillars that were placed with 11 in the Forest. The four pillars are hunted by geocachers from all around the country, ranging out towards Michigan.

**Old Rochester Regional High School
Mattapoissett**

Envirothon 2008

Coach: Lynn Connor

The time spent this year completing research and presentation for the Envirothon has been wonderful! **The Old Rochester Environmental Organization**, or OREO as we like to call ourselves, has had a blast working together during this project. After some consideration **we chose to explore and seek improvements to our local Mattapoissett Bike Path**. The path itself is unpaved and overgrown with plants, which we believed would make it hard for young children and older people to walk through, and was also the reason for it being mostly abandoned.

Focusing on the bike path was not part of our original plan for the competition, however. Our first choice had been to study the harmful effects the nearby golf course, incidentally close to the Bike Path, had on our community. Our area is notorious for golf courses, and we spent about three months researching all the harmful chemicals needed to keep the land in perfect condition, and how it also how it was a great source of pollution to the surrounding environment.

We decided to switch topics after we actually tested water samples from a pond nearby the course. The team figured the results would turn up horrible, but the samples actually past everyone.

That was when we turned our attention to the current issue. We agreed that to find out how popular our idea would be among our peers was to have a small survey passed out one morning. The results were actually positive; out of about 381 high school students, forty nine percent replied that they would use an improved bike path. Considering that all the students come from three towns (Marion, Mattapoissett, Rochester) and the majority reside in the other two towns, this was incredible feedback!

Since our community showed such an interest in the project, we wished to request to our selectmen for a paved path. On April 1st the approval of construction for the Mattapoissett Bike Path was announced.

Sincerely,

The OREO Team

**Oliver Ames High School
Easton, MA**

Coach: Debbie Margarite

Our town of Easton, once a rural, historic town, is now urbanizing into a suburb just outside of Boston. Although the 29-square mile town is mostly comprised of wetlands and forests, we are undergoing rapid development in an attempt to accommodate the growing number of families. Fortunately, we are also home to Borderland State Park, as well as countless other acres of National Resource Trust lands, which offer open space for land preservation and outdoor recreation for the community.

One of the major issues regarding recreation in the environment that Easton is facing is the push by a private organization, Friends of Easton, for a new artificial turf field and stadium for the high school. Because the board for this organization is largely made up of athletes rather than environmentalists and because of the many unfavorable traits commonly associated with artificial turf, our team decided this year to study the pros and cons of this development and to make an environmentalist's assessment of its costs and benefits, which we will discuss with the Friends of Easton. This issue is significant in our town because our high school track has been condemned, our bleachers have been determined not up to code and thus ripped down, and, as a result, our State Champion track teams have not had a home meet in six years. Also, the Easton Planning Board has been attempting for almost five years to develop lands suitable for a town recreational site. We interviewed, among others, the president and other member of the Friends of Easton board, naturalists from our town's Sheep Pasture, the Town Administrator, some environmentalists from the town, and the makers of FieldTurf, in order to acquire more insight from different points of view of this issue. The cons associated with artificial turf are: toxins in recycled tire granules, the absorption of heat by the turf creating "heat islands," costs of installation, the carbon footprint left by developing natural turf to artificial, and "turf toe," an injury to which athletes are prone. However, we discovered that the benefits of artificial turf greatly outweigh the costs. The heat issue is not applicable in our region of the country, the cryogenically synthesized rubber used in our future turf absorbs rather than releases toxins, and is proven to be no threat to the environment or humans, the cost of maintenance of natural turf offsets the initial costs of field turf, and the inefficiency of lawn mower motors used to upkeep natural turf is greater than the carbon footprint of developing an artificial turf. Also, we talked to Town Administrator David Colton about other potential sites for recreation development, and the available options are either too expensive or unsuitable. As a group of environmentalists, we concluded that the artificial turf field would be the best solution to this recreational problem, because it possesses virtually no threat to the environment and its durability would almost completely eliminate the need to develop other precious areas of open space.

**Quabbin Regional High School
Barre, MA**

Coach: Rebecca Bottomley

Team Members: Rachel Metterville, Carly Lohr, Audrey Degnan, Caroline Doane, Andrea Miller, and Matthew Stevens

Outdoor Recreation and the Environment

Envirothon Story by Matt Stevens

The team focused on increasing public awareness and to encourage the use of the local recreational areas. The team made proposals to improve the trails and use of Cook's Canyon, the local Mass Audubon property. Quabbin Regional High School is located in Barre and we decided to focus on the recreational opportunities in Barre and the surrounding area. Five central Massachusetts rural towns are educated at Quabbin Regional High School, including Barre, Oakham, Hardwick, Hubbardston, and New Braintree.

We researched wildlife, soils, water, and Forests by hands-on learning at Envirothon workshops and at after school team meetings. Our team attended each of the workshops and learned a lot. We also had many learning opportunities at our meeting. We learned track identification, tree identification, soil textures, along with many others important facts.

Our team made many site visits to learn about the local recreational opportunities in our area. We went to Cook's Canyon and talked to Deb Carey, of Mass Audubon. We hiked with Walker Korby, the superintendent of The Trustee's of Reservation at the Swift River Reservation. We went to Wachusett Meadow and held baby lambs with Cindy Dunn, and spoke to Regional Sanctuary Manager, Ron Wolanin, about the issues at Cook's Canyon and other local Mass Audubon properties. We went biking at Quabbin Gate 40 to the Old Dana Common and, met with Clif Read at the Quabbin Visitor Center. We discussed the history of the Quabbin Reservoir and its past and present recreational issues. We also went to Barre Falls Dam, a DCR property in the Ware River Watershed, where we participated in Letter boxing, a fun treasure hunt type game. Also we met with Rangers Fran Tyburski and Jeanne Decenzo at Rutland State Park to discuss the problems faced by state parks in the current times.

The team participated in the Woods Memorial Library's "Going Green" Fair to raise awareness of ways to improve the local area and live healthier. Our team made a display titled, "Have Fun Outside Locally", where we helped introduce people to recreational opportunities in the local area. These included Cook's Canyon, Rutland State Park, Wachusett Meadow and Barre Falls Dam. We handed out brochures, maps and information on each of these areas, along with general Massachusetts recreational areas. We also had an interactive Animal Tracking game to teach the children. This game let children try to match a track to the animal that made it. The kids loved the game and the parents loved the large amount of local, safe and cheap outdoor activities.

Our Team had a great time researching this year's topic. We learned a lot about our area and the great opportunities we have here right in our own backyard. We enjoyed doing many recreational activities and sharing this knowledge with so many people at the "Going Green" event for Earth Day.

**2008 Massachusetts Envirothon
Outdoor Recreation and the Environment
Ralph C. Mahar Regional School
Orange, Massachusetts**

Advisors: Kurt Enko and Mike Magee

In researching this current issue, we focused on several major recreational areas within our school district. They were: Lake Mattawa, Quabbin Reservoir Watershed, Mount Grace, Mount Tully and the Millers River.

Lake Mattawa offers people who enjoy fishing a wonderful opportunity to catch a variety of fish either from shore or from a boat. The lake contains sunfish, bass, pickerel, catfish as well as trout and salmon. Because of the depth of Lake Mattawa, the water temperature is cold enough to allow the trout and salmon to survive the summer. The trout that are stocked in Lake Mattawa are primarily rainbow trout and the salmon are former brood stock, which are simply not as productive as they once were.

This lake is one of the few available in which people with physical handicapping conditions can enjoy a day at the water. Holdshire Road, which runs along the west edge of the lake, allows people to park their car along the guardrail, set up a folding chair, and cast their line into the lake. This area just happens to be the prime fishing spot in the entire lake for both trout and salmon.

The Quabbin Reservoir watershed offers hikers, bikers, people that snowshoe, people that fish, and even hunters a tremendous opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. This pristine land is obviously very well managed and protected. The access to the major fishing areas is carefully monitored in an effort to manage the fish stock and protect the watershed. There are miles of trails that give hikers some beautiful views where wildlife is abundant. Deer, moose, beaver, bear and eagles are just a few the animals that you may encounter during your jaunt through the area.

The Mount Grace and Mount Tully areas also affords hikers, people who snowshoe, and even people who ride snowmobiles a chance to experiences the outdoor environment without traveling great distances.

The Millers River is a wonderful example of how a natural resource can be resurrected. Not all that many years ago, the Millers River was so polluted that there was little life in it. People would remark of the color of the river for that day which would be dependent upon which materials the factories upstream were using. Today, the Millers is a class "B" river with a number of different populations of wildlife living in, on or around it. There is presently a program to reintroduce salmon into the river west of Orange, Massachusetts.

The people that live in our area are extremely fortunate to have these areas available to them. It is important for all of us to remember that it is our responsibility to maintain these resources so that the can be enjoyed for generations to come.

**Somerset High School Envirothon Team
Town where members live: Somerset, MA**

Coach: Matt Talbot

Summary of Current Issue Presentation:

The town of Somerset has a wealth of recreation activities and opportunities that people are not aware of, or do not take full advantage. Our proposal and wish is to inspire people in our community to access and explore the opportunity of the many outdoor recreation resources.

People who put this story together:

Lindsey Machamer, Emily Domingue, Erin Lefrancois, Molly Rounds, Miyagi Jacobs, Rachel Coogan, Marcus Mello, Kevin O'Brien, John Charest

Highlights from what you learned:

Veteran team members worked with novice ones in the instruction of the process. We also each became an expert of the different ecostations and shared that knowledge with each other through presentations and cooperative learning.

Current Issue Research

As a team, we interviewed people for our community research award. The people included, the town of Somerset Conservation Commissioner (Christina Wordell), long time town resident (Mrs. Alice Ferris), Environmental science teacher and conservation commissioner (Mr. Matthew Talbot), active members of the Somerset community (Mrs. Mary Clement, Mrs. Elaine Rezendes), Somerset Recreation board member (Mr. Richard Silvia), and comprehensive planner of SRPEDD (Nancy Durfee).

Plans

In our attempt to get people involved in the recreation that Somerset has to offer we came up with two ideas. We will create a commercial for public access television showing us enjoying the outdoors. Also for public access television we will create a PowerPoint presentation that includes pictures from around town and inspiring quotes about nature. We also have a public service announcement for the radio station WSAR.

Places we have Explored:

Walden Pond

The Taunton River

Pierce's Beach

Questions

Why, if we are an environment based organization/competition, did we have to make 60 copies when they would just be available on the website?

Why is the size of the Envirothon team limited to six members that can attend the event?

Why can't there be varsity and junior varsity levels of competition for more experienced competitors?

South Hadley High School Envirothon Team Current Issue

Coach: Sylvia Cooley

Nature Deficit Disorder is a reality in South Hadley. NDD is defined as "the cumulative effect of withdrawing nature from children's experiences, which causes increased feelings of stress, trouble paying attention, and feelings of not being rooted in the world. Richard Louv writes about this in his book, "Last Child in the

Woods.”

The great thing about Nature Deficit Disorder is that it should be the easiest disorder to cure. The misconception about recreation is that it has to be strictly organized. In reality, recreation can be anything you want it to be. All you have to do is get outside and discover the natural world. The more parents can let go of over-scheduling their children with lessons and organized sports, and just give their kids some free time to get outside, the more benefits they will see.

As a former farming town, transforming into another New England suburban town, the amount of open space and woods is decreasing daily. Development is happening in South Hadley, from the heart of town with our new stoplights and newly curbed and paved intersection, to the woods behind homes where new condos are going up. This directly ties into the ideas that Richard Louv has suggested- because as the amount of nature in our town shrinks, and the lifestyle changes away from farming, the risk of Nature Deficit grows.

Our mission is to inform South Hadley citizens about the importance of free time, when that free time is spent outside. We want our community to know that “children who play on natural playgrounds (trees, fields, streams) are more likely to make up their own games and are more cooperative than those who play on man-made equipment” (according to Julie Deardorff in “Nature Deficit sends kids down a desolate path”).

When we surveyed about 200 students at our high school, 53% said they think we need more recreation sites in our town. We found that 56% of these students do participate in an organized recreational activity and spend up to 2 hours outside per day, but this is usually within the confines of a team sports practice. Teachers who responded to a survey said they prefer the open areas of the past to the more structured areas and businesses that have now taken over South Hadley. They all commented that they missed a sense of togetherness that the town used to offer.

Our Envirothon team has been working towards solving these issues present in our town. We thought, “What could we possibly do to make people realize that there are issues with the ways children are being raised today?” We wanted to come up with something that would not only get kids outside and playing, but their parents too. So we decided on three different projects: #1- a Recreation Brochure which would provide families with information on places to go in South Hadley, #2- a restoration project for a garden at our school known as the Art Garden. This would not only give us time outside ourselves, we would eventually create an outdoor classroom in the garden for all classes to use, as well as a guidebook about the types of plants there, and #3- create TV ads using our high school TV studio to broadcast them town-wide, along with published posters we created using Photoshop to educate parents and children about Nature Deficit Disorder.

We think all of the steps we have taken have truly made a difference. We are enjoying the great outdoors more often ourselves, and hope to help our community do the same. We are only one school and one team, but big changes can start with small steps.

Springfield Central High School Envirothon Team

Current Issue: Outdoor Recreation

Coach: Naomi Volain

Although Springfield is the third largest city in Massachusetts, with over 20 parks and recreation sites available for use, most of its people are staying indoors. Clearly, the problem isn't that outdoor recreation sites aren't available. The problem is that these resources are significantly *underused*. So as a team, we wondered, "Why aren't the people of Springfield taking advantages of all these parks and going outside?" After some

investigation, we've come to the conclusion that the biggest problems that Springfielders have with spending time outside are their concerns with safety, pollution and the aesthetics of the parks and the city itself.

Safety is a problem universal to all large urban centers. Springfield, therefore, is not immune to this issue; as a matter of fact, it may be the most difficult obstacle we have to deal with. As a city, we face poverty, drugs, gang violence, homelessness, vandalism, and the current depressing economy is fueling frequent burglary and robbery cases. As a result, many people are afraid to go outside. This fear is preventing many families and their children from being able to appreciate the natural world and great outdoors.

Because safety problems exist, we can only find ways to address it rather than try to eliminate it all at once. Encouraging people to go out in larger groups can easily reduce the concerns of safety. We've decided to inform people of large group events such as walkathons, fairs, and community garden farm-together days as these events involve a larger group of people and are usually held for a good cause. The number of participants will lessen people's doubts and the charity will encourage more people to go.

Pollution is another big issue affecting outdoor recreation in Springfield. The biggest "victims" of pollution in our city are the waterways. We have identified many threats that our watershed faces, problems such as toxins in the river, combined sewer overflows, bio-accumulation of contaminants, and non-point source pollution. In addition, the air pollution from factories and busy streets causes acid rain to accumulate in the rivers. Our mission is to organize community clean-ups to both raise awareness of water pollution problems in Springfield and to clean up our beautiful waterways as to make them available for recreational use.

In addition to cleansing the rivers and streams, we've realized the overall appearance of the city also affects the attitude of people toward outdoor recreation. We believe that by improving the aesthetics of the city and parks, we can increase the willingness of people to go outside. We participated in "Keep Springfield Beautiful," a citywide cleanup, and helped to keep our city beautiful. We visited some of the twenty-plus parks in Springfield. Many of the parks were either lacking some desired facilities or had ones that were very run-down. We plan to use this information to suggest to our local Parks Department that they should spend some money on refurbishing or adding such facilities. If the parks look nicer, more people will want to go out and enjoy them.

Our team realizes that we too have been under-appreciating our numerous outdoor recreation sites. We believe that if we can make people realize the problems we face as a city and offer them our potential solutions, they too will receive the same kind of epiphany we have had. By doing so, we hope to increase people's awareness and appreciation of the natural world that surrounds us.

Taconic High School Pittsfield

Coaches: Laura Schneider and Deirdre Lock

We are the Taconic High School Envirothon team from Pittsfield, Massachusetts. This Envirothon story is a collaboration between the group members, including Caitlin Partridge, Jessica Ziemek, Katie Russett, Kate Buhl, and Sarah Tucker. This year, our project focused on recreation in the Berkshire County area and the ways in which we can reduce the environmental impacts. We found that, in general, outdoor recreation in our area is of minimal environmental impact and the best solution to the problems would be to educate the public about responsible outdoor activity.

We have had a great time in Envirothon this year. This year, we got to do a lot more outdoor exploring than we ever have in past years, which was a lot of fun. We visited the areas that we wanted to do our project on so that we could better understand them, which meant lots of fun and exciting trip to the Pittsfield State Forest, Onota Lake, and Jiminy Peak. We also made more of an effort than in past years to talk to members of the community who are involved in environmental issues in their day-to-day lives, which meant that we got a lot of new and interesting perspectives on the issues we were researching.

All in all, we had a fantastic time working on the Envirothon project this year. A lot of us have been on the team for a few years now and really know what we're doing, which meant that we got things done much more efficiently. We also better knew what to expect from the competition and could therefore decide what things we really needed to work on. Of course, we were pressed for time in the final stage of the project, but then again, we have been every year. We think we're going to have a great year at the competition, and those of us who aren't graduating can't wait to start next year's project.

Envirothon Stories
Tahanto Envirothon Team
Tahanto Regional High School in Boylston, MA

Coach: Sue Moore

Team Members:

Boylston: Deanna Filsinger, Heather Viola, Alt: Gabrielle Lucivero, Arielle Strzelewicz

West Boylston: Julie Sargent

Worcester: Alaa Eldam, Tasneem Zawahreh

Current Issue: Outdoor Recreation

1. Our Team met with the Boylston Parks and Recreation Committee and found that they needed to meet the requirements of the Boylston Open Space and Recreation Plan of having activities for all ages and

abilities, such as Senior citizens.

2. Our Team proposed having Boylston Nature Quest, based on the state of Massachusetts' "Great Park Pursuit". The Great Park Pursuit has an event in a new park each week during the summer to introduce a different activity such as making a camp fire. Our Team decided to have the Boylston Nature Quest on one day-May 31 from 9am-4pm, with different activities at each site. For example, we will learn how to fish at Rocky Pond, canoe at Sewall Pond, identify butterflies at Hillside, and pick cranberries in Wachusett Watershed.

We decided that the best way to invite people to join us was to make it fun with a treasure hunt by using LETTERBOXING (see www.letterboxing.org). It was a great way for people to learn where areas of Open Space and Recreation areas are in the town of Boylston.

We had great fun driving to all of the sites and learning where trails were that we hadn't known about and deciding which "nature clues" to use to get people to find the letterboxes. Some of the team members found their own letterbox sites and got lost during the process. Finding good sites to hide a letterbox that could withstand the test of time was a challenge sometimes and it made us more aware of our environment-stone walls, holes at the base of trees, etc

We also had fun learning about letterboxing for the first time and carving the stamps that go in the letterbox. Our "Boylston Nature Quest" will be on Sat, May 31, 2008 for all ages. Go on the Boylston Parks and Recreation website www.Boylston-ma.gov/parks and click on "Boylston Nature Quest" to find out more.