

# The NRT Report

Natural Resources Trust of Mansfield Newsletter

## Mansfield's New Conservation Agent

*Welcome to Mansfield's New Conservation Agent – Ms. Michèle Grenier!*

By Christine Weaver

Mansfield is fortunate to have Michèle Grenier as our newest Conservation and Environmental Planner. She is replacing Elizabeth Leidhold, who had to resign due to family reasons after six tumultuous months of serving Mansfield. Best wishes to Liz. We all enjoyed working with her very much!

Michèle officially started on April 4<sup>th</sup>, but managed to observe a meeting on March 28<sup>th</sup> that unfortunately initiated her into some of the recent issues and personalities that have occupied the commission's time so much in the past year.

Michèle is well suited for continuing the fight to conserve the remaining wetlands in Mansfield. She describes herself as an environmentalist and clarifies that she is someone who's heart is for the environment, but who works to protect the environment by abiding by the regulations. She has worked in the field of wetland and wildlife science for more than 16 years and is extremely familiar with both the science and the policy behind wetlands protection. Michèle also sat on the Massachusetts Environmental Secretary's Riverfront Team to help write the current regulations during 1995 and 1996, while she was Environmental Affairs Director for the Town of Stoughton, MA.

Her interest in wildlife protection started early. At the tender age of 8, Michèle removed 80 painted turtles from the local pet store and released them into the wild. (Let's hope these

were not exotic species!!) She enjoyed spending time in the woods, and by the age of 12 had learned the names of all the local flora and fauna. Her environmental education was formalized with bachelor and master degrees in biology from Cornell University, and numerous additional professional training and certifications since then. In addition, Michèle is certified as a Professional Wetland Scientist (PWS), a certification that is recognized all over the world and is required by some states, and even a few Conservation Commissions in Massachusetts.



Saving the remaining wetlands in Mansfield is important to her, especially riverfront and vernal pools which are so important for our ecology. Michèle hopes to accomplish this by fairly and consistently applying the wetland regulations. In return she expects applicants coming before the Conservation Commission to be honest and

forthcoming.

Michèle envisions working as a facilitator for the Conservation Commission to allow the commission to work together more efficiently. She would also like to educate the town's citizens about the importance of wetlands. She invites anyone interested to visit her at Town Hall. She is in the office until 8:00 PM on Wednesdays, or call her at 508-851-6455. 

### Upcoming Events:

**Canoe River Awareness Day May 7th (see back cover)**

**Annual Meeting, June 1st, 7:30 PM at the Village at Willow Crossing Community Center, Cobb Street .**

**Downtown sidewalk event. July 13th, 6:00 PM Visit our table and display.**

**Great Woods Walk. Watch for news in local papers.**

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### 2005 Dues

are payable now.  
Membership is only \$25.00.  
Please mail your dues to the NRT,  
255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048.

## A Message from our President Lou Andrews

**A**s buildable land becomes scarce in Mansfield, it will be more important to be vigilant and true to our charter *"To acquire and preserve natural resources for use and enjoyment of present and future generations."*

Our acquisition efforts are focused on the Canoe River Aquifer, while we keep a lookout for other opportunities to protect land.

We must also preserve the properties we have with programs for trail maintenance, and insure our land is protected from improper use.

Last fall the NRT had to take action against an abutter who was filling land on our property and storing a trailer and other items on our right of way.

It was important to be tactful but firm, and required immediate correction of the problem. I met with the owner, who was apologetic, and who has corrected the intrusion.

We must constantly watch over our properties to insure they are protected.

Trail bikes and all terrain vehicles are another menace. They upset wildlife and destroy our trails. To help reduce the problem, the NRT sponsored an article at last year's Town Meeting to ban motorized vehicles from all Town owned open space in Mansfield. It passed with no opposition.

We also supported the appointment of Vice-President Colin Cauldwell as a Conservation Constable to help enforce this and other regulations protecting open space.

It is important that we build associations with other groups to aid us in meeting our goals. The NRT is coordinating programs with the Scouts and the high school to help us maintain the trails, clean the streams, and help with trail marking.

Finally, it's time we wave the flag. The board voted to purchase and install new signs, strategically placed on NRT land around town. We will be installing them this spring and summer.

Please attend our 34<sup>th</sup> annual meeting on June 1st, 7:30 PM at the Village at Willow Crossing, Community Center, Cobb Street. I hope to see you there.



**In memory of  
Virginia "Ginny" Bellamy  
Director & Conservationist  
from 1971 to 2004**

*We are saddened to announce the death of Ginny Bellamy, who passed away last November, at the age of 87. Ginny was a founding director, a life long conservationist, and an ardent birdwatcher. We will all miss her.*

## Kids' Stuff

**WHAT IS A COMPASS?** A compass is an instrument with a magnetized needle that points north. By knowing where north is, you can use the compass to find other directions. Having and knowing how to use a compass is important when hiking in the woods.

**HOW DOES IT WORK?** The earth contains metals that are naturally magnetized. One end of the compass needle will always point toward the North Pole because of the earth's magnetic properties.

Just for fun, you can make a compass yourself and see how it works.

**WHAT YOU WILL NEED:**

- 1 sewing needle
- 1 magnet (maybe there is one on the refrigerator)
- 1 bowl of water
- 1 small piece of paper

**WHAT TO DO?**

- Stroke the dull end of a needle across the magnet 60 times, going in the same direction each time.
- Now place the small piece of paper on top of the water in the center of the bowl. Set the needle on top of the paper and gently move the paper to cause it to spin slightly. Make sure there is no metal nearby. (*Does the table you are working on have metal on it or under it?*) Also make sure the magnet you used to magnetize the needle is at least 2 feet away from the bowl. If the paper gets stuck to the side of the bowl, gently nudge it toward the center again.
- Now, wait. What is happening? When the needle and paper have stopped moving completely, the sharp end of the needle is pointing north. You can prove this compass is really pointing north by setting a manufactured compass nearby. Don't set the two compasses too close to each other because they will interfere with each other.



## Harry's Notebook by Harry B. Chase, Jr.

### THE OLD CODDING FARM—ONCE IT WAS ALIVE!

As you look down into the cellar hole of the abandoned Samuel Coddling farmhouse in Mansfield's Great Woods it's hard to imagine the life that thrived here two centuries ago.

You reach the site by heading north from the Oak Street parking lot across a pole line, then along a muddy lane between stone walls. At the first fork, bear left for 100 yards.

The barn foundation is the easiest to spot built into the slope to your right, its open end facing the path. The house cellar is behind the barn, atop the little rise. Before you hunt for the house, though, find the well (ten yards southeast of the barn) so you don't fall into it.

Here Samuel and Sarah Coddling raised ten children and two adopted nephews. All were needed: boys to help build the three miles of walls and heap up the great cairns at the corners of the fields, girls for household chores.

Samuel, born in Taunton, had been a sergeant in the Revolution. Like many soldiers then, he served off and on, never getting farther from home than Rhode Island.

In 1781 he married Sarah Hill of Bridgewater and they went to live as tenants on West Mansfield land belonging to Rev.

David Barnes of Providence. The 205-acre tract stretched northward from the Norton line for a mile and a quarter. Samuel built the house and barn, dug the well and planted an orchard. When Rev. Barnes died, his widow Joanna in 1815 sold Samuel the farm for \$3,928.

Samuel lived only six more years. I'm guessing the "malignant fever" that in 1821 finished him, two of his children and one of the nephews was typhoid from the well, dug too near the barn.

That's when they laid out the little burying ground on Oak Street.

Sarah then began selling the property piece by piece. After she died in 1829 her son John worked the farm until 1865, then sold to Giles Manchester. In the 1880's the house burned, the farm was abandoned and the woods grew back.

Now, the Coddling tract is conservation land, officially called (after more recent owners) the Scott-Goyea Farm. But when you walk its fields and woods, pause now and then to reflect that you're treading in the two-centuries-old footsteps of Samuel Coddling.



*Harry has camped, hunted, surveyed, mapped and observed plant and animal life in The Great Woods for over 50 years.*



## Conservation History



Great Woods Study Committee members Jerry Harpen and Lou Andrews, Mansfield Town Treasurer Joan Cuttilo, committee chair Marydee Flynn, and members Rob Webb and Charles Meszoely.

1975- The Great Woods Study Committee presented a check for \$28,735 to Town Treasurer and Tax Collector Joan Cuttilo .

The money represents the Commonwealth's reimbursement for the Great Woods Hallet Property (Taylor's Hill) acquisition of 109 acres of conservation land.



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**"To acquire and preserve natural resources  
for the use and enjoyment of present and  
future generations"**

**WE'RE ON THE WEB:**  
[nrtma.home.comcast.net](http://nrtma.home.comcast.net)

**Annual Meeting , June 1st, 7:30 PM , Village at Willow Crossing Community Center, Cobb Street**

### Canoe River Awareness Day

The Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee is holding their annual Canoe River Awareness Day on Saturday, May 7th at the Mansfield Fish and Game, Route 106, adjacent to the Highway Garage.

**Canoeing**

8:30-9:00 Refreshments

9:00-9:15 Welcome and Announcements

9:15-10:00 Presentations: Leslie Luchonok - Director of the Massachusetts Resource Management Planning Program; Guest Speaker, Kurt Gaffney - Tour of the Mansfield Water Treatment Plant

10:00-Noon Canoeing

### Annual Meeting Agenda

**C**all to order 7:30 P. M.

Secretary's Report  
Treasurer's Report  
Nominating Committee's Report  
Election of Officers & Directors

- Status of Conservation Projects
- Upcoming Events:
  - Downtown Sidewalk Event , NRT table , July 13th, 6 - 9 P.M.
  - Nature Walk
- Old Business
- New Business
- Guest Speaker:  
Mansfield's New Conservation Agent - Ms. Michèle Grenier
- Adjourn

### Membership

**The NRT welcomes new members!**

Our dues are \$25.00 per year.

Dues can be sent to :  
NRT, 255 Fruit Street, Mansfield, MA 02048

Refreshments