



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: The Rhode Island Blueways Alliance and PaddleRI

Date: Friday, May 23, 2008

Location: Barberville Fishing Pier, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association Headquarters, Hope Valley

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management and the Rhode Island Blueways Alliance are encouraging citizens to “Paddle Rhode Island” this season in an effort to increase awareness of the new Blueways network and to promote safety, conservation, recreation and economic development of our state’s waterways.

The Rhode Island Blueways Alliance has been creating a Blueways trail network linking Rhode Island’s 1500 miles of rivers and streams and 21,000 acres of lakes and ponds to Narragansett Bay. Since 2006, Blueways has been working with public and private organizations to present Rhode Island’s water trails in the same fashion as the biking and hiking paths with well-defined routes, clear information showing put-ins, take-outs, and



R.J. Heim interviews WPWA Program Director Denise Poyer at the Barberville Fishing Access Pier, while DEM Associate Director Larry Mouradjian looks on.

portages, and other information such as flow and speed of water and access points. The group is creating a one-stop portal (www.exploreri.org) for information on paddling in Rhode Island, which it hopes to eventually expand to walking and hiking.

The Rhode Island Blueways Alliance is sponsoring a series of guided paddling events to launch the Blueways network and to celebrate Rivers Month in June and Bay Day in July (27th). Called “PaddleRI,” the paddles take place every weekend at different locations throughout the state and are sponsored by watershed councils, DEM or outdoor recreation retailers. Some events may charge a fee to support the sponsoring organization. All events

require advanced registration. Most require that you bring your own boat, but some groups have boat rentals available. Details of each paddle are available at www.exploreri.org.

Wood-Pawcatuck River and Barberville Fishing Access Pier

The Wood-Pawcatuck River and Barberville Fishing pier provide an example of how partner organizations are working together to create the Blueways network. DEM has improved accessibility to the River by acquiring public access points and easements and constructing an accessible fishing pier on the riverbank. The Pier includes a parking area for vehicles transporting people with disabilities, a sidewalk leading to the pier and the riverbank, and a canoe portage on the west side of the pier. WPWA publishes a map and guide of canoeing and kayaking routes and sponsors guided paddles. WPWA members and volunteers also maintain navigable water trails by clearing blow downs and other debris throughout the year.

Interviews:

- Larry Mouradjian, Associate Director, DEM Bureau of Natural Resources talked about state efforts to improve access to waterways throughout the state
- Denise Poyer, Program Director, Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, talked about WPWA efforts and upcoming paddles.



Channel 10's R.J. Heim paddling on the Wood-Pawcatuck River.