

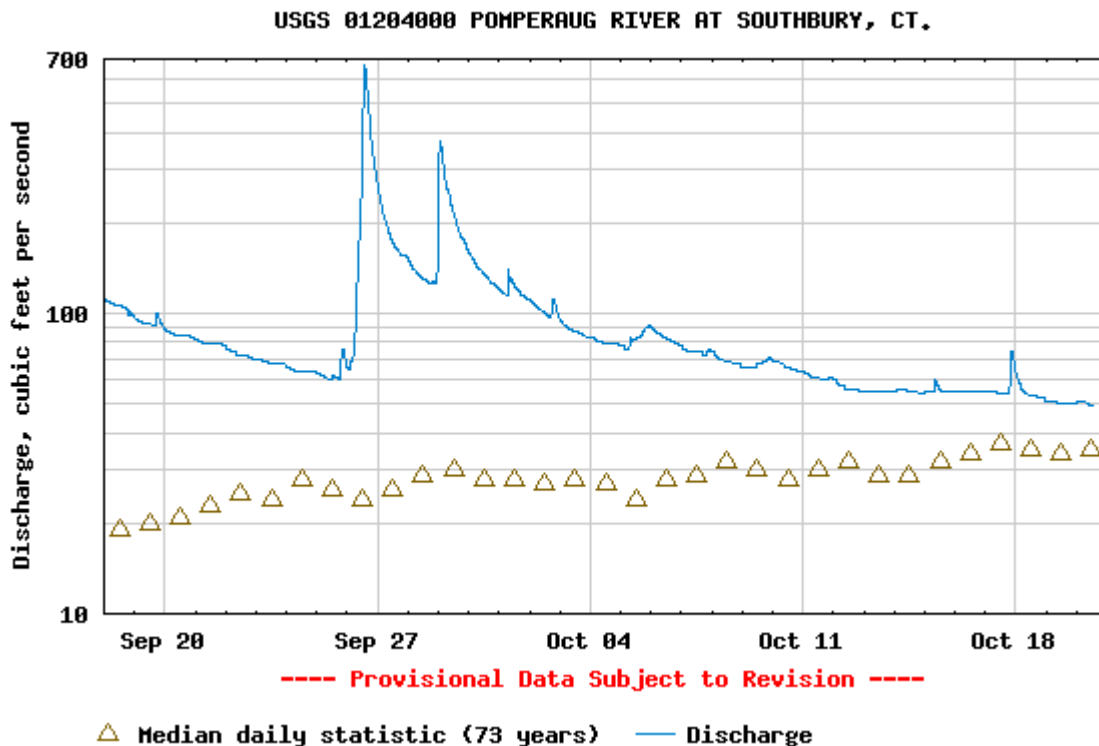
2008 DEP / PRWC Macroinvertebrate Survey Summary

The best laid plans can be derailed by Mother Nature. Witness PRWC's third annual Macroinvertebrate Survey.

RBV or "Rapid Bioassessment in Wadeable Streams and Rivers by Volunteer Monitors" is a CT DEP water quality monitoring program. Volunteers aid the DEP in surveying the State's rivers and streams for the biennial report to Congress, mandated by the federal Clean Water Act. Certain species of riffle-dwelling benthic macroinvertebrates are indicators of excellent water quality. The DEP's Mike Beauchene conducts a training workshop in the morning and confirms the identification of macros collected from river riffles in the afternoon.

It's a great activity for introducing Watershed citizens to the importance of water quality in our rivers.

Saturday, September 27 was reserved way back in January. The screen shot from PRWC's website link to the USGS gage on the Pomperaug River says it all:



Beginner's luck, perhaps, in 2006 water quantity for PRWC's first RBV survey was ideal.

A year ago in 2007 the summer was dry and the pre-survey riffle check team had trouble actually locating riffles.

The summer of 2008 was rainy and there was concern that there would be too much water in the rivers. However, on Tuesday, September 23, when Ed Edelson, Carol Haskins, Bob DuBois and Ingrid Davis surveyed likely riffles on the rivers, water levels were deemed safe for wading. Water levels would have continued to drop were it not for a storm on Thursday and Friday that changed the whole picture. A flurry of emails and it was decided to hold the Saturday morning

training at the Bent of River's barn despite the continuing rain which had effectively erased the riffles. 30 plus volunteers, including 7 young ladies from Westover School, showed up to learn all about Riffle-dwelling Benthic Macroinvertebrates.

Survey teams were organized, dates and locations selected for the following weekends. Critical to the data collected for the RBV surveys is accurate identification of the macroinvertebrates. The presence of at least four of the fussier species is required for a river to rate excellent water quality. Volunteers use the provided keys to make identifications and at least one of each type is sacrificed to the specimen bottle. Mike and his colleagues use these specimens to determine final identification.

Mike had other training sessions scheduled for the dates of our surveys. Fortunately, for us, Carol Haskins knows her Macros. She was indispensable to the teams she joined. The hardest part of this activity is figuring out these tiny guys. Three tails? Two tails? No tail? Does it curl up, zip around, hide in the debris in the tray, carry its house on its back? Where are its eyes? What eyes! Get out that magnifying glass. Thank goodness, Mike is the final arbiter. (Carol summarized the i.d.'s checked on the data sheets and the results look good if we all were accurate.)

The scheduled surveys were on two perfect Fall days and 8 surveys were completed by Sunday, October 12. Later, Carol met Mike, enroute to another training session, and turned over the specimens and the borrowed survey equipment. We await the final results. (There were 4 surveys in 2006 and 5 in 2007; thanks to Ed's encouragement we added three additional sites for 2008.)

Riffles surveyed were on the Pomperaug at the Bent of River and at Ewald Park in Southbury and at the Hollow in Woodbury; Transylvania Brook south of the Training School in Southbury; the Weekepeemee near Jack's Bridge, Woodbury; the Nonnewaug off of Minortown Road, and south of the Rt. 47 bridge, both in Woodbury and Sprain Brook of off Paper Mill Road in Woodbury.

Survey leaders were Ed Edelson, Carol Haskins, Tom Hook, Bob DuBois, Ingrid Davis, Jennifer Norden, and Westover's David Jean. A total of 31 volunteers participated, counting the leaders. New volunteers were David Jean and his team of Westover School students, Jackie and Julie Rowland, Jon Bunt, Jon Lloyd, Duncan and Suzanne Sellars, Leora Matison, Tom Meyer (and he loved it!), Eileen Denver, Joel Stephens and Sandy Cox. "Experienced" volunteers included Claudette Volage (2 surveys!), Shirley and George Presti, Brenda Weir, Bill Kimball, Daniel Sherr and Ethel Follett. Ann Lilley's daughter Mogie, husband Hank and daughter once again drove down from upstate New York to participate in the training.

And, all the fun is captured on video thanks to the beneficence of Charter Communications and PRWC's very own videographer, Sarah Martin. And, many thanks to Patti Doyle for keeping the emails and phone calls from volunteers straight! A real team effort all around.

Ingrid Davis
PRWC Macroinvertebrate Survey coordinator