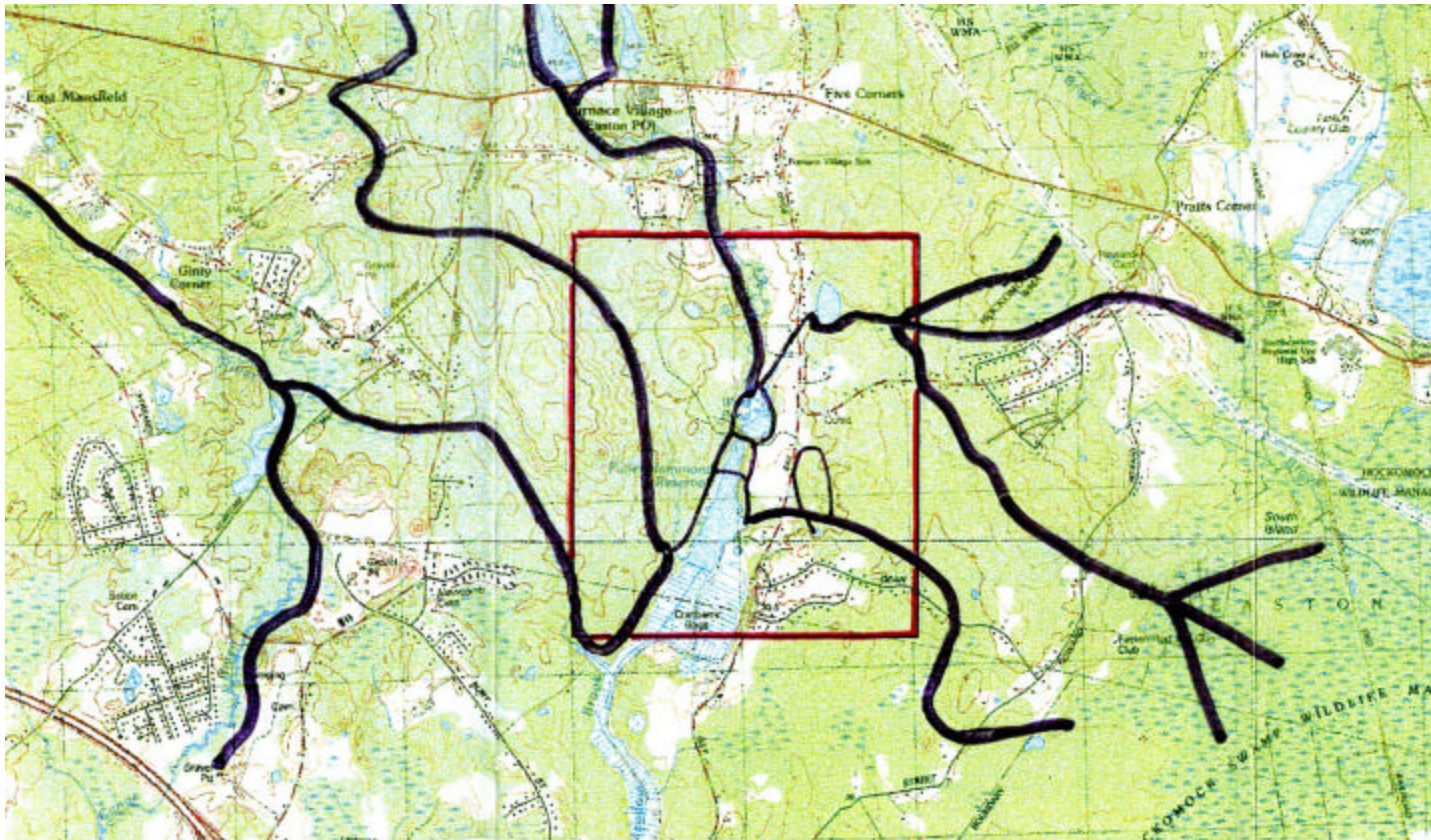


Wildlife Habitat Evaluation of the Canoe River in Norton MA

Corridors and connections

Call of the Wild biologist C. Diane Boretos conducted a wildlife habitat evaluation for the Friends of Wheaton Farm on the property along the Mulberry Meadow Brook. Ms. Boretos' investigations conclude that there are significant wildlife corridors between the Canoe River, Mulberry Meadow Brook, and portions of the Hockomock Swamp. Maintenance of these corridors is extremely important for genetic diversity and dispersal of young of various species including fox, coyote, deer, fisher, muskrat, mink, turkey, painted turtles, snapping turtles, spotted turtles and many of the amphibian/reptile species.



Otter tracks were observed moving from the Canoe River across North Washington St. These tracks could show that the otter migrate from the Canoe River to the Rumford River and the extensive conservation restriction land adjacent to it. Other signs of mammal movement along the Canoe River documented during this investigation include fisher, deer and fox/coyote.

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Invasive plant inventory and maps

Purple loosestrife and fanwort are the major invasive plants of the river system. Purple loosestrife has overtaken large portions of the marsh while the fanwort has become established in small to medium sized patches in the center of the river within the sandbars. Smaller stands of Phragmites can be seen in some of the wetlands. Winnecunnet Pond is infested with fanwort and variable water mil-foil. Upland species that are known to be exotic, invasive plants include oriental bittersweet, buckthorn and Japanese barberry.

Management recommendations for exotic, invasive plants

The Galerucella beetle has been observed in other watersheds in Norton and may spread to the Canoe River to mitigate the purple loosestrife. The fanwort should be removed from the river to prevent alteration of freshwater mussel/fish habitat. A permit may be necessary from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act; however, a management project specifically designed to improve rare species habitat may qualify as an exemption, provided a management plan is approved by NHESP. Phragmites should be monitored and mapped. Unfortunately the invasive plant management project for Winnecunnet Pond is not receive funding at Town Meeting and will not be addressed in the immediate future. However, the upland invasives appear to be in manageable quantities and could be removed by hand by small work-parties.

Other Recommendations

1. Continue to provide access to the river via work days and sponsored canoe trips.
2. Write fanwort removal management plan for NHESP approval. Sponsor removal day.
3. Investigate the remaining potential vernal pools for certification with NHESP.
4. Investigate and document the freshwater mussel populations.
5. Continue to work with Mass Highway Department regarding the water quality issues at the RT 495 interchanges.

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	Invasive Species
—	Purple loosestrife
—	Fanwort
—	Buckthorn
—	Japanese barberry
—	Oriental bittersweet

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Appendices:

A: Field Forms

B: Species List (Excel chart)

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