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WEKEPEKE HABITAT PROJECT PRESENTED

*Study Identifies Improvements and Management Criteria
To Improve Habitats and Water Resources*

Clinton, MA – On Monday August 29th a meeting was held at The Clinton Home, which brought together local and state officials and others to discuss the results of a fish habitat study conducted on portions of Wekepeke Brook and the former Clinton Water Works in Sterling, Massachusetts. The meeting was hosted by Northeast Geoscience Inc of Clinton at the request of Nestlé Waters North America Inc (NWNA). The presentation was given by Dr. Piotr Parasiewicz from the Rushing Rivers Institute in Amherst, Massachusetts, the organization that conducted the study.

The meeting was attended by a diverse group of local and state officials, environmental groups, and concerned citizens including Clinton Town Administrator Michael Ward, Sterling Conservation Commission Chair Barbara Roberti, Sterling Conservation Commission Agent Matt Marrow, Open Space Committee member Maryanne McLeod, Martha Morgan from the Nashua River Watershed Association, Deborah Grant, President of the Clinton Greenway Conservation Trust, Phil Truesdell of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game - Division of Fisheries, Russ Cohen of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game - Division of Ecological Restoration, and others.

The study was funded by Nestlé Waters North America Inc as a way to take advantage of a large database of information gathered during comprehensive testing by the company in 2008, as part of a spring water investigation. The project was initially proposed to create a set of tools that could be used to balance fish habitats and water withdrawals, and is now being expanded to try and implement some of the findings. According to Thomas Brennan, Senior Natural Resource Manager for Nestle Waters, “The Wekepeke is a unique cold water fish habitat and water resource. We hope that by following up on recommendations from the Rushing Rivers Study, positive improvements can be made. From the beginning, our objective for this project was to develop a model that integrates both sustainable water resource development and habitat modeling in order to guide water withdrawal practices. This approach could then be replicated at other NWNA sites in North America.” While there are currently no plans to revisit the withdrawal of spring water at the site, Rushing Rivers' study did evaluate potential water withdrawals under a variety of climatic conditions as well as a variety of mitigation measures designed to compensate for those scenarios.

The group has planned a public presentation of the study results in an effort to inform interested citizens and to get people involved. “The project will likely involve some work on modifying sections of the stream channel, such as placing artificial log jams or other types of obstructions in the streams.” noted Dr. Parasiewicz. “There are many people living in the area with an intimate knowledge of the watershed, and it would great to get them involved.”

The public meeting will be held on September 15th at 6:00 pm at the Chocksett Middle School Auditorium, 40 Boutelle Road Street, Sterling, Massachusetts. All are welcome. Additional information can be found at the Rushing Rivers Institute’s website at www.rushingrivers.org .