

Remarks by Ames Colt, chairman of the Rhode Island Bays, Rivers and Watersheds Coordination Team, at the celebration of the display panels at the Providence Place Mall on March 16, 2009:

Thank you Alicia Lehrer

Sen. Whitehouse, Administrator Leighton, distinguished guests.

We've come together today to celebrate the efforts of the Woonasquatucket river watershed council.

And to celebrate the river itself as it runs through our communities and our lives in its never-ending journey to the sea.

One reason I think so highly of this watershed council is that it acts on an ethical principle of fundamental importance.

The principle that the children and families who live off of Eagle Square and Manton Avenue deserve to enjoy a clean river blessed with abundant aquatic life just as much as the children and families who live around the headwaters of the Woonasquatucket in North Smithfield.

Life-affirming examples of how to fulfill such a call for environmental justice are found in the projects conceived and orchestrated by the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, from the Rising Sun Mills fish ladder to the Lippitt Greenway, to the educational display here in the mall.

We have a wonderful view here of how the Woonasquatucket runs through the heart of the providence renaissance. Of how it flows and pulses at the nerve center of Providence's revitalized communities, cultures, and economies.

However, one of my favorite views in Providence is actually two floors above in the food court. Looking west along Promenade and Kinsley Streets and toward the red brick bell towers of the Churches of Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of Lourdes.

To the west the Woonasquatucket runs straight and open and its banks are green in the summer and gold in the fall. This is the beginning of the Lippitt Greenway, a linear park and trail that brings children and all outdoor lovers back to the Woonasquatucket, a river that was once closed to them and even presented threats to our health.

That view west of the Woonasquatucket reveals accomplishments that are as essential to Providence's urban renaissance as any view east of the downtown's new condominium towers and office buildings.

Thank you very much.

Thank you Alicia Lehrer. Thank you Jane Sherman, thank you to all who contribute to the ideals and accomplishments of the WRWC.