

# Taunton River study kicked off

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MIDDLEBORO — The first time Kristen McDonald canoed down the Taunton River a few years ago, she couldn't help but be impressed.

"I was amazed at the little slice of natural scenic beauty the river was," said McDonald, who is an assistant for American Rivers Conservation located in Washington D.C. "I was left with a strong feeling about the river."

► RIVER, Page A4

## River: Ceremony kicks off three-year study

From Page A1

McDonald, along with environmental and political leaders from the region and Washington D.C. came together at the Middleboro Town Hall yesterday for a ceremony to help kick-off a three-year study that could help protect the Taunton River.

Congressmen Barney Frank and James McGovern, D-Mass., McDonald, and officials and residents from the communities of the Taunton River Watershed were on hand during the ceremony. The watershed communities are Taunton, Raynham, Middleboro, West Bridgewater and Halifax.

The purpose of the gathering was to celebrate the soon-to-be conducted Wild and Scenic River feasibility study for the 22-mile stretch of the upper Taunton River by the National Park Service. The study was the result of legislation signed by former President Bill Clinton last October.

McDonald said the urban sprawl is a main threat to waterways like the Taunton River.

"Fortunately there is a solution to sprawls. Only 2.5 percent of rivers in this country are designated as Wild and Scenic Rivers," she said. "Finding a river like the Taunton River is rare. This study enables communities to decide the role of the river."

According to James Fosburgh of the National Park Service, the Wild and Scenic feasibility study provides the Taunton River Watershed communities with staff assistance and financial resources, about \$300,000 in this case, in planning for the river's future.

"This legislation came through as a result of local citizens and officials coming together," Frank said. "We will take the results of this study and do the maximum we can to further the protection of the Taunton River."

Both U.S. Rep. Joe Moakley, D-Mass., and Sen. John

F. Kerry, D-Mass., who were unable to attend the ceremony, sent letters in support of the study.

"It is my hope that the study that will be conducted over the next three years will in fact determine that the Taunton River should be designated as a Wild and Scenic River," Moakley said in a letter read by McGovern. "I can not think of another river in the commonwealth that captures the magnificence of New England better than the Taunton River."

"This kind of work is the most valuable and powerful demonstration of environmental and community stewardship," Kerry said in a letter read by state Sen. Marc Pacheco, D-Taunton. "We all know the unique character and remarkable history of the Taunton River. You are now going to explore and explain them (through the study) in a most convincing fashion. The Taunton River is worthy of Wild and Scenic designation."