



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Fall 2012

Volume 24

The Thames River watershed includes the Five Mile, French, Moosup, Natchaug, Pachaug, Quinebaug, Shetucket, Willimantic, and Yantic Rivers and all their tributaries. We're not just the "Thames main stem."

Greetings from the [Thames River Basin Partnership](#). Once again this quarter our partners have proven their ability to work cooperatively on projects compatible with the [TRBP Workplan](#) and in support of our common mission statement to share organizational resources and to develop a regional approach to natural resource protection. I hope you enjoy reading about these activities as much as I enjoy sharing information about them with you. For more information on any of these updates, just click on the blue website hyperlinks in this e-publication, but be sure to come back to finish reading the rest of the report.

*Jean Pillo, Watershed Conservation Coordinator
Eastern Connecticut Conservation District*

If you missed the Fall 2012 meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership, then you missed a lively Soil Health Nutrient Pathways presentation by Ray Covino, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist for Windham County. NRCS nationally is promoting a [healthy soils](#) initiative to increase crop production, save money and decrease erosion and NPS runoff. In summary, the four rules for soil health are:

1. Minimize disturbance (no-till)
2. Maximize diversity (plant community, crop rotation)
3. Keep the soil surface covered (residue, living leaves)
4. Keep a living root in the soil as long as possible.

Healthy soils contain up to and exceeding 2000 pounds of animal life per acre of soil. The living biomass of soil is disturbed by tillage and over application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, and leads to increased erosion and runoff.

The NRCS will be presenting a workshop in their series on Healthy Soils in April 2013. Contact [Ray Covino](#) at (860) 779-0557 X 102 for more information.

TRBP Updates

A PowerPoint presentation has been posted to the TRBP website, recapping the June 22, 2012 Floating Workshop in Mansfield, CT. TRBP wishes to extend gratitude to all our presenters and partners that helped to make this workshop a success.

Partner Reports

The partnership was welcomed to the Northeast Connecticut Council of Government facility in Dayville, CT by Jim Larkin, Assistant Executive Director.

CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection reported that the [Connecticut Nitrogen Trading Program](#), designed to reduce nitrate pollution from reaching Long Island Sound, has already met the 2014 statewide goals for the program.

[Phosphorus reduction strategies](#) have been developed. A [public hearing](#) about the program has been rescheduled for November 28, 2012 from 9 AM – 11 AM in the Phoenix Auditorium of the DEEP Headquarters located at 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT. Public Act 12-155, *An Act Concerning Phosphorus Reductions in State Waters* specifically requires DEEP to collaborate with towns on the following:

- a state-wide response to address phosphorus nonpoint source pollution
- scientific methods to measure current phosphorus levels and to make future projections of phosphorus level
- approaches for municipalities to comply with standards established by the USEPA for phosphorus, including guidance

Comments on this process may be submitted by email to: DEEP.phosphorus@ct.gov

The Water Bureau Staff of CT DEEP has prepared a draft of the [2012 Biennial Water Quality Report](#). Questions regarding the draft document should be directed to Erik Bedan at (860) 424-3386 or erik.bedan@ct.gov. Comments on the draft document were accepted through October 29, 2012. North Running Brook in Woodstock has been taken off the impaired waters list after projects jointly completed by the NRCS and Eastern Connecticut Conservation District corrected farm runoff issues also adds this special request.

DEEP is seeking information from town staff, land use commissioners, private land owners and land/water managers regarding local actions that may have led to water quality improvements in the following greater Thames River basin watercourses:

- Lowermost Eagleville Brook (Mansfield)
- Lower Willimantic River (between confluence with Tenmile River in Lebanon/Columbia up to the base of Eagleville Lake Dam in Coventry/Mansfield)
- Lower Skungamaug River (mouth near Hop River/Andover upstream to Anderson Road crossing, Tolland)
- Lower Hop River (mouth near Willimantic River, Columbia/Coventry upstream to confluence with the Skungamaug River, Bolton)
- Lower North Running Brook (Woodstock)
- Lower French River (Thompson)
- Mid Quinebaug River (from confluence with Moosup River, Canterbury/Plainfield upstream to Putnam POTW, Putnam)
- Broad Brook (Preston)

Please contact [Eric Thomas](#) at DEEP at 860-424-3548 with information. This information can be incorporated into “Success Stories” for these once impaired waterbodies that have improved enough in at least one designated use to now meet our CT Water Quality Standards. They are each proposed for delisting in the 2012 CT Integrated Water Quality Report – a big goal of the Department, the TRBP and our watershed partners.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) is partnering with the USGS Water Science Center and will be installing and monitoring stream flow gauges in the lower Thames watershed to help establish baseline data. This project is being funded by US EPA Clean Water Act § 604B funds through the CT DEEP. The objective of this study is to gather data useful for the recently passed [Connecticut Stream Flow Regulations](#).

Ground breaking has taken place for a fish ladder over the Hallville Dam in Preston and the project is currently under construction. The fish ladder project was first proposed to the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) in 2004. It has taken eight years to complete the necessary fund raising, engineering designs and to obtain the property easements. Project updates are being posted regularly to the ECCD Facebook page.

The Poquetanuck Cove Conservation Action Planning (CAP) meetings have been progressing. During the CAP process a series of three meetings is held with local stakeholders, land use officials and conservation professionals to identify important resources of an area, identify the threats to those resources and finally suggest a list of actions to reduce those threats. ECCD has hired Holly Drinkuth of UCONN/The Nature Conservancy to assist with the process. This project is funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as part of the Long Island Sound Study. The third meeting CAP meeting is scheduled to take place on November 15 at St. James Church in Poquetanuck Village. For more information, contact [Jean Pillo](#), or visit the [ECCD website](#), click on Current Projects on the top bar, then click on the Poquetanuck Cove CAP tab.

The Long Island Sound Study Habitat Restoration Group invited ECCD to give a presentation about the Poquetanuck Cove CAP process at their September meeting to consider the process for future Habitat Restoration or Stewardship Site Selections processes.

ECCD led a Walktober paddle on Poquetanuck Cove on September 8. Eighteen people attended. Coast Guard Academy (CGA) Marine Biology Professor Karina Mrakovcich and Connecticut College Student Rebecca Horan demonstrated fish seining for the participants and yielded a healthy variety of small fish and shrimp. The CGA professional staff are helping to fill certain data gaps in Poquetanuck Cove and advising Rebecca on a special project there this year.

ECCD recently completed two agriculture BMP projects in Woodstock in partnership with NRCS and with funding assistance from the EPA §319 program through the CT DEEP. Roof gutters were installed on three barns and silage bunkers were improved to reduce NPS draining towards Peckham Brook in Woodstock.

ECCD has been working with the Amos Lake Association in a water quality investigation supported by an EPA Clean Water Act grant through the CT DEEP. Data was collected from the lake and tributary streams in advance of a more in depth investigation in 2013.

Thirty-five people were trained to conduct Rapid Bioassessments in wadable streams as part of The Last Green Valley (TLGV) Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program, including people from neighboring watersheds (Niantic, Eight Mile and Salmon Rivers.) Many volunteers from previous years have returned to resample where they collected samples in the past in the northern part of the watershed.

Additional TLGV volunteers were trained in the NRCS Stream Walk Protocol and a Stream Walk of the Flat Brook watershed is being coordinated by ECCD. This effort follows bacteria monitoring in the watershed earlier this year. ECCD is conducting a track down survey to determine the source of bacterial contamination found in Flat Brook in Ledyard.

The Last Green Valley is sponsoring a free [Land Use Leadership Alliance](#) (LULA) workshop series. The training program is structured to significantly benefit board members, citizen/advisory committee members, and planners, among other local leaders in developing and reinforcing their local land use decision-making skills and by providing them with strategic tools needed to address local land use issues of critical importance. The training program will also offer local officials and leaders a rare opportunity to discuss the land use issues they are facing in their communities with peers and experienced professionals. These workshops will be held at the Southern Connecticut Council of Government office in Norwich, CT on November 14, 28 and December 5. Participants may register online at <http://clear.uconn.edu/lu/tlgvseries.htm>. For more information about the workshops, please contact Lois Bruinooge at 860 774-3300 or lois@tlgv.org.

The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) is working with a large number of partners on a regional pilot project to engage family forest landowners along the CT, RI, and MA borders – the Southern New England Heritage Forest. The goal is to strengthen forest stewardship and conserve the many values of the region’s forest landscape for future generations. This project is funded by a US Forest Service grant through the North East State Foresters Association, and is one of four high priority interstate landscapes selected as a regional pilot.

In this region, they will be working with experienced forest landowners to reach out, in small group and one-on-one settings, to previously unengaged “woodland retreat” landowners in an effort to foster engagement and action. The focus communities will be Killingly, Putnam, Stafford, Thompson, and Union, CT; Brookfield, Douglas, Holland, Monson, Wales, Warren, and W. Brookfield, MA; and Burrillville, Foster, Gloucester, and Scituate, RI.

Project partners include The Last Green Valley, MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership, Opacum Land Trust, Highstead, CT Dept. of Energy & Environmental Protection, UConn Cooperative Extension, Mass. Dept. of Conservation & Recreation, Mass. Exec. Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, The Nature Conservancy, Northern RI Conservation District, RI Resource Conservation & Development Council, Mass Dept. of Conservation & Recreation,

RI Dept. of Environmental Management, Providence Water, and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. For more information, contact Lois Bruinooge, lois@tlgv.org. TLGV is working from students at Woodstock Academy to produce a 30 minute documentary about the Quinebaug River Water Trail as part of a Recreation Trails Grant award. The purpose of this documentary is to foster river stewardship. The grant will also fund 20 informational kiosks throughout the watershed as well as fund additional paddle guides and produce interactive mapping on their website.

The Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Council, with funding support from The Last Green Valley, will be continuing the successful AGvocate program. The AGvocate steering committee has retained the services of CME Associates of Woodstock to manage the AGvocate program over the next six months or so, through the next state-wide Agricultural Commissions Conference. John Guskowski will be the Project Manager. John has been involved with the AGvocate program from the beginning, and is excited to be able to help out in this transitional period. The new email address for the AGvocate program is: AGvocate@outlook.com.

Celebrating Agriculture had a dry sunny dry day on September 22 for the approximately 3,500 participants. They were able to view the intense wood cutting competition, sit back on a trailer load of hay as they explored the neighboring dairy farm, visit the variety of exhibits from beeswax candles to conservation groups, animals, maple syrup, ag organizations and more, to taking the wagon transport to the Brunn Barn antique tractors and equipment. New demonstrations included the 4-H using a Squeeze-O to make apple sauce, a UConn Canine unit, and a local goat farmer sharing techniques for making soft goat milk cheese. A variety of lunch foods were available at The Woodchoppers Café, Creamery Brook Bison booth, the Senexet Grange, CT Poultry Barbecue and from vendors who served ice cream, maple cotton candy, mushrooms, etc. Instead of handing out programs, local artist Jessica Machnicki provided a painting that was used to create large signs and a Scavenger Hunt for children. Volunteers from neighboring schools and the Glastonbury FFA Chapter helped the committee keep things running smoothly.

After successfully preserving a mile of Shunock River frontage in North Stonington over the past decade (*predominantly through a local subdivision requirements*) and recently receiving a very generous gift of 62 acres of wooded uplands that contains a stream that drains south toward the Shunock River, Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC) is now endeavoring to create an expanded wildlife corridor in this area through purchase of a 70+ acre woodland block. They are hopeful that the CT DEEP will approve their application for monies in this recent round of state Open Space grants to get the fundraising efforts off to a good start.

ALC was recently awarded funds from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as part of the Long Island Sound Study to create early successional habitat on one of their Stonington preserves. This project will enhance the habitat value for the New England Cottontail, a species in decline in Connecticut.

The USGS Connecticut Water Science Center will likely be reorganized into the New England Water Science Center as part of a cost cutting strategy. Staff will be realigned when the restructuring takes place.

The NRCS is currently operating under a federal budget continuing resolution and therefore will be unable to take applications for the Grassland Preserve Program at this time. In the last fiscal year, the NRCS Windham County office completed projects impacting over 2800 acres of land through their various programs.

News from the Municipalities

The Town of Hampton voted to purchase a 160+ acre Loiselle parcel. This is the first major piece of property purchased by the town for open space. This parcel is located on the south side of Route 6. The property borders Parker Road and RT 97 just south of RT 6. There is a small access from both roads.

The Ledyard Conservation Commission and Ledyard Garden Club are proceeding with a demonstration riparian buffer project at the end of Royal Oak Drive on town owned land. This land abuts Poquetanuck Cove. Invasive species on the land have been removed in consultation with an arborist. The invasive plants will be replaced with native plants in spring.

The Town of Woodstock Agriculture Commission, Conservation Commission and Open Space Land Acquisition and Farmland Preservation Committee are co-sponsoring *An Evening with the Commissioner of Agriculture* on Wednesday, November 14th, 2012 at 7pm at the Woodstock Town Hall Lower Level Meeting Room. The town hall is located at 415 Rte 169. Woodstock CT. Steven Reviczky, Connecticut's Commissioner of Agriculture and Joan Nichols of the Connecticut Farm Bureau will speak on the current climate for agriculture in Washington after the election, what's coming up in the 2013 legislative session in Hartford, and answer any questions concerning agricultural grants, regulations, government support, land use, farmland preservation, etc. This meeting is open to all who are interested in farming from Woodstock and surrounding towns.

Other news

NEIWPCC and the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation are pleased to announce the dates of the 24th Annual Northeastern Nonpoint Source Pollution Conference. The conference will take place at the Sheraton Hotel in Burlington, Vermont on May 14 & May 15, 2013. For more information and to see presentations from previous years, please visit us on the web at <http://www.neiwpcc.org/npsconference> They are also seeking abstracts for conference presentations on select topics related to nonpoint source pollution. If you would like to submit an abstract for consideration, please email the requested information to cryan@neiwpcc.org or fill out an electronic form at the Nonpoint Source Pollution Conference website (<http://www.neiwpcc.org/npsconference/nps-abstracts.asp>). The deadline for submission is December 14, 2012.

Warren Kimball of the MA DEP Watershed Program Manager, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Worcester, MA presented a webinar featuring "Water Quality Report Cards- Assessments made accessible, the Massachusetts experience" on September 12, 2012. Click [here](#) to view the presentation. Warren also gave a presentation on the SMART monitoring program in Massachusetts which is also available for download from this site.

The latest issue of "Sound Update" focuses on invasive species around the Sound and is now available online at: <http://longislandsoundstudy.net/2012/08/invasive-species-issue/>. If you would like hard copies of this publication for distribution, please let me know and I will be happy to send some along. This newsletter is mailed out to more than 4,000 residents in the Sound's watershed. If you would like to be added to their mailing list, please sign up by visiting their Web site at <http://longislandsoundstudy.net/> and clicking on the "Stay Connected" box.

Mastering the Business of Agriculture: A hands-on business course developed for Connecticut farms looking for:

- ways for you to increase your farm's profitability,
- expansion and diversification opportunities that might be right for you,
- identifying attainable goals for the future of your business,
- analyzing the costs and benefits of those goals, and
- developing action plans to accomplish them and increase your farms profitability.

Tuition is free for farms within The Last Green Valley Heritage Corridor or \$200 for farms outside the area. The course will consist of 10 evening weekly sessions beginning Jan 8th at the QVCC campus in Danielson. The program is limited to only 12 farms (each with multiple attendees). There is no application deadline, but space is limited. For more information contact Paula Stahl at 860-486-1215 or paula.stahl@uconn.edu.

The Connecticut Farm Energy Program will host it's 2nd Annual Connecticut Farm & Energy Expo on Saturday December 1, 2012 from 10am -3pm at the Glastonbury Riverfront Community Center located at 300 Welles Street, Glastonbury, CT 06033. This event will showcase 30+ Energy & Agriculture Exhibitors, Informative Sessions on the hour every hour from 11am - 2pm for homeowners, agriculture producers, businesses and community members interested in learning more about energy opportunities and technology in Connecticut. There will also be eco friendly cars onsite, interactive displays, demos for the kids including alternative energy powered ice cream, and the healthy eating specialist from Whole Foods Market will be onsite that day. Admission is Free and all are welcome to attend this Statewide Event. For more information about our exhibitors and sponsors go to the CT Farm Energy website <http://www.CTFarmEnergy.org> or call the Connecticut Farm Energy Program at 860-345-3977.

If you would like your organization's efforts included in the next edition of the TRBP Partners in Action Report, consider attending one of our quarterly meetings. It includes a [TRBP Plan of Work](#) activity reporting session, which is an informal "round the table" discussion of Partner activities. It is a great time to network with like-focused organizations. All meetings begin at 9:30 AM. Generally, the TRBP meet quarterly on the 3rd Tuesday of the month

The next meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership will be held January 2013. The specific date, location and theme haven't been determined. Meeting content and locations will be posted on the TRBP [Calendar](#) of upcoming events, or contact [Jean Pillo](#) at (860) 928-4948 for more information or to be added to the TRBP distribution list

If you are not already on the e-distribution list for this publication, contact [Jean Pillo](#) by email and request to be added, or you can download the most current version of this quarterly publication from the [TRBP website](#).

The Thames River Basin Partnership is a voluntary, cooperative effort to share resources, and strives to develop a regional approach to resource protection. The Partnership is made up of a variety of agencies, organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, companies, and individuals interested in the environmental health of the greater Thames River basin. Partial funding support for FY 12 for TRBP Coordinator time has been provided by The Last Green Valley. Additional sources of funding are being sought to continue the TRBP Coordinator position. Please consider making a donation to the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District and designate it to support the Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator position.