



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Spring 2013

Volume 26

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 Spring 2013 meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership, then you missed a presentation by Scott Gravatt, Executive Director of the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District. Scott gave an overview of the 9 year process to design, permit, gather easements and finally construct the Hallville Fishway, which is now open for business. For the first time in over 150 years, fish that live in the Atlantic Ocean will be able to get over the Hallville Dam in Preston, CT. First proposed to ECCD by DEEP in 2004, this fishway restores access for primarily alewife and will allow them to return to Hallville Pond each spring for spawning. A dedication ceremony was held on May 2, 2013.

TRBP Updates

An important notice to Thames River Basin Partnership website users: The TRBP website was created using Microsoft's FrontPage software, which is obsolete and no longer supported by Microsoft. The Partners have formed a website subcommittee to explore options for moving the website to a new platform. For the time being, TRBP website updates after 2010 are only visible using the Microsoft Windows Explorer web browser.

A seven question opinion survey was created and sent out to partners on the TRBP e-distribution list. Twenty-one replies were recorded. Survey results were shared with the Partnership. Group consensus supports continuance of a TRBP website especially for access to the Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Report quarterly newsletter, meeting notes and agendas and Floating Workshop information. Links to Partner websites and TRBP documents were also considered important. The TRBP website subcommittee will continue to develop options and

cost estimates and funding opportunities for converting the website to a new platform. We appreciate your patience during this time.

The TRBP Floating Workshop XIII will focus on Connecticut's Changing Coastline and will feature a tour of the lower Thames River to review impacts from Super Storm Sandy and Tropical Storm Irene and potential future threats to existing infrastructure. The exact June workshop date has not been determined. If you are interested in serving on the Floating Workshop planning committee, have an interesting presentation to include as part of the workshop or just want more information, please contact [Jean Pillo](#).

Partner Reports

The [U.S. Geological Survey](#) (USGS) will discontinue operation of up to 375 streamgages nationwide due to budget cuts as a result of sequestration. Additional streamgages may be affected if partners reduce their funding to support USGS streamgages. The USGS is working to identify which streamgages will be impacted and when, and will post this information as it becomes available. Streamgages are used nationwide to predict and address drought and flood conditions by monitoring water availability. The USGS and over 850 Federal, State, and local agencies cooperatively fund the USGS streamgaging network, which consists of over 8,000 streamgages. When budget fluctuations occur, the network is impacted. For more information contact Virginia de Lima at 860-291-6741 or vdelima@usgs.gov.

The National Water Quality Assessment Program New England study presented by Elaine Trench at the July 2012 TRBP meeting is now available online. Click [here](#) to access this report. Elaine Trench, long time TRBP representative for the USGS, announced her retirement at the end of April 2013. A note of appreciation was sent to Elaine on behalf of the organization.

The Thames Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited had a very busy quarter.

- TVTU volunteers did a major clean up along the Yantic River Trout Management Area in Bozrah and Lebanon. The Lebanon town crew took away a truckload of trash and contacted the State about illegal dumping on an old town road. This project was supported with TLGV river clean up funds.
- National Fishing in Schools Pilot Program – five eastern CT schools were selected to receive grants (funded by the National Recreation Foundation). The grant supported the purchase of equipment and educational materials to teach the lifetime sport of fly fishing to middle and high school students. Over twenty participants (teachers, park and recreation staff and TVTU mentors) attended training. TU received a portion of the funds to support on-the-water fly fishing training to youth.
- Sea Run Trout Initiative – CT TU chapters assisted CT DEEP with their effort to restore wild coastal brook trout to Connecticut. Two chapters provided funding for temperature data loggers. These loggers were installed at multiple locations along the Anguilla, Cops and Donahue Brooks in Stonington. Data will be collected for a year.
- Trout in the Classroom – participating schools are planning their trout release/field days. Many schools have participated in the program for their 6th time this year. TU members are writing letters to their state representatives to express their concern about the possible

closing of the Kensington Hatchery which supplies all the TIC trout eggs for the program.

- Culverts Project – DEEP habitat biologists are reviewing data and numerous photos supplied by TVTU volunteers on the road culverts that may fragment fish habitat.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, in partnership with the Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Council will be hosted a two day soil health workshop on April 22 and 23. Topics of the workshop included Principles of Soil Health, Economics of Soil Health, Holistic Farm Management, Year-Round Grass Productions Systems, and soil health demonstrations.

The impact of sequestration and future Farm Bill funding will have an impact on USDA NRCS programs. It is anticipated that the CT EQIP program funding will be reduced from \$5 million to \$3.6 million. New CSP application are being accepted but there is no funding dedicated to the program at the time of this report.

There are thirty three Long Island Sound Stewardship sites in Connecticut and New York. The Long Island Sound Stewardship Committee has developed a website atlas where more information on each of those special places is available. Click [here](#) to visit this new website. Standards are being developed for nominating new areas for inclusion in the program.

CT DEEP is required by Congress to develop statewide water quality standards. The most current Connecticut water quality standards went into effect in 2011. Click [here](#) to review this document. CT DEEP is moving towards codifying the standards into regulations. For more information, click [here](#).

Permits related to Phosphorus limits are a prime focus of CT DEEP Water Bureau and Land Reuse staff. CT DEEP efforts to implement [stream flow regulations](#) that went into effect in December 2011 began with mapping and classifying streams in the Thames River basin.

Staff at the Coast Guard Academy has been working with local public schools on estuary education. They also mentored Connecticut College student Rebecca Horan on a benthic and salinity study of Poquetanuck Cove. Ms. Horan will be preparing a presentation on the outcomes of her study.

The Project O Seal Field Study Program (mid-October through mid-April) uses methods of population counting to determine the seal count in Long Island Sound and will be used to compare data from other classes. Behavioral studies of annual migrations and long-term population data are being graphed and subject to a mathematical analysis of data. Hauled-out seals are counted and compared to the seals in the water. Environmental factors such as weather, tides, wind and waves influence the accuracy of population count. This season, seals have been reported in the Thames River near Allen Point in Ledyard.

Mickey Weiss is continuing his study of blue crabs, primarily in Birch Plain Creek and the Poquonnock River in Groton.

Avalonia Land Conservancy recently closed on the property acquisition of [Bell Cedar Swamp](#) in North Stonington. This 90 acre property abuts a 70 acre holding owned by The Nature Conservancy. ALC is currently seeking matching funds to purchase Babcock Ridge in North Stonington. More information on this property can be found [here](#).

In addition to the Hallville Fishway reported earlier in this newsletter, ECCD staff has been focused on multiple projects in eastern Connecticut.

- In cooperation with the USGS Water Science Center and with funding through the CT DEEP, three stream flow gauges were installed in southeastern Connecticut to collect baseline measurements of stream flow.
- A back yard BMP workshop was held in March to educate landowners about lawn nutrients and septic tank management and a Low Impact Development workshop for land use officials is being scheduled. These workshops are part of the Poquetanuck Cove Conservation Action Plan process.
- Educational signage is being designed for the East Lyme Old Colony Road neighborhood where tree filters were installed to help improve water quality in Latimer Brook.
- The Flat Brook Watershed Based Plan based on a track down survey was prepared and submitted to CT DEEP. Flat Brook in Ledyard is listed as impaired for recreational contact due to bacteria concentrations. Click [here](#) to see the final document.
- ECCD, CRCCD, and the CT Horse Council sponsored a free workshop at Killingworth Horse Farm in Killingworth, CT on May 4, 2013. The goal of the workshop was to learn how horse owners can make a contribution to protecting and improving water quality by use of best management practices. Technical and financial assistance available to help with planning and implementation was also described. Guest speakers included Dr. Jen Nadeau, Equine Extension Specialist from UCONN, and Javier Cruz, district conservationist for the Natural Resource Conservation Service. This was an interactive walking workshop where speakers would address resource concerns and discuss ways to prevent environmental impact.
- In cooperation with The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program volunteers and the Amos Lake Association, ECCD will be conducting water quality investigations in Amos Lake, the Mount Hope River and the lower reach of the Natchaug River this season. Amos Lake is listed as impaired due to excess nutrients. The Mount Hope River and lower Natchaug Rivers are both listed as impaired to bacteria. Quality Assurance Project Plans for the water quality monitoring have been drafted and monitoring will begin when appropriate for each project.

Volunteers participating in The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program were recognized for their efforts at the annual TLGV Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Appreciation event in early April. Several speakers on important water quality topics gave presentations to keep the volunteers motivated.

Other news

The US EPA National Rivers and Streams Assessment 2008 – 2009: A Collaborative Survey reveals that 55% of streams in America do not support healthy populations of aquatic life, with phosphorus and nitrogen pollution, and poor habitat the most widespread problems. Click [here](#)

to read a fact sheet on this study. The full draft report and study methods can be viewed [here](#). The most recent Connecticut Integrated Water Quality Report to Congress (2012) is available [here](#).

EPA has released final nonpoint source program and grants guidelines for states and territories for the Clean Water Act section 319 grant program. The section 319 program provides funding to states, territories and tribes to mitigate nonpoint source or diffuse sources of pollution. These guidelines are applicable for Fiscal Year 2014 grant awards and subsequent section 319 grant awards, and replace guidelines that have been in effect since 2004. The final guidelines provide updated program direction, an increased emphasis on watershed project implementation to restore impaired waters, increased accountability measures and appropriate flexibility for state programs, while emphasizing the importance of states updating their nonpoint source management programs to ensure that section 319 funds are targeted to the highest priority activities. After extensive state/EPA work, stakeholder outreach and public comment, the guidelines have now become available at <http://www.epa.gov/nps/319>.

EPA's app and website, How's My Waterway, helps you find information on the condition of your local waterways, what's being done to protect and restore those waterways, and what you can do to help. And now, How's My Waterway lets people find out even more about their local waterways. The new features include search results color-coded by condition, local information on watersheds, a watershed locator tool, and options to look up dischargers regulated by permits and individual runoff control projects for a specific waterway. To view the app, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/mywaterway>

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 **July 16, 2013** at Project O in Groton. Meeting content and locations will be posted on the TRBP [Calendar](#) of upcoming events. You must use Windows Explorer to view the website. 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](#) (Windows Explorer required).

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 13 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.