



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Summer 2012

Volume 23

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 Summer 2012 meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership, then you missed a presentation by Elaine Trench of the USGS Connecticut Water Science Center, who has been involved with the interpretation of data trends as part of the [National Water Quality Assessment Program](#) (NAWQA). The long-term goals of the NAWQA program are to describe the status and trends in the quality of a large, representative part of the Nation's surface and ground water resources, and to provide a sound, scientific understanding of the primary factors affecting the quality of these resources. The full report [Status and Trends of Nutrients in Streams of the Northeastern US](#) (USGS Scientific Investigation Report 2011-5144) is available for download. Trends in the Quinebaug River were highlighted for our audience. Downward trends in nutrient loading were noted, but questions about the impact of development in previously undeveloped headwater areas are unanswered.

TRBP Updates

The TRBP Floating Workshop 12 featuring *The Willimantic River After 40 Years of the Clean Water Act* took place on June 22 at the Eagleville Fire House in Mansfield, CT. Keynote speaker Hugo Thomas, formerly with the Willimantic River Task Force, presented a slide show featuring a canoe trip with UCONN students in the 1970s, when the river changed color depending on what color dye the local mills were using on a particular day, and it was not uncommon to find feces floating in the river from inadequate sewage treatment upstream. The [Willimantic River Alliance](#), the current stewards of this river, presented Hugo with a *Spirit of the River Award* for his efforts to publicize the river's condition. Chris Bellucci of the CT DEEP, explained the strategy to improve conditions in the upper Willimantic River as outlined in the Willimantic River TMDL. Lois Bruinooge of The Last Green Valley announced that in May 2012, the National Park Service designated the Willimantic River a National Recreation Trail. The

Willimantic River is a good example of a success story for the Clean Water Act, transitioning from an open sewer to a National Recreational Trail! Unfortunately, a paddle on Eagleville Lake and hike along the Willimantic River Greenway scheduled for later in the afternoon was cancelled due to severe weather. Click [here](#) to link to the TRBP Floating Workshop page, where you will have an option to download a pictorial summary of the workshop and Hugo's entire presentation. Special thanks to Eric Thomas (his nephew) for converting the slides to web compatible format.

Click [here](#) to see an excellent video about the Clean Water Act featuring former Congressman Jim Oberstar, who played a key role in getting the act passed.

Partner Reports

U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced in May that the 21-mile Willimantic River Water Trail has been designated a Nation Recreation Trail. The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) and the Willimantic River Alliance (WRA) worked cooperatively to achieve this recognition. In addition, the Quinebaug River Water Trail, already a National Recreation Trail, has been expanded by 35 miles for a total of 45 miles of easily-accessible and enjoyable paddling on the Quinebaug. Quinebaug River Paddle guides are available from [TLGV](#). Willimantic River Water Trail maps are available [here](#).

Connecticut Sea Grant is taking part in preparations for the biannual Long Island Sound Research Conference. This is the 10th conference celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Long Island Sound Foundation, whose mission is to provide future generations with knowledge and information needed to preserve and protect Long Island Sound. For more information about this conference, click [here](#).

The CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) has drafted a [Statewide Total Maximum Daily Load](#) (TMDL) for indicator bacteria and is accepting public comments on this document.

The CT DEEP is currently accepting applications for [Clean Water Act § 319 NPS](#) grant funds for watershed based planning or implementation work to address non-point sources of water pollution. The current deadline is August 3, 2012 but an extension of that date is being considered.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will be hosting a Healthy Soil Tour for approximately 25 participants including NRCS and Conservation District staff. Healthy soils help to increase infiltration, decrease runoff and capture nutrients. This tour is planned for October after the crops are off the field. NRCS Chief White will join the tour which will include stops at farms in Woodstock.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) recently completed several projects in Woodstock, CT. A demonstration bioretention rain garden was installed behind the Woodstock Historical Society located at 523 Route 169. This stormwater retrofit will capture and infiltrate stormwater runoff from the WHS property and reduce soil erosion in the Woodstock Arboretum located down slope of the property. Native plants were used to improve a vegetated riparian buffer along an unnamed stream that flows through the Woodstock Golf Course, which will slow down, infiltrate and remove contaminants from runoff from the 9th hole green and the 1st hole tee. Roof gutters were installed on several buildings on the Elm Farm, redirecting the relatively

clean rain water away from manure contaminated surfaces. A second project on the Elm Farm to redirect silage leachate away from surface water streams is ready to get underway as soon as the contracts are finalized.

ECCD's Judy Rondeau, Natural Resource Specialist and Jean Pillo, Watershed Conservation Coordinator both recently passed an examination to become a [Certified Professional in Sediment and Erosion Control](#).

Avalonia Land Conservancy is in the process of acquisition of property in North Stonington known as [Bell Cedar Swamp](#). They have applied for an open space grant and are actively fundraising to obtain the matching funds required to complete this sale.

Project Oceanology, a non-profit organization focused on marine science and environmental education, is participating with the CT DEEP Long Island Sound program to help study blue crab life history with volunteers. For more information on blue crabs, click [here](#).

The Last Green Valley (TLGV) is sponsoring river and shoreline clean ups by offering mini grants for groups wishing to sponsor an event. Click [here](#) for more information. A clean up of the Quinebaug River in Canterbury is scheduled for August 18. The goal is to remove dozens of tires and pallets between Mansfield Park and Butts Bridge Road. A pizza lunch will be provided to volunteers at the completion of the clean up. For more information, contact [Lois Bruinooge](#).

News from the Municipalities

The Ledyard Conservation Commission and Ledyard Garden Club are working cooperatively on a project to install a demonstration riparian buffer on town owned land that abuts Poquetanuck Cove. The neglected parcel had been over taken by invasive species including autumn olive and bittersweet vines. After the removal of the invasive plants, the area will be replanted with native plant species suitable for living along the water's edge. The project is being funded in part by a small grant from the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut.

The Town of Ledyard is actively promoting the development of the [TriTown Trail](#), a proposed 14-mile bike and pedestrian path stretching from the tip of Bluff Point State Park to Preston, CT as South-Eastern Connecticut's first regional trail. They are currently negotiating a means to connect the trail without impact to the Groton Reservoir system.

The Town of Brooklyn passed an ordinance specifying the Conservation Commission is not responsible for Level A Aquifer Protection, but rather will establish a new body to oversee the Aquifer Protection Overlay Zone.

Other news

EPA has released a new, web-based tool to help a variety of stakeholders evaluate the economic and social impacts of pollution controls needed to meet water quality standards set for specific uses for a waterbody, such as swimming or fishing. This tool could be used by states, territories, tribes, local governments, industry, municipalities and stormwater management districts.

The tool will help stakeholders identify and organize the necessary information, and perform the calculations to evaluate the costs of pollution control requirements necessary to meet specific water quality standards. The tool prompts users to submit treatment technology information, alternative pollution reduction techniques and their costs and efficiencies, and financing

information, as well as explain where that information can be found. [Click here for more information](#). For additional information, contact Gary Russo at 202-566-1335 or email russo.gary@epa.gov.

Excess nutrients in the water cause algae to grow faster than ecosystems can handle. Very large growths of algae (algal blooms) can severely reduce or eliminate oxygen in the water, sometimes leading to illness or death of fish and other aquatic life. Some algal blooms are harmful to humans because they produce elevated toxins and bacterial growth that can sicken people who contact the polluted water or drink contaminated water. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus can travel thousands of miles to coastal areas where the effects of the pollution are felt in the form of hypoxic zones with scarce oxygen and scarce aquatic life. Examples of this phenomenon are seen in the Gulf of Mexico and Chesapeake Bay. More than 100,000 miles of rivers and streams, close to 2.5 million acres of lakes, reservoirs and ponds, and more than 800 square miles of bays and estuaries in the United States have poor water quality because of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution.

To help address this growing problem, EPA's Office of Water is engaging watershed groups and other organizations to augment the discussion about the importance of reducing nutrient pollution before it further degrades our invaluable water resources. Our goal is to help organizations like yours engage their communities on this important environmental issue. In order to help reach a variety of audiences, we developed some new outreach materials, including: **Community Outreach Toolkit** -- Designed to assist watershed groups, NGOs, states, and federal partners with messaging and outreach to the media about nutrient pollution. Media outlets—newspapers, magazines, radio stations, television stations and websites—are important ways to inform a broad range of people about nutrient pollution and the importance of clean water, and local actions that can be taken to reduce sources of this pollution. The toolkit also includes information about [EPA's Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox](#), a collection of public service announcements (PSAs) that have been developed by states, local government and others on nutrient pollution and other water quality issues affecting the nation's waters.

- **[Nutrient Pollution Video \(EPA YouTube channel\)](#)** <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCicSNnKUvM&feature=plcp> This video aims to raise awareness about nutrient problem, the first step in addressing and reducing the problem.
- **Postcard/Poster**—Shows a before and after photo of Lake Erie to illustrate the impacts of nutrient pollution.
- **Future Farmers of America Curriculum** – EPA worked with several other federal agencies to develop lesson plans for young farmers about source water protection and management practices that can help control runoff to protect surface and groundwater.

You can access these and other materials on our Nutrient Pollution Microsite and Resource Directory at www.epa.gov/nutrientpollution. The site includes a wealth of information on EPA actions to reduce nutrient pollution, state efforts to develop numeric nutrient criteria, and EPA tools, data, research, and reports. There is also information for homeowners, students, and educators, including basic information about the sources of nutrient pollution; how it affects the environment, economy, and public health; and what people can do to reduce the problem. The home page features an interactive map with local case study examples.

EPA Announces Framework to Help Local Governments Manage Stormwater Runoff and Wastewater EPA has issued a new framework to help local governments meet their Clean Water Act obligations. The Integrated Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater Planning Approach Framework assists EPA regional offices, states, and local governments to develop voluntary storm and wastewater management plans and implement effective integrated approaches that will protect public health by reducing overflows from wastewater systems and pollution from stormwater. In developing the framework, the EPA worked in close coordination with a variety of stakeholders, including publicly owned treatment works, state water permitting authorities, local governments, and nonprofit environmental groups. EPA's framework outlines new flexibility to pursue innovative, cost-saving solutions, like green infrastructure, and will help communities as they develop plans that prioritize their investments in storm and wastewater infrastructure. For more information: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/integratedplans.cfm>

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 on Tuesday, October 16, 2012 beginning at 9:30 AM. The location and theme of this meeting is still being determined.

Look for updates at www.trbp.org. Please mark your calendars to save the date. 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.