



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Winter 2012

Volume 21

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 Winter 2012 meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership, then you missed an inspiring presentation by Holly Drinkuth of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the Community Natural Resource Planning Program (CNP) on her successful efforts to bring eight municipal leaders together to sign an [intermunicipal compact](#) focused on conservation strategies that will protect and/or restore water quality within the Natchaug River Basin Watershed. Holly and a team of other TNC staff coordinated a [Conservation Action Plan](#) process, which involved a series of three meetings involving local municipal representatives and land use officials along with conservation professionals from many fields. Together they identified the highest value resources within the watershed basin, listed the threats to those resources and finally developed a prioritized list of actions to alleviate those threats. The Natchaug River is a trophy trout stream and the watershed provides drinking water to the city of Willimantic and parts of Mansfield, CT.

John Meyer, a participant in the Natchaug River Basin Conservation Compact process, produced a short movie titled *For Grandchildren; the Natchaug River Basin Conservation Compact*. Click [here](#) to see this 11 minute production (with sound) posted on YouTube.

The winter meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership was hosted by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service at the new Windham County USDA Service Center, located at 71 Westcott Street, Danielson, CT 06239. Their new phone number is (860) 779-0557

TRBP Updates

At the January 17, 2012 meeting, the Thames River Basin Partnership voted to approve an updated [TRBP Plan of Work](#). While the focus of the Partnership remains the same, the format was updated and it was agreed that the work plan would be adjusted to begin in January instead of July. Also, instead of an annual work plan, the period of time covered by this work plan was

extended from one to three years, with an annual review of the Plan of Work at the January meeting.

The TRBP Floating Workshop 12 will focus on the Willimantic River and likely be scheduled towards the end of June 2012. A Floating Workshop Committee was formed. If you are interested in joining the TRBP Floating Workshop Planning Committee, please contact [Jean Pillo](#) at 860-928-4948.

Partner Reports

The [Eastern Connecticut Conservation and Development Council](#) (EC RC&D) has hired [Sal DeCarli](#) as their new part time Project Manager. Sal will be based out of the NRCS office at 24 Hyde Avenue, Vernon, CT. To reach Sal, call 860-373-7408.

The EC RC&D Council and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) sponsored a well attended series of Healthy Soils Workshops to promote use of cover crops to improve soil health. Each day of the multi-day workshop covered a different facet of land use, and topics were directly relevant to the land use type of the day.

The USDA NRCS has many programs to assist private land owners with conservation initiatives, from energy conservation, forest management, habitat improvement or farmland protection. Their [website](#) lists all their programs and the closing dates for applications.

The Community & Natural Resource Planning Program (CNP) is a program of the University of Connecticut Extension previously known as the Green Valley Institute. GVI focused mainly on conducting programs within the Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor. CNP offers the same programs and educational workshops, but now throughout the State of Connecticut. CNP's goal is to improve the knowledge base from which land use and natural resource decisions are made. To learn more about the types of programs that are offered by CNP, please visit the [GVI website](#). They will be launching a new website soon. For more information, or to schedule a workshop, or to be added to the CNP listserv, contact [Sue Westa](#) at 860-774-9600.

The Connecticut Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) Program will be hosting a residential rain garden training event. This 1.5 day workshop will start with a classroom session (Thursday, March 29 from 8:30 AM – 3 PM), then conclude with an actual installation of a rain garden (Friday, March 30 from 8:30AM – 12:30 PM). Instructors are from the University of Connecticut NEMO program and the University of Rhode Island Outreach Center. The workshop fee for the private sector is \$25. Municipal/non-profit organizations and private citizens will get a \$5 discount. To register for this program, click [here](#), or contact [Mike Dietz](#) at 860-345-5225.

The Last Green Valley (TLGV) will be hosting a Volunteer Water Quality Monitor Appreciation Luncheon and Watershed Conference on February 3, 2012 at the Connecticut Audubon Society Grassland Bird Center in Pomfret, CT. A great lineup of speakers will speak on data interpretation, fish issues and monitoring success stories. This workshop is being funded in part by Connecticut Light and Power. For more information, contact [Jean Pillo](#).

The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program submitted a record number of 25 Rapid Bioassessment voucher samples to the CT DEEP in 2011. There was a focus on collecting

samples in the Natchaug River watershed basin to compliment the signing of the Natchaug River Basin Conservation Compact.

Webster Lake Association hired a consultant to analyze ten years of water quality data in part collected by their volunteer water quality monitoring program. The [final report](#) of this analysis is available on their website.

TLGV will soon be announcing a mini grant program for Earth Day Clean Up and River Clean Up projects. The amount of these grants will be under \$300. Participants will be required to fill out litter composition forms. For more information, contact TLGV at 860-774-3300.

TLGV has developed a comprehensive regional plan to sustain and expand food, fiber and forest production and related agricultural economies in The Last Green Valley. There will be a Green and Growing Symposium on April 14 at the Nathan Hale Conference Center on the UConn Storrs Campus. Contact The Last Green Valley at 860-774-3300 for more information.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD), in cooperation with TLGV Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program, is ramping field work this summer. ECCD will be conducting water quality investigations in Amos Lake in Preston and Flat Brook in Ledyard in order to develop Watershed Based Plans that address the sources of contamination that have caused those waterbodies to fail Connecticut Water Quality Standards. If you would like more information, or would like to be involved in these projects, contact [Jean](#) or [Judy](#). The watershed contamination source investigations (CSI) are funded in part by the US EPA Clean Water Act NPS program through the CT DEEP.

ECCD was awarded funds by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to lead a Conservation Action Plan process for Poquetanuck Cove, a two mile long intertidal cove of the Thames River located between Ledyard and Preston, CT. Poquetanuck Cove was featured in [TRBP Floating Workshop 10](#). Their staff have been making contact with the local officials and developing a list of conservation experts with a goal of kicking off this process by late spring. For more information, contact [Jean Pillo](#).

ECCD will also be sharing in another NFWF grant with the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District and the Southwest Connecticut Conservation District to work with horse owners in the Connecticut Coastal Zone to develop and carry out manure management plans. Additional funding for this project is being provided by the USDA NRCS. If you are a horse owner in an eastern Connecticut coastal town, please contact [Kate](#) at 860-887-4163 x 400. Feel free to pass on this information to horse owners you know in the project area.

ECCD is finishing up a NPS implementation project in Woodstock. This project involves helping a dairy farmer to install roof gutters on the barns to prevent clean roof runoff from draining through manure contaminated areas and flowing towards a local brook. Additional NPS implementation projects in the works in Woodstock include the installation of a stormwater bioretention project at the Woodstock Arboretum, a demonstration rain garden at the Woodstock Town Hall and the planting of a riparian buffer along an unnamed stream that flows through Woodstock Golf Course. These projects are all being funded in part by the US EPA Clean Water Act NPS program through the CT DEEP. The bioretention project at the Woodstock Arboretum was designed by David Faist of [Faist Engineering, Inc.](#)

The Nature Conservancy has expanded and improved their [Coastal Resilience Tool](#). Coastal communities and decision-makers in Connecticut, Long Island and New York City can explore different flooding scenarios from sea level rise and storm surge and analyze the potential impacts on their communities, natural resources and critical infrastructure like roads and schools, and develop solutions to address these realities. Contact [Holly Drinkuth](#) for more information.

As part of an ongoing effort to provide communities with relevant information, access to expertise, and practical approaches for accommodating and adapting to coastal change, the Nature Conservancy brings you the Coastal Resilience Webinar Series. Please join TNC for a presentation by Betsy Blair on The Hudson River Sustainable Shoreline Project on February 6, 2012 from 12:00 to 1:15pm.

Webinar Link/Password/Directions:

1. Go to <https://nethope.webex.com/nethope/j.php?ED=161383797&UID=0&PW=NOTVhNGU1NDFk&RT=MiMxMQ%3D%3D>
2. If requested, enter your name and email address.
3. If a password is required, enter the meeting password: Shoreline1
4. Click "Join"

Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. will once again sponsor a Connecticut Trails Day paddling event on Poquetanuck Cove. This June 2, 2012 event will launch from the Royal Oaks Drive cartop boat launch in Ledyard at 8 AM. This boat launch is the site of a new environmental kiosk that highlights significant natural resource features of Poquetanuck Cove.

In the fall of 2011, Avalonia Land Conservancy's acquisition achievements included preservation of land in Griswold, North Stonington, Preston and Stonington. These outright donations to this land trust included 59 acres of amphibian rich wetland/woodland in North Stonington that will eventually connect to a larger existing Avalonia wildlife corridor involving the Shunock River; 15 acres of valuable wetland habitat extending an existing Anguilla Brook Preserve in Stonington; approximately 2 acres of coastal shrub-land habitat in Mystic; and an impressive 25-acre wooded island with marshy inlets in Pachaug Pond in Griswold. In Preston, 30 acres were acquired thru payment of back taxes and this addition to Avalonia's holdings of conserved land creates a wildlife corridor with land in North Stonington of over 250 acres. The land trust is still in the acquisition process of purchasing the habitat rich Bell Cedar Swamp in North Stonington which abuts The Nature Conservancy's Appleton property and hope to close before too long.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service has a focus on New England Cottontail habitat land protection. The strategy being employed is to provide viable habitat in order to prevent the NE Cottontail from becoming an endangered, threatened or species of special concern in Connecticut. A special area of interest is in Ledyard. For more information, contact [Rick](#).

The [Working Lands Alliance](#) presented their 2011 Farmland Preservation Pathfinder Awards in November 2011. The AGvocate Outreach Steering Committee was awarded The Education Leader Award for its work to promote farm friendly policies and regulations in Eastern Connecticut.

The [AGvocate Program](#) will be presenting a conference for Connecticut Agriculture Commissions – Growing Farms in Your Community. This conference will be on March 24, 2012 beginning at 9AM to 3:30 PM at the EastConn facility in Hampton. For more information, contact [Jennifer Kaufman](#).

The US Coast Guard has been conducting monitoring in the Thames main stem from Norwich Harbor to the Gold Star Bridge. This work includes fish surveys, current studies and nutrient studies. It has been requested they prepare a presentation on their studies for a future TRBP meeting.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is undergoing transition as part of a national pilot project to combine energy and environmental interests.

[Stream Flow Standards](#) were adopted and made effective December 12, 2011. The first steps of these regulations will be to classify and map stream types.

The list of approved Watershed Based Plans and other planning documents related to watershed protection on the DEEP website is growing. Click [here](#) to view this list. In addition to restoration work, DEEP has also applied for funding to support clean water initiatives.

Hendrik Verkade is now the President of the Thames Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Volunteers in the organization are assisting the CT DEEP fisheries program to complete a culvert survey in towns they live in. Poorly designed road culverts can be a significant barrier to fish when they can't swim from one side to the other.

The [Atlantic State Rural Water and Wastewater Association](#) has lost their funding to assist towns with the development of Source Water Protection Plans. After seven years of doing drinking water protection with Atlantic States Rural Water and Wastewater Association, Steering Committee member Marc Cohen is launching his own consulting business - *Callidity Consulting*. He will continue to work with municipal officials and commissions to protect drinking water supplies. In addition, he will provide natural resource planning, GIS and project management services. For more information, contact Marc at marc@callidityconsulting.org or call 413-687-3956. You can also visit his newly launched website at www.callidityconsulting.org.

The State of CT Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and the Northeast CT Council of Governments will be holding a workshop discussion with Town Planners, Economic Development, Planning, Zoning and Conservation representatives to discuss the Draft C&D plan, and options for creating a new Locational Guide Map. The meeting will be held Tuesday, February 7, 9:00 a.m. at the Northeast CT Transit building 125 Putnam Pike, Dayville CT 06241.

The following link will provide access to the Initial Draft – 2013-2018 Conservation and Development Policies Plan for Connecticut and other related documents.

http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/igp/cdplan/2013/2013-2018_initial_draft.pdf

The Quinebaug Valley Community College is sponsoring a recycling program for household batteries and compact fluorescent lights. This program is open to all members of the community at no cost. Community members may drop off their materials for recycling in the QVCC atrium at the Danielson Campus. For more information, contact [John Lewis](#).

News from the Municipalities

The Working Land Alliance presented an Outstanding Individual Award to Andy Rzeznikiewicz, a Pomfret resident and Sanctuary Manager for the Connecticut Audubon Society Center at

Pomfret. Andy logged countless hours to formalize and increase momentum in the Pomfret Land Preservation Program. He has been directly involved in preserving over 1,000 acres of land and worked with the town to expand its preservation efforts.

Grace Jacobson of the Woodstock Conservation Commission took part in a six class [Forest Stewardship](#) Course presented by the UConn Extension System. She will be applying the knowledge she gained by developing a Forest Stewardship Plan for on a parcel of town owned forested conservation land.

The Brooklyn Conservation Commission is planning an Earth Day Town Wide Cleanup Event. Riverside Park will be a special focus.

Other news

The Niantic River Watershed Committee (NRWC) completed an important milestone in November 2011 with the formation of a Board of Directors, an accomplishment that was three years in the planning. The Niantic River Watershed is located in portions of East Lyme, Montville, Salem and Waterford. The Board is composed of appointed representatives from each of the four watershed towns, as well as other key organizations, including shellfish and harbor management commissions. The new Board is charged with numerous tasks, including implementing the recommendations of the [Niantic River Watershed Protection Plan](#), directing the activities of the Water Quality Monitoring and Education & Outreach subcommittees, and establishing continued funding to support a watershed coordinator position. The watershed coordinator had been funded for the past three years through CT DEEP by US EPA Clean Water Act §319 Nonpoint Source program grants. Projects currently underway by the NRWC subcommittees include a [Landscaping for Water Quality](#) program with local nurseries and landscape businesses, installation of a riparian buffer on Town-owned land in East Lyme with partner [Friends of Oswegatchie Hills](#), development of a volunteer water quality monitoring program, promotion of water quality loan kits for watershed teachers, and creation of riparian buffer planting kits.

EPA and 16 organizations renewed their commitment to improve septic system performance for over 26 million homes nationwide. One of the challenges that communities face is the improper operation and maintenance of septic systems, leading to system malfunctions and potential health hazards. Today, one in five homes in the United States uses a septic system to handle its wastewater. Ten to 20 percent of all septic systems may not be properly functioning, which can pose risks to public health and the environment.

Signatories to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to improve septic systems have doubled since its initiation in 2005 with eight public and private partners. The MOU partners have achieved a number of successes in encouraging proper management of septic systems and increasing collaboration among EPA, state and local governments, practitioners and assistance providers. The partnership has supported a credentialing program for septic system installers and a model septic system performance code, training opportunities and improved curriculum consistency to enhance the competencies of installers and maintenance professionals, coordinated research priorities, and a wiki website to serve as a one-stop shop for sharing decentralized wastewater information. For more information, visit: www.epa.gov/owm/onsite.

EPA has added updated U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) SPATIally Referenced Regressions On Watershed attributes (SPARROW) data to the nitrogen and phosphorus pollution data access tool, a tool intended to help states develop effective nitrogen and phosphorus source reduction strategies. SPARROW is a GIS-based watershed model that integrates statistical and mechanistic modeling approaches to simulate long-term mean annual stream nutrient loads as a function of a wide range of known sources and factors affecting nutrient fate and transport.

EPA published a proposed rule that would require concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFO) to submit basic operational information to the Agency. EPA received requests from the public for additional time to submit comments, and is extending the public comment period to January 19, 2012. EPA proposed the rule in order to more effectively carry out its CAFO permitting programs on a national level and ensure that CAFOs are implementing practices to protect water quality and human health. For information on the proposed rule, visit <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/afo/aforule.cfm>.

Visit EPA's Water Is Worth It Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/EPAWaterIsWorthIt>, and follow their Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds tweets at <http://twitter.com/epaowow>.

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, April 17, 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.