



Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Winter 2014

Volume 29

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 2014 meeting of the [Connecticut Audubon Society Grassland Bird Conservation Center](#) in Pomfret, then you missed a presentation by Land Manager, Andy Rzeznikiewicz on the land management strategies for the 700 acre Bafflin Sanctuary. As the name of the center implies, much of the preserve is managed as grassland bird habitat. In addition to the Audubon property, Andy also manages an adjoining 500 acre preserve owned by the Wyndham Land Trust, as well as the 160 acre [Trail Wood](#) Sanctuary in Hampton, the location of the historic Edwin Way Teale writing cabin. In Pomfret, nearly 200 acres of the preserve is managed as farmed grasslands on the condition that hay is harvested after July 15. This allows grassland nesting birds to fledge their young. Another 200 acres is bush hogged annually, while another 200 acres is leased for farming alfalfa and corn. Grassland bird species that benefit from this land management include bobolink, eastern meadowlark, savannah sparrow and kestrel. Andy also maintains 200 blue bird nesting boxes on the sanctuary as well as over 20 larger nest boxes used by kestrel and screech owls. Additional land on the sanctuaries is managed as early successional habitat. Bird species that benefit include thrashers and woodcock. Brush piles are also maintained to benefit New England Cottontail. The habitat management efforts are supported in part by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service WHIP and EQIP programs. The CAS Grassland Bird Center is open Monday – Friday 9 AM – 4 PM, weekends noon – 4 PM. The 7.8 mile trail network is open from dawn to dusk.

TRBP Updates

Later this year, the [Thames River Basin Partnership](#) will be reviewing the content of the TRBP website as we prepare to move over to a new platform. You can help us by sending your comments on the existing website to [Jean Pillo](#).

Floating workshop theme for 2014 will be the Patchaug River. This event will take place in June 2014.

Partner Reports

The year 2014 is the 20th anniversary of [The Last Green Valley](#) as a National Heritage Corridor. In honor of this event, TLGV was selected to serve as the Grand Marshall of the Putnam Holiday Dazzle Light Parade in December 2013. Accompanied by the Green Flash, they led the parade with the message, “The Last Green Valley, it’s where you live. Keep it Clean. Keep it Green.” Prior to the start of the parade, trash bags were distributed to parade goers and collected after the parade was over.

TLGV has selected a website redesign consultant for an update and overhaul of their website. In addition to information about their mission and ongoing programs, their new website will feature interactive maps and an online store.

TLGV River Clean-up Funds will be available again in 2014. If you are interested in organizing a river clean up, contact [Lois Bruinooge](#).

Fifty volunteers strategically positioned in about two dozen locations throughout The Last Green Valley in Connecticut participated in the annual Midwinter Eagle Survey on January 11, 2014. Their volunteers recorded 21 sightings this year – a new record!

Volunteers coordinated by David Bainbridge also participated in the Midwinter Eagle Survey in stations around Poquetanuck Cove. Dave reported that three eagles were observed this year during the 7 AM – 11 AM survey period.

There’s still room available to sit in on the National Cover Crop and Soil Health Forum live webcast at regional USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices on February 18, 2014 from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. The meeting will open with live stream video from the National Cover Crop and Soil Health Conference in Omaha, Nebraska, featuring Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Howard G. Buffett. Panel presentations from leading cover crop farmers across the nation will be featured, as well. Approximately 200 concurrent forum locations throughout the country will provide NRCS and our conservation partners and stakeholders with a unique opportunity to experience the conference and discuss ways we can more fully organize and energize our efforts to enable the soil health movement at the grassroots level.

Connecticut State Office
344 Merrow Road
Tolland, CT 06084
(860) 871-4011

Danielson Field Office
71 Westcott Road
Danielson, CT 06239
(860) 779-0557

Torrington Field Office
1185 New Litchfield Street
Torrington, CT 06790
(860) 626-8258

Please RSVP by February 13, 2014, to Carolyn Miller at carolyn.miller@ct.usda.gov or (860) 871-4028.

USDA’s NRCS will accept a second round of applications from January 27-April 18, 2014, for landowners who want to enroll floodplains impacted by Hurricane Sandy into easements. Funds

are available for eligible landowners through the NRCS Emergency Watershed Protection Program – Floodplain Easements. In December, NRCS announced applicants from the first round who were selected for enrollment. If the process is completed, these landowners could put about 400 acres into perpetual, floodplain easements to help protect against future floods.

“Floodplain easements are a long-term solution to provide relief for landowners while preventing future damage from flooding,” Connecticut NRCS State Conservationist Lisa Coverdale said. “We are committed to continuing to help the victims of Sandy recover, and this second round of applications will allow more people in need to apply for this vital program and place more critical floodplain acres under easement.”

In an effort to deliver timely soil health-related information, the “Soil Health Communications Update” will soon be supplemented by news and information via govDELIVERY. To ensure you receive soil health-specific updates, NRCS Windham County District Conservationist Ray Covino asks that you please click [here](#) and check the “Soil Health” box in the “Topics” section of the form. The service is free and you may also subscribe to receive news and information regarding other NRCS topic areas.

The Connecticut Audubon Society Grassland Bird Conservation Center is now taking applications for the 2014 Master Naturalist Program. The program includes a 10 week half day training program followed by a 40 hour volunteer commitment to the center. A project in the works by one of the recent graduates of the program is an interactive trail map linking QR codes to web based descriptions of the location. Each site can be updated seasonally. The CAS Master Naturalist program will begin on Tuesdays from March 25 through May 20, 8 a.m. – Noon. Contact [Sarah Heminway](#) for more information.

Daniel Esty has resigned and will be returning to Yale University after three years serving as Commissioner of the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. During his administration, the state energy strategy was merged with the environmental plan for the first time. Governor Malloy has appointed Robert Klee to fill the position.

DEEP Water Bureau staff have completed their public information meetings on the proposed streamflow classifications for the Thames, Southeast Coast and Pawcatuck River basins. A number of comments were formally submitted and are under review by DEEP. A final record will be entered into the CT Law Tribune in the coming weeks. DEEP will continue streamflow classifications in another Connecticut major basin later this year. For more information click [here](#).

DEEP continues to support development of watershed-based plans and implementation projects, primarily through federal Clean Water Fund Section 319 and 604 grant-funded agreements. A current highlight - Eagleville Brook IC TMDL and watershed plan implementation. In recent months a watershed team was established and part time coordinator in place to review implementation proposals, document past and current LID/stormwater retrofit projects on the UConn Storrs main campus, discuss cross-program challenges and opportunities to increase implementation practices, continue water quality and volume monitoring in Eagleville Brook (now with three years of continuous data); and development of a spreadsheet of known LID

practices with contributing drainage area, inspection report and pollutant loading efficiency determination, and a graphical database tracking tool of cumulative stormwater runoff volume collection and treatment per practice since installation and collectively across the watershed. Project background information [here](#) and more recent project reporting will be available soon.

DEEP is revising its outdated statewide Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan through a coordination grant awarded to contractor Fuss and O'Neill, Inc. A dedicated DEEP NPS Management Plan web page is dedicated to reflect planning and stakeholder input work to date. A draft plan will circulate for public comment in the coming weeks and be finalized this spring. Take a look at the recent PowerPoint presentation given at a stakeholder meeting. For more information click [here](#).

The Connecticut Green Plan continues to be revised by DEEP staff, with expected status report at an upcoming Council of Environmental Quality meeting. For more information click [here](#).

DEEP is coordinating with USDA NRCS CT, along with USEPA Region 1 staff to continue an inter-agency focus (National Water Quality Initiative, or NWQI) on agriculturally-dominated watersheds with chronic water quality impairments. The Little River, primarily in Woodstock, is the selected watershed that can benefit from focused EQIP cost share funding and DEEP ambient in-stream water monitoring and assessment. Water quality monitoring plans are under discussion between and within each agency, to be finalized once selected agricultural producers are identified and agree to monitoring needs.

Eric Thomas recently communicated with Yale School of Forestry and their Quiet Corner Initiative (QCI) Coordinator, based out of Yale's Myer Forest in the upper Natchaug River watershed. Three current areas of interest to TRBP are highlighted here:

- a) Management Plans: Each year Yale Forestry students rotate through the sub-watersheds within which they are active (this past fall was Mt. Hope, next year Bigelow Brook, following year Still River and back again). Their ability to take on landowner clients depends largely on student course enrollment numbers. The students work in interdisciplinary teams conducting deed searches on property history, social assessments of land-use and goals, full bio-physical assessment from soil composition to stand delineation and vegetative inventory. Finally, the students provide holistic management recommendations for how to meet the goals of the owners given the site history and current condition. As far as referencing similar work in the region, this program does this insofar as it is relevant to the management goals of the property owner. If there are local resources/initiatives that the QCI think would be useful for a client to get plugged into, that is very much within the scope of the outreach and capacity-building work in the region.
- b) River Assessments: Yale/QCI has numerous courses and independent projects focused on watershed health. Generally, the Vermont Stream Geomorphic Protocol is used. They are currently applying for funding in order to support more student research in this domain.
- c) QCI recently brought a silvopasture workshop to the region. Michael Kielty of UConn's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. QCI took a group of our

students to his farm as a follow-up to another silvopasture workshop. More information on the latter click [here](#).

A recent report by the state Council on Environmental Quality titled "Preserved But Maybe Not: The Impermanence of State Conservation Lands" should be of interest to all TRBP partners involved with local, regional or statewide land protection projects. Among recommendations is a call for local land use commissions (e.g. Conservation) to provide on-the-ground town hall records research to detail land protection records with the emerging statewide Protected Open Space Mapping Project (POSM). More information [here](#).

DEEP Fisheries recently stocked 13,000 rainbow trout into a number of lakes located throughout CT (especially timely as it appears that winter will be with us for some time yet).

They are seeking your input on our short survey focused on your fishing preferences that should take no more than 10 minutes. The survey is facilitated via survey monkey and can be completed by opening this link https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FISH_ON. Join your fellow anglers, just over 2,000 to date, who have completed this short survey and have provided us with excellent information on how to improve fishing in CT.

The new 2013 fish stocking report now online [here](#).

The CT DEEP Forestry Division has applied for funding to continue to work cooperatively with partners in Massachusetts on forest preservation measures. Their proposal includes focus on 1552 acres of forest land in seven Connecticut communities that line up with an additional 1103 acres in eight Massachusetts communities including the town of Stafford, CT.

The [Highstead Foundation](#) is a non-profit organization whose vision includes supporting New England conservation efforts of local, state, and regional partners to conserve at least 70% of the region's forested landscape and the myriad ecologic, economic and cultural benefits it provides. Regional Conservationist [Bill Labich](#) facilitates the development and activity of state-wide and regional conservation partnerships and networks on behalf of the [Wildlands and Woodlands Initiative](#).

The Coast Guard Academy Cadets have been collecting water quality data in the Thames River and may be ready to present their results at the Fall 2014 TRBP meeting.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District is continuing several projects in the Thames watershed. These projects include:

- Bacteria source track down in the lower Natchaug River watershed in Willimantic and Mansfield.
- Coastal Manure Management Project focused on assisting horse owners in the coastal regions with horse manure best management practices to help improve water quality in Long Island Sound
- Amos Lake nutrient source study and development of an Amos Lake Watershed Management Plan

- Bacteria source track down in the Mount Hope River in Ashford and Mansfield and recommendations to reduce fecal contamination of the river.

Recently activated projects includes:

- A small farm assistance in the Little River watershed in Woodstock and the Mashamoquet Brook watershed in Pomfret. The emphasis of this project will be assisting horse owners with manure management.
- A Riparian Buffer Demonstration Project at Mago Point in East Lyme.

ECCD will also be working in the towns of Waterford and East Lyme installing tree filters along both sides of the Niantic River to reduce storm water pollution.

The annual ECCD plant sale is coming in April. The proceeds from the plant sale helps to support ECCD soil and water conservation efforts. If you are interested in pre-ordering from a wide selection of native plants or ever green seedling bundles, or a three pack of blueberry bushes, contact [Kate Johnson](#) for the plant list and ordering deadline. This year, ECCD will be featuring a “buffer in a bag” offering, which includes five bare root shrubs suitable for planting along rivers and ponds.

The New Roxbury Land Trust recently closed on a 74+ acre land donation in North Woodstock. The Bishop Farm Preserve contains mixed hardwoods and evergreens in the upland area of English Neighborhood Brook.

The owner of a large farm (Avery Farm) that straddles the Groton/Ledyard border has donated the Groton portion to the Groton Open Space Association (GOSA). In addition, the Ledyard portion was offered to GOSA for \$1M. The farm is located between Colonel Ledyard Hwy and Rt 117 south of Lambtown Rd. Another parcel that is owned by GOSA abuts the farm on its southern boundry - all together about 400 acres stretching from Rt. 184 to Lambtown Rd. The Groton part also abuts 14 acres of open space under the care of the Ledyard Conservation Commission. An interconnected system of inter-property trails is already in place. See the map and more information at www.GOSAonline.org.

The 2013 Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) Annual Report is now available. The report includes general information about CIPWG and its members, the CIPWG website, meetings and workshops presented during the year, invasive plant pulling parties, and activities and events that CIPWG members organized or in which they participated. The report is available on the CIPWG website at www.cipwg.uconn.edu. The Annual Report is also included in the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council Eleventh Annual Report.

Plans are underway for the 7th biennial CIPWG Invasive Plant Symposium, which will be held in the fall of 2014. Charlotte Pyle (USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service) and Penni Sharp (CIPWG Co-chair; Connecticut Botanical Society) volunteered to serve as Co-chairs of the Symposium Planning Committee. Please contact Charlotte (charlotte.pyle@ct.usda.gov) or Penni (Pensharp4@gmail.com) if you would like to join the Symposium Planning Committee. The date for the fall symposium and additional details will be available in February.

News from the Municipalities

The Town of Groton has introduced a new [interactive guide to hiking trails](#) on their town website. The Town of Groton has partnered with Avalonia Land Conservancy and the Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) to make available nearly 13.5 miles of trails. Each Trail System provides both interactive and downloadable trail maps as well GPX waypoints - which can be downloaded and copied onto your GPS device so you can utilize waypoints and tracks as you hike.

Other news

Glenn Krevosky of Oxford, MA was given a permit by the MA Division of Fisheries & Wildlife to release 400 fertile brook trout eggs in a specially constructed gravel-bottomed channel that flows into Barbers Hollow Brook. The last time native trout were known to inhabit Barbers Hollow Brook was before the construction of interstate highway 395. One of his goals is to demonstrate to the state's fisheries biologists that it is possible to re-establish a viable brook trout population in a stream where there was once a natural population. For more information, click [here](#).

Resource Media recently released a rain garden communications guide to help communities develop effective outreach and messaging strategies for rain garden projects. By nature, rain gardens are highly visible community projects. This guide builds on the lessons learned from the projects that did get bad press and community pushback, as well as the success stories. It includes best outreach practices, effective messaging and troubleshooting. To download the guide and view other technical resources, visit <http://www.resource-media.org/raingardens>.

EPA has launched a new strategy to expand the use of green infrastructure, with the goal of making green infrastructure a part of business as usual for local communities. The Agency's 2013 Green Infrastructure Strategy builds on its previous 2008 and 2011 green infrastructure strategies. The new strategy maintains a focus on information exchange and community engagement, while focusing on improving federal coordination, Clean Water Act regulatory support, research and information exchange, funding and financing, and capacity building. More information: http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/greeninfrastructure/gi_support.cfm.

EPA recently released a new technical report called "[Case Studies Analyzing the Economic Benefits of Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure](#)" that helps utilities, state and other municipal agencies, and other stormwater professionals understand the potential benefits of low impact development and green infrastructure (LID/GI) programs. The objective of the report is to highlight different evaluation methods that have been successfully applied and also to demonstrate cases where LID/GI projects and programs have been shown to be economically beneficial. Also, the intent of this document is to promote the use of LID/GI, where appropriate, to supplement grey stormwater infrastructure.

The United States is losing wetlands in coastal watersheds at a significant rate according to a new report released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The report, Status and Trends of Wetlands in the Coastal

Watersheds of the Conterminous United States 2004 to 2009, tracked wetland loss on the Pacific, Atlantic, Gulf, and Great Lakes coasts. It concludes that more than 80,000 acres of coastal wetlands are being lost on average each year, an increase from the previous study. EPA initiated a federal Interagency Coastal Wetlands Workgroup in response to the losses in the previous report. Federal agencies are collaborating to better understand how wetland trends are affected by land use practices and other factors, and how federal, state, and local programs can better address threats to coastal wetlands. Read more [here](#).

The Natural Resources Defense Council's new report, [The Green Edge: How Commercial Property Investment in Green Infrastructure Creates Value](#), explores the wide range of benefits green infrastructure can provide to the commercial real estate sector. These include higher rents and property values, increased retail sales, energy savings, local financial incentives (such as tax credits, rebates, and stormwater fee credits), reduced life-cycle and maintenance costs, reduced flood damage, reduced water bills, reduced crime, and improved health and job satisfaction for office employees. The report provides illustrative examples for retail buildings, office buildings, and multi-family residential buildings, showing that the cumulative value of these benefits can total in the millions of dollars over a long-term (40-year) planning horizon.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released phase II of the National Stormwater Calculator and Climate Assessment Tool package. The updated calculator includes future climate vulnerability scenarios. The calculator, a part of President Obama's Climate Change Action Plan, is a desktop application that estimates the annual amount of stormwater runoff from a specific location. The calculator now includes changes in seasonal precipitation levels, the effects of more frequent high-intensity storms, and changes in evaporation rates based on validated climate change scenarios by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. More information on the National Stormwater Calculator and Climate Assessment Tool package at <http://www.epa.gov/nrmrl/wswrd/wq/models/swc>.

Upcoming Workshops

A Vision for The Future of Shellfish in Connecticut
Monday, February 24, 2014
9:00 am – 6:00 pm
Courtyard Marriott, Shelton, Connecticut

This workshop showcase the importance of our natural, recreational and commercial shellfish resources. Learn more about and get involved in the [Connecticut Shellfish Initiative](#). The cost of the meeting is \$35.00 per person which includes a continental breakfast, lunch, snacks and beverages. Sponsored by Connecticut Sea Grant and UCONN Extension. To register for the meeting, click [here](#):

Drafting Agricultural Easements
Friday, February 28, 2014
9:30 am to 12:30 pm
deKoven House Community Center, 27 Washington Street, Middletown, CT

The American Farmland Trust (AFT) and its partners - Connecticut Land Conservation Council and Connecticut Farmland Trust are sponsoring a half-day seminar and training on drafting agricultural easements, offered as part of AFT's Model Agricultural Easement project. This project - funded through an Agricultural Viability Grant provided by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture - created model agricultural easement terms and conditions that will help improve the agricultural viability of land permanently protected by land trusts and municipalities.

The cost of this event is \$20 per person. A lunch featuring Connecticut grown foods will be provided. Please register by Monday, February 24th. If you have questions about the training, please contact Lisa Bassani at lbassani@farmland.org or at 860-683-4230.

The 8th Annual Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources will be held on March 17, 2014 from 9 AM – 5 PM at the University of Connecticut Student Union. This year's keynote speaker will be Dr. Margaret Davidson, Acting Director of the NOAA Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. For cost and registration information, please click [here](#).

Registration for the 2014 Annual Meeting of the Connecticut Association of Wetland Scientists (CAWS) is now open! This year's meeting, "Research, Case Studies & Anecdotes: The Latest in Wetland Science," will be held Thursday, March 20 (8:15 a.m.-3:45 p.m.) at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Southbury, CT.

Registration is \$65 for CAWS members, \$80 for non-members, and \$35 for students (with ID), and includes continental breakfast and buffet lunch. For more information, please download the [brochure/registration form](#). Registration deadline: Friday, March 14.

UConn is sponsoring the "Perennial Plant Conference – A Conference for the Landscape and Horticultural Professional." The conference will be held at the Lewis B. Rome Commons on the University of Connecticut Storrs campus on Thursday, March 20, 2014. This all-day educational conference will address a wide range of topics focusing on herbaceous perennial production, sustainable landscape design, and retail marketing. Topics were selected to appeal to professional landscapers and designers, nursery and greenhouse producers, and retail garden centers. Two concurrent educational sessions will feature nationally recognized speakers from both industry and academia. Program and registration information, including online registration, is available at www.2014perennial.uconn.edu. A pre-registration fee of \$100 per person is due by March 13th. The fee is \$110 per person if postmarked after March 13th or for walk-ins. Registration is limited and nonrefundable. Please make checks payable to the University of Connecticut and send to Donna Ellis, University of Connecticut, Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture, 1376 Storrs Road, Unit 4067, Storrs, CT 06269-4067.

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 **April 15, 2014**. Meeting location and agenda To Be Determined. Meeting content and locations will be posted on the TRBP [Calendar](#) of upcoming events. 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 14 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.