



# Thames River Basin Partnership

## Partners in Action Quarterly Report

January 2007

Volume 3

The Thames River Basin includes the Fivemile, French, Moosup, Natchaug, Pachaug, Quinebaug, Shetucket, Willimantic, and Yantic Rivers and all their tributaries and, of course, the "Thames main stem."

*Greetings once again from the Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator. With the increased outreach effort through this newsletter and other mechanisms, our Partnership continues to grow. We welcome our newest partners; Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc, the Town of Ledyard Conservation Commission, the Preston Conservation Advisory Committee and the Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments. Individuals are equally welcome to become involved. Please visit our website at <http://www.thamesriverbasinpartnership.org> for more information.*

*-Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator*

At the January 16, 2007 TRBP Quarterly meeting, a special presentation by **The Nature Conservancy** (TNC) featuring *The Thames Watershed Preliminary Conservation Action Plan* was debuted by Kevin Essington, TNC Pawcatuck Borderlands Project Director and Holly Drinkuth, TNC Quinebaug Highlands Project Director. This draft Action Plan included an overview of the criteria used to select the target rivers and species within the greater Thames River watershed area, the major threats to those targets and the key environmental objectives within those areas. They are in the beginning stages of peer review of this Action Plan.

Greg Smith of the **Eastern Connecticut Conservation District** (ECCD) reported on a manure stacking project. Two farms have been selected in Thompson and Woodstock. Cow manure has been stacked with intermittent layers of carbon materials, such as leaves and hay, to reduce leachates that may be a source of water pollution. They are using a UCONN protocol under real field conditions to demonstrate the benefits of layering manure piles.

The ECCD has also cleared the land in the area of the Hallville Dam in Preston in preparation for beginning a competitive bid process to select engineering proposals for a fish ladder. The ladder will allow anadromous fish upstream access for spawning purposes. They are currently targeting construction of this fish ladder to begin in the summer of '08. This project will be on private property, but the ECCD will own the fish ladder through special negotiations.

Since the ECCD co-sponsored a workshop on biodiesel fuel in late spring 06, there has been continued interest in this alternate energy source. A follow-up symposium at UConn this month was packed with legislators, entrepreneurs, distributors, producers, as well as academic researchers. Part of the Conservation Districts Northeast Regional meeting in Mystic later this summer, hosted by Connecticut's Conservation Districts, will be devoted to biodiesel issues. At the national level the communications director at the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee was just quoted in the Washington Post as saying that biofuel and ethanol executives and lobbyists keep the committee's fuels expert busy "from the time she gets to work in the morning until the time she grabs her coat to go home. It's a pretty steady stream of customers."

Biodiesel is currently available in Connecticut for use in diesel powered vehicles and as home heating oil with no modification to the current machinery.

A 433 kilowatt AC commercial solar photovoltaic system has been installed on the rooftop of **Staples'** 300,000 square foot retail distribution center in Killingly, CT. The installation was made possible, in part, by a \$1.7 million grant from the **Connecticut Clean Energy Fund** (CCEF). The Killingly-based solar array is the largest in New England and will have a measurable impact on the environment. It covers nearly 74,000 square feet of roof space – larger than a football field – and will produce 14 percent of the energy for the Staples distribution center. The local environment will benefit through a reduction in carbon emissions – to the tune of 195 tons per year, which is the equivalent of 30,000 trees planted.

Lois Bruinooge reported that the **Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc.** was awarded nearly \$3700 in US Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act funds by the Connecticut DEP for the purchase of equipment and other expenses related to the water quality monitoring program administered by the Water Subcommittee. The funds will be utilized to purchase waterproof digital cameras, boots, and rapid bioassessment supplies, as well as funding for outreach and training materials. Recruitment and training of volunteers to conduct StreamWalk surveys using an established protocol developed by the **Natural Resource Conservation Service** (NRCS) will begin in late spring. The protocol will be modified to incorporate the inclusion of GPS locational data accompanied by digital images of significant sites. Training will take place in at least two locations within the Corridor. Further water quality monitoring utilizing the Rapid Bioassessment for Volunteers protocol will be promoted in the fall season. Jean Pillo, as the QSHC Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator, is working with Mike Beauchene of the **CT DEP** to choose most needed sites for the monitoring programs. A special effort to recruit and equip volunteers to conduct StreamWalk assessments in Poquetanuck Cove and its major tributary streams has already been chosen as one focus area. Training in the northern part of the watershed will be coordinated with the **Connecticut Audubon Society Center in Pomfret** Citizen Science Coordinator, Paula Coughlin. Any person or groups interested in learning more about the QSHC Water Quality Monitoring Program is encouraged to contact Jean Pillo at (860)928-4948 or email at [trbp\\_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:trbp_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net). The Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator funding is supplied in part by the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc. This year the budgeted time for the Water Quality Monitoring Coordinator has been increased from 5 to 10 hours per week.

Carl Fontneau, **Town of Griswold** Planner reported that an updated Plan of Conservation and Development will receive public input on January 22, February 26 and March 26 in combined hearings of Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Selectmen at 7:00 P.M. in Griswold Town Hall, 28 Main Street. A draft Municipal Stormwater Management Plan will go to public hearing at the IWWCC regular meeting of February 22 at 7:00 P.M. in Griswold Town Hall at 28 Main Street. A completed Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment for the Triangle Wire and Cable site adjacent to Ashland Pond is under review.

Eric Thomas of the **CT Department of Environmental Protection** (DEP) reported that Paul Stacey, formerly of the Long Island Sound/NPS Management Program was promoted to Director of the Planning and Standards Division, Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse.

The DEP together with the **USDA Natural Resources and Conservation Service** has been working to complete 3 watershed-based plans in the state:

The Coginchaug subregional Basin in Middletown and Middlefield is the location of their first collaborative effort. A more agricultural-based watershed plan for the Broad Brook subregional basin in East Windsor and Enfield will begin within 6 months. The Little River subregional basin plan in Woodstock and Putnam will be initiated in late 2007. The Niantic River Watershed Protection Plan was completed in September 2006, and an implementation committee is now promoting local adoption and short-term priority action steps.

Future funding requests for Clean Water Act Section 319 NPS implementation funds will require an approved watershed-based plan for consideration.

A water resource protection plan for the Eight Mile Watershed Protection Plan has been drafted. For more information, visit their website <http://www.eightmileriver.org>.

DEP has contracted with the **UConn NEMO** program to develop a web-based community resource inventory. TRBP members first learned about this initiative at the July 2006 Thames River Floating Workshop. The CRI website has just been posted and NEMO staff invite you to visit the site and offer feedback; go to: <http://nemo.uconn.edu/tools.htm>

DEP has submitted a revised TMDL analysis for the impaired sections of Eagleville Brook in Mansfield (tributary to the Willimantic River) to US EPA for approval. The University of Connecticut, Town of Mansfield and Willimantic River Alliance provided comments on the TMDL. The focus is on reducing effective impervious cover within the watershed (dominated by the University of Connecticut, Storrs campus) and connected stormwater discharges that have impaired aquatic life in this stream. The UConn core campus stormwater management plan will be implemented through several projects towards expected improvements in Eagleville Brook water quality.

The DEP will be launching a new website soon at [www.ct.gov/dep](http://www.ct.gov/dep).

Dave Schroeder of the **Ledyard Conservation Commission** reported that an Open Space Plan has been approved by the town. This plan will allow a reduction of lot sizes in exchange for a 40% open space set aside in designated preferred areas zoned R 60 and R 80, with a vision of creating a corridor of open space from Allen Point in Groton to Poquetanuck Cove in Ledyard. They are also working cooperatively with the town of Preston to expand this corridor further north.

The **Preston Conservation Advisory Committee** hosted a joint open space planning workshop with the **Ledyard Conservation Commission** on January 17, 2007 with a special focus on the Poquetanuck Cove area. Dave Kozak, of the **CT DEP Long Island Sound Program** presented information about the resource values of the cove. Citizens were invited to share their visions for connecting open space areas across the town line.

The **Town of Ledyard** and the **City of Groton** received special recognition from the federal Environmental Protection Agency for their wastewater treatment facilities and the staff that operate them. They were the only two Connecticut municipalities nominated by the CT Department of Environmental Protection to receive the 2006 EPA Regional Operations and Maintenance Excellence awards. The regional awards make Ledyard and Groton eligible for the national EPA wastewater facility awards. Ledyard and Groton received these awards on Jan. 24 at the annual New England Water Environment Association Awards Luncheon in Boston. The staff at each facility has been commended for their successful efforts to reduce the nitrogen level

in the treated waste water. Ledyard, which treats about 180,000 gallons of sewage a day, was recognized in the small plant category. Groton treats 2 million gallons of sewage a day and was awarded excellence in the medium-size category.

Elaine Trench of the **U.S. Geological Survey** (USGS) reported that she and Jon Morrison have completed a first draft of a report on nutrient loads in the Quinebaug River Basin. Some additional work is needed, and the report is not ready for colleague review at this time. Jon Morrison is also working on the draft report for the project on nutrient cycling and nutrients in sediments in West Thompson Lake. Both reports are part of projects conducted in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

Kathy Howard of **Project Oceanology** reported that the education framework change due to the No Child Left Behind strategy has impacted the number of field programs booked at Project O, as the science testing at the high school level is more focused on physics and chemistry, rather than biology. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum include some water studies. The team at Project O will be working to develop a multidisciplinary approach to bring water back into the classroom.

Mike Goodwin of the Thames Valley Chapter of **Trout Unlimited** (TU) reported that the number of fishing licenses issued by the State of Connecticut is significantly less than it has been in the past. Their organization continues to monitor the temperature below the Scotland Dam where the water flow rate varies between 85 to 1400 cubic ft/sec. They theorize that when the dam is fully open, it impacts cool water fish species below the dam by eliminating refuge areas with large dilutions of warmer water. The Trout in the Classroom program is going well. TU would like to expand to 10 more schools for the 07/08 school year. Lastly, TU is partnering with the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association (CFPA) to build a footbridge over a dam on private land in North Stonington with funding from the Environmental Protection Agency. This footbridge will service a portion of the Blue Trail System. This project is awaiting issuance of a dam maintenance permit, expected in February 2007.

The **Green Valley Institute** (GVI) introduced their new intern, David Lavallee. He is a student with the Audubon Expedition Institute. He will be working with the GVI on educational and outreach projects through April.

The **Green Valley Institute** has a new website. Be sure to visit them at:  
<http://www.thelastgreenvalley.org/gvi>.

The **Ad Hoc Committee for the Preservation of Poquetanuck Cove**, Preston/Ledyard, CT Phragmites control in Poquetanuck Cove was officially approved by the CT DEP as the grant required watershed restoration project for Jean Pillo, **TRBP** Coordinator. Ms. Pillo continues to work with the Ad Hoc Committee for the Preservation of Poquetanuck Cove, which includes representatives from **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc**, the **Ledyard Conservation Commission**, the **Preston Conservation Advisory Committee**, **The Nature Conservancy** and the **US Fish and Wildlife Service**. The **CT DEP Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management** (WHAMM) program has agreed to act as the contractor for the herbicide application and mulching operation once funding is secured. Multiple sources of funding have been applied for, including the CT DEP Landowners Incentive Program (LIP) grant and a US Fish and Wildlife Long Island Futures Fund grant. Smaller grants have been or will be applied for as the match requirement. The work plan developed by the team includes 3 phases: a multi-seasonal floristic survey to catalog the presence of species listed as endangered, threatened or of

special concern on the State Natural Diversity Data Base; a multi-year herbicide and mulching program to control the Phragmites; and a monitoring program to measure the success of the treatment. Another planned activity related to this project is a water quality monitoring project involving the **Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor** sponsored water quality monitoring program utilizing **NRCS** Stream Walk protocol for visual assessments of the cove and the major tributary streams that feed it. This baseline information will document current stream conditions and any obvious impairments will be reported. Stream Walk recruitment and training is scheduled to begin in late spring. If you would like to be involved in this project, please contact Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator at (860) 928-4948 or by email at [trbp\\_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:trbp_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net).

Coming this spring – the Year 2 TRBP Coordinator’s grant includes a requirement for the TRBP Coordinator to facilitate the Partnership’s involvement with at least one town to assist with a stormwater retrofit that impacts a 303(d) listed impaired waterbody. If you have a project that fits this description and would like to benefit from the energy in the Partnership, please contact Jean Pillo at [trbp\\_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:trbp_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net).

The next meeting of the **Thames River Basin Partnership** will be at 9:30 AM on April 10, 2007 at the **Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments** (SECCOG) office, located at 5 Connecticut Avenue, Norwich, Connecticut 06360. The Partnership invites anyone interested in our mission to attend.

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 Thames River basin. If your group is interested in being included in the next update of this newsletter or to e-subscribe, please contact Jean Pillo, Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator at [trbp\\_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net](mailto:trbp_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net) or call (860) 928-4948. The TRBP Coordinator is funded in part by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection through a United States Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant.