



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Winter 2009

Volume 11

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, TRBP Coordinator

If you missed the January 27 TRBP Quarterly Meeting, you missed a presentation by Mike Altshul of the [Green Valley Institute](#). Mike presented an overview of the [Co-occurring Resource Analysis](#) process used by municipalities. Based on their local natural resource inventory, land use officials provide input on the highest value resources in their community and then a special computer program color codes where multiple resources overlap. The resulting maps are a useful tool in town level open space and conservation planning. For more information about this program, contact [Mike Altshul](#) or [Holly Drinkuth](#) of the Green Valley Institute.

TRBP News

The Thames River Basin Partnership [Floating Workshop IX](#) will be on Friday afternoon, June 12. Mark Tedesco, Director of the EPA Long Island Sound Office will give the keynote address at Project Oceanology in Groton. Afterward, workshop participants will head up the Thames River aboard Project Oceanology's research vessel, the *Envirolab*, for a tour of ongoing municipal efforts to reduce the upland contributions of nitrates, the leading cause of hypoxia in Norwich Harbor and Long Island Sound. Registration forms will be posted on the TRBP website in May. Municipal surveys are being prepared to help focus the program on the education needs of the region. We encourage each municipality to complete and return this very important survey. This year's TRBP Floating Workshop is being partially funded by a grant from the [Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program](#) as part of the [Long Island Sound Study](#).

Back by popular demand, the TRBP will be repeating a rain barrel promotion partnering with the [New England Rain Barrel Company](#) again this spring. Rain barrels are an effective way to collect roof runoff and store it for use during dry periods. The cost of rain barrels this year will be \$85, and the TRBP will receive \$9 for each rain barrel sold. We are negotiating 2 delivery locations this year. Watch for further developments on the [TRBP](#) website.

Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator has been invited to present a Back Yard Water Wise workshop in several locations this spring. These workshops are free and open to the general public.

More information can be found on the TRBP website [Calendar of Area Conservation Events](#).

Location	Date	Time	Sponsor
Woodstock Town Hall	March 2	7 PM	Woodstock Garden Club
Ledyard Senior Center	April 6	7 PM	Ledyard Garden Club
Mansfield Town Hall	May 2	10 AM	Mansfield Recycling Program

Partner Reports

The [Eastern Connecticut Conservation District](#) (ECCD) completed a water quality improvement trial project in Woodstock. With EPA Clean Water Act funding awarded them by the CT DEP, the District purchased an [Aerway](#) system that was utilized by 3 farms. The Aerway System creates deep pockets in the soil which reduces manure runoff from farm fields where liquefied manure is applied. Limited initial results showed very dramatic reductions in nutrient runoff from fields where the apparatus was used. The apparatus was also well received by the farmers involved in the program.

The ECCD is also currently involved in a separate Clean Water Act funded water quality improvement project in the Muddy Brook/Little River watershed in Woodstock, where several stream segments are not meeting water quality standards. They will be partnering with the [Woodstock Conservation Commission](#), the Friends of Roseland and others to plan a water resource outreach event at Roseland Park on May 9, 2009. This mini-festival will be part of the Source to Sea, Connecting the Drops in the Last Green Valley series of events.

The ECCD annual plant and barley straw sale will April 17, 18, 24 & 25. Pre-order for the best selection. Order forms will be available on the [website](#) soon, or contact [Kate Johnson](#) at 860-887-4163 x 400 if you wish to have her mail you an order form.

ECCD is a member of the [Celebrating Agriculture](#) Steering Committee, and one of the ways that ECCD helps out is by applying for grants that can provide some of the funding needed for the event. Very recently, ECCD was awarded a grant for “Celebrating Ag” through the CT Department of Agriculture’s Agriculture Viability grant program. Celebrating Agriculture will be September 26 at the Woodstock Fairgrounds.

The CT DEP Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse, Planning & Standards Division recently added a [Low Impact Development](#) (LID) program as part of its Watershed Management group. This new program was created is to help bring the citizens of Connecticut an awareness of LID techniques for reducing stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution. The LID staff work with partners at the federal, state and local levels to provide information, educational materials and technical assistance in the application of LID techniques, building on existing programs such as the Governor’s Responsible Growth Initiative, the University of Connecticut’s Extension System NEMO program and EPA’s Smart Growth Program. The goal is to build better relationships and promote LID management practices with local land use agencies, academic institutions, nonprofit groups, the building industry and the public in order to protect, conserve and restore the water resources of the state. For more information or specific advice please contact [David Dembosky](#) at (860) 424-3078 or [Jessica Morgan](#) at (860) 418-5994.

The [2008 Summary of Volunteer Monitoring Program](#) has been posted on the CT DEP Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring webpage. At least 6 sites within the upper Thames River basin had either "4 or more", or "3 or more" Most Wanted macro-invertebrates sampled in this calendar year. [Mike Beauchene](#) has also posted two PowerPoint presentations about the Rapid Bioassessment for Volunteers (RBV) Program containing background information and instructions for this program. Learn more about the program from these links. If you are interested in participating in RBV in eastern CT this fall, contact [Jean Pillo](#) at (860) 928-4948.

The 2008 Clean Water Act Section 319 Non-Point Program grant recipients will be announced soon by the CT DEP. Unfunded "shovel ready" projects will be forwarded to the EPA for consideration under the infrastructure bill. The 2009 grant project proposals are under review. The CT DEP has announced a new grant round for the federal Clean Water Act Section 319 NPS program. The submission deadline is June 15, 2009. The Department anticipates developing grant agreements and memorandums of understanding for this round in the May-July 2010 timeframe. Click [here](#) for the posted Request for Proposals. The CT DEP has posted several plans, documents and related links on a Watershed Management webpage that can assist you with consideration of a grant application – that page is posted [here](#).

A draft of Connecticut Stream Flow regulations by the CT DEP is near complete. An information outreach schedule will follow. Watch the [TRBP calendar](#) for announcements as the schedule develops. A PowerPoint presentation by DEP staff has been uploaded to the [TRBP webpage](#) as place holder for the draft stream flow regulations until they are available.

[The Last Green Valley](#) announced that plans for the [Source to Sea, Connecting the Drops in The Last Green Valley](#) are coming together. Save Friday afternoon, April 17 for the kickoff event at Mashapaug Pond in [Bigelow Hollow State Park](#) located in Union, CT. DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy is expected to attend this event. Many river festivals, paddling events and other water related programs are being planned beginning in the upper reaches of the Thames watershed and progressing down towards Long Island Sound, where the wrap up event will happen on June 13, 2009. For more information, or to volunteer to help at any of the numerous events, contact [Lois Bruinooge](#) at (860) 774-3300.

The [Trout Unlimited](#) organization will be celebrating their [50th anniversary](#) of coldwater habitat conservation programs in 2009. The Thames Valley chapter will be participating in multiple Source to Sea events. They will also be assisting CT DEP Inland Fisheries with the construction of fish habitat in the Shetucket River near Salt Rock Campground in the summer of 2009.

The Nature Conservancy recommended a habitat mitigation project to the Fish and Wildlife Service which would remove the first barrier to fish passage on the Moosup River. The project was recommended for approval along with an educational program to identify and survey important natural resources and species in the Town of Canterbury - final approval is expected soon. For more information about this project, click [here](#).

The CT DEP approved a \$490K Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant towards the purchase of a conservation easement to protect land and water resources on the 450-acre Myers

Pond property in Union, CT (Natchaug Basin). The Nature Conservancy was the applicant for this grant.

The Natchaug River Watershed Conservation Action Planning process is being co-sponsored by TNC, Naubesatuck Watershed Council, WINCOG and NECCOG. In October, municipal representatives from the 8 Natchaug River watershed communities along with relevant experts met to define conservation targets in the watershed. In January, they met again to identify and rank threats to those targets. They will meet again in March to focus on developing strategies for resource protection. For more information on the Conservation Action Planning process, click [here](#). Funding support for this effort is being provided by the Patagonia Store in Westport.

[Connecticut Audubon Society Center at Pomfret](#) sponsored a second well attended panel discussion on Grassland Birds this winter. Grassland habitat is declining in Connecticut and this loss poses a major threat to the state's bird diversity. Recognizing the challenge and the opportunity, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has selected grassland conservation as the first major statewide action to be addressed under [Connecticut's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy](#).

The 2009 Connecticut State of the Birds Report has been published by Connecticut Audubon Society. Click [here](#) to review this report which focuses on Connecticut's Top 20 Bird Conservation Priorities. The CAS Conservation Priority Top 20 birds are important indicators of key habitat types that can benefit from achievable conservation efforts.

The USDA Rural Development Program is offering loans, small grants and energy efficiency audits for rural small businesses and agricultural producers interested in improving energy efficiency. The renewable Energy Generation System loan and grant program provides support for renewable energy projects including wind, solar, biomass, biofuels, geothermal and anaerobic digesters. The Energy Efficiency Program provides loan guarantees and grants for energy efficiency measures including lighting, heating, cooling, insulation and pump improvements. For more information about these programs supported by the Farm Bill, click [here](#) or contact [Joanne Demers](#) at the Norwich office at (860) 859-5218.

The [2008 Farm Bill](#) and efforts to implement the programs included under it are underway. This comprehensive bill has provisions to assist people in various stages of agriculture. For more information, contact [Dawn Pindell](#) of the [Farm Service Agency](#) Windham County office in Brooklyn.

The [CT NEMO](#) Program and [Goodwin College](#) are offering a workshop on Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for developers and contractors on Thursday, February 12, 2009. The workshop will begin at 8:30 a.m. with a networking breakfast and will end at 12:30 p.m. The event will be held at Goodwin College, One Riverside Drive, East Hartford. LID techniques represent a new approach to stormwater management and are increasingly being required by Connecticut towns. This workshop will provide practical information on the importance of LID and how to avoid common pitfalls during installation. Registration is required, and the cost is \$25. To register or serve as a sponsor, contact [Rachael Cleveland](#) at 860-345-5205. A copy of the program flyer can be downloaded [here](#).

For those who attended the fall Green Valley Institute ([GVI](#))/Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area ([RC&D](#))co-sponsored workshop series and are looking for more information, and for those who weren't able to attend, [here](#) is a link to the Green Valley Institute's website page with links to the workshop presentations. Information has been posted about Transfer of Development Rights and Brownfield Development.

On behalf of multiple organizations including Eastern CT RC&D, The Last Green Valley, UCONN and others interested in preserving agribusiness in The Last Green Valley, The Town of Thompson applied for and received funding from the CT Dept. of Agriculture's Agriculture Viability Grant Program to develop a regional agricultural advocate position , or Ag-vocate, to review local regulations for their compatibility with sustainable agricultural and explore the formation of a regional agricultural commission. Eastern CT RC&D will provide project coordination for the grant

[The USGS Connecticut Water Science Center](#) has applied for funding to support a study of nutrient loads in the French River basin. Click [here](#) for real time USGS water data for Connecticut.

The [Trust for Public Land](#) (TPL) is a national, nonprofit, land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands, and other natural places, ensuring livable communities for generations to come. In 2005, TLP worked with the Town of Woodstock to help preserve the [Eddy Farm](#). For more information about TLP, please contact [Amy Patterson](#) at (203) 777-7367.

The [Atlantic States Rural Water and Wastewater Association](#) (ASRRWWA) will end their 2008/09 Fiscal Year on March 31. In eastern Connecticut, they have been involved with drafting water supply protection plans in Stafford and Preston. They will potentially be working in North Stonington in FY09/10.

[Wyndham Land Trust](#) has added two additional properties to their holdings this quarter. With the addition of 53 acres in Pomfret and 42 acres in Woodstock, Wyndham Land Trust now owns approximately 1330 acres in north eastern Connecticut.

The 2009 Elizabeth Babbott Conant Interdisciplinary Conference on the Environment at the [Goodwin-Niering Center for Conservation Biology and Environmental Studies](#) at Connecticut College will focus on Water Scarcity and Conflict. For more information on this April 3 & 4 program, click [here](#). The Friday evening keynote address, *Water Use and Abuse: Innovations in Conservation* by Amy Vickers, President, Amy Vickers & Associates Inc. is free and open to the public.

News from the Municipalities

The Town of Thompson is involved with updating their Plan of Conservation and Development. Conservation targets have been incorporated into the current draft.

The Town of Thompson, with participation from several departments and other local organizations, has submitted 12 different programs to be included in the TLGV Source to Sea events. This is the highest amount of programs from any town.

At their January 20, 2009 Council of the City of Norwich meeting, the Council voted to adopt a resolution as presented by Mayor Ben Lathrop to endorse the [US Mayors Climate Protection Agreement](#).

More Information

In 2008, FirstLight Hydro Generating Company is the current owner and licensee for the Scotland Hydroelectric Project. As part of their Federal Energy Regulatory Commission application process, they were required to conduct a freshwater mussel survey in the areas above and below the dam. Two freshwater mussel species listed on the State of Connecticut natural diversity data base were found for the first time in the Shetucket River. Neither was known to exist there prior to this survey.

The [French River Connection](#) is a 501 c 3 organization with a vision of the French River and its shoreline to become a resource that is used, enjoyed, and treasured by residents and visitors to the French River region. Their goals are for the river's natural and cultural heritage to be appreciated and protected; recreational gatherings along the river to be encouraged; and the economic benefits of a healthy, active riverfront to be realized. They are currently working with multiple area partners to purchase a critical parcel of land between the river and their proposed French River Greenway. For more information, click [here](#).

The US EPA's Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds (OWOW) and Office of Wastewater Management (OWM) have jointly issued a Draft "TMDLs to Stormwater Handbook," available for public comment. Click [here](#) to download a copy of this handbook. Contact [Christine Ruf](#) in OWOW's Watershed Branch at (202)-566-1220 for more information about the Draft Handbook.

EPA's Office of Water has issued a draft "Handbook for Developing Watershed TMDLs" available for public comment. The Draft Handbook for Developing Watershed TMDLs discusses the potential environmental, financial, and implementation benefits of developing TMDLs on a watershed scale, and provides practitioners with a series of screening factors that should help determine, based on pollutant type, waterbody type, data quality, and other considerations, the site specific suitability of the TMDL watershed approach. Additionally, the Draft Handbook highlights the connections between watershed TMDLs and other water programs, identifying opportunities for integrating watershed TMDLs into other similar water quality management efforts, such as watershed planning, permitting, and water quality trading. To download a copy, click [here](#). The public comment period closes on February 18, 2009. Please send any comments or questions you have on this draft document to [Michael Haire](#) in OWOW's Watershed Branch.

The "National Water Quality Inventory Report" is now available [here](#). This report summarizes water quality assessments submitted by the states to EPA under section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act. The report finds that the states assessed 16 percent of the nation's 3.5 million river and stream miles, 39 percent of its 41.7 million acres of lakes, ponds and reservoirs, and 29 percent of its 87,791 estuary square miles. Forty-four percent of assessed river and stream miles, 64 percent of assessed lake acres, and 30 percent of assessed estuary square miles were found to be impaired for one or more of the uses designated for them by the states. Leading causes of impairment included pathogens, mercury, nutrients, and organic enrichment/low dissolved

oxygen. Top sources of impairment included atmospheric deposition, agriculture, hydrologic modifications, and unknown or unspecified sources. This report is a companion to electronically-submitted state water quality information available on EPA's Web site, known as [ATTAINS](#). In addition to viewing the national summary and information by state at this Web site, users can click down to the individual waterbody level to find out more about water quality conditions.

The Center for Invasive Plant Management and US Fish and Wildlife Service National Wildlife Refuge System are pleased to announce the second of two learning websites developed collaboratively and beneficial to refuge staff other natural resource managers. The website, [Managing Invasive Plants: Concepts, Principles, and Practices](#), provides an overview of invasive plant management and planning supported by case studies, quizzes, scientific literature, and web-based resources. This new training provides an excellent overview of invasive plant management. Focusing on planning, assessing and specific IPM strategies, it can be used as an introduction for those just getting involved with invasive plant management or as a refresher for those already engaged in such management. The course can also be used to supplement the course offered through the National Conservation Training Center, "Field Techniques for Invasive Plant Management," which was also specifically designed for the National Wildlife Refuge System. This new on-line training is in addition to the already existing on-line training for volunteers working with invasive plants released last year's [Volunteers and Invasive Plants, Learning and Lending a Hand](#). This on-line training for volunteers is a recent recipient of an award from the National Association for Interpretation.

A new video is specifically aimed at the hunting/fishing community to encourage them to reduce the spread of invasive species. "DEFENDING FAVORITE PLACES - How Hunters and Anglers Can Stop the Spread of Invasive Species". For more information please visit the [USDA Forest Service invasive species website](#).

EPA is developing a series of documents, collectively called the Municipal Handbook, to assist local officials with implementation of green infrastructure programs. Each 15-20 page issue covers a very specific issue associated with establishing and implementing a comprehensive program. Click [here](#) for more information.

How healthy is Long Island Sound? EPA's Environmental Assessment Provides a Wellness Check-up on the nation's coastal waters. The overall condition of America's coasts is rated as "fair", based on these five indicators. Comparison of the condition scores shows that overall condition in U.S. coastal waters has improved slightly since the 1990s. The next National Coastal Condition Report is expected to be released in 2011 and will provide an assessment of the status of U.S. coastal waters from 2003 to 2006, along with trends in condition since the 1990s. Long Island Sound is featured in Chapter 3 of the June 2007 Northeast National Estuary Program Coastal Condition Report. Click [here](#) to download this 13 page section.

The Long Island Sound Study launched a new web page featuring volunteer opportunities throughout the LIS watershed. Their hope is that this web page will serve useful in matching up volunteers with organizations that are looking for help! You can visit the web page at: <http://www.longislandsoundstudy.net/volunteer.htm>.

The Center for Watershed Protection announced the launch of a webcast series on watershed and stormwater management. Webcast watchers will recall the participation of Center staff in various webcasts hosted by EPA. Past Center webcasts addressed post-construction stormwater management, stormwater retrofitting, IDDE, and municipal maintenance. The Center will now be hosting our own webcast series beginning in April. Some of the first topics to be covered include municipal pollution prevention and good housekeeping programs, managing your stormwater program in the age of budget cuts, creating a link between MS4s and TMDLs, managing coastal watersheds, better site design, and more! The 2009 webcast schedule will be published soon. They are asking for your input - please click [here](#) to take this very brief survey to tell them about topics you would like to see in a webcast.

MassDEP has officially proposed a new Statewide Stormwater Management Program. It will require private owners of large impervious surfaces (including institutions, commercial, industrial and residential properties) to manage stormwater. The draft regulations, draft general permit, draft Fact Sheet, Summary of the program and various supporting documents are all posted on MassDEP's [here](#). MassDEP will accept verbal and written comments on the proposed regulations and draft general permit at a series of public hearings, and written comments until 5:00 p.m. on **February 9, 2009**. All written comments should be submitted to MassDEP, One Winter Street, 5th floor, Boston, MA 02108, attn. Glenn Haas, or by email at DEP.Waterpermitting@state.ma.us.

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 [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 meeting quarterly on the 3rd Tuesday of the month

- Tuesday, April 21, 2009 – This meeting will feature a special presentation by Connecticut State's Conservationist, Douglas Zehner. Meeting location TBA
- Tuesday, July 21, 2009 The summer meeting is traditionally held at Project Oceanology

Please mark your calendars to save these dates. 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 Thames River basin. 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.