



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

October 2006

Volume 2

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 again from the Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator. The first quarterly newsletter has been a success and the list of subscribers is continually growing. I will take this opportunity to officially welcome our newest Partners; the Connecticut Department of Health and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and encourage other organizations, industries or municipalities to join us at our quarterly meetings where the networking potential is promoted and partnerships are nurtured.

*-Jean Pillo
TRBP Coordinator*

USGS (Elaine Trench) and the **CT DEP** (Eric Thomas) prepared a slide show overview of the Thames Science Plan for those in attendance at the October TRBP quarterly meeting. The Thames Science Plan is the result of a cooperative project between the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (CTDEP). The Science Plan outlines water-quality investigations that could provide information necessary for the CT DEP to develop water-quality management and restoration strategies for nutrient-related problems in the Thames River Basin. The purpose of the Science Plan is to identify information that would support CT DEP in developing Total Maximum Daily Load analyses (TMDLs) for nutrients for individual water bodies and stream reaches in the Thames Basin, and eventually for the entire basin, as required under the Federal Clean Water Act. More detailed information about the Thames Science Plan can be found at <http://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2005/1208/>.

The **Naubesatuck Watershed Council** is developing a web site to continue with their education/outreach focus. NWC membership forms are being developed by intern Diane Rimkus, who also did an outreach educational presentation on "Conservation Measures to Protect your Drinking Water Supply" to Ashford Lake Association members at their annual meeting in October. NWC continues correspondence and follow-up with CT Department of Health, UCONN, and the Town of Mansfield regarding the UCONN Water Supply Plan.

Quaddick Lake Association in Thompson (Bill Bainbridge) is in the beginning stages of forming a watershed management program.

A Living Museum (Louise Fabrykiewicz) The Nature Walk at Ocean Beach Park is being developed into an education program along the tidal creek. They also have interest in building an onsite classroom. Phase I (observation platform) and Phase II (garden area) have been

completed. Phase III (connecting pathway) is being planned. Their organization is currently seeking funding for Phase III.

The Nature Conservancy (Holly Drinkuth) Quinebaug Highlands Project is working with an intern from UCONN (Diane Rimkus) to do education and outreach both town-wide and along the main stem of the Natchaug River Greenway.

Holly, along with Kevin Essington, Ken Geisler (TNC GIS specialist), Adam Welchel (TNC Science Director) and Eric Thomas (CT DEP) conducted a scientific review of the Upper Thames Basin (Quinebaug and Shetucket) and are developing conservation strategies for several ecologically significant streams and rivers. Evaluation of the Thames River and estuary is underway with expert guidance of Mickey Weiss at Project O.

Quinebaug River Team (Holly Drinkuth of the **GVI**) completed the StreamWalk survey and inventory of the Quinebaug River from Wauregan to Aspinook Pond. The inventory will be mapped this winter. Water access points to the Quinebaug River will be posted on the QSHC website.

Project O (Mickey Weiss) had another successful summer program with area school age children. With funding from a **Department of Education** Inter-district Cooperative Grant, the Thames River Connection program with the Norwich and Montville Public Schools will continue to do water quality monitoring this year.

Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc. (Lois Bruinooge) had no approved budget numbers prior to the congressional recess for the national election period. It is hopeful that when the post election Congress resumes, the Federal budget will be decided. Until then, funding for the QSHC water quality monitoring program and GVI is uncertain.

The QSHC Natural Resources and Agriculture Committee is going through a self evaluation of their Vision 2010 goals and accomplishments. Several smaller committees will meet for this purpose.

The **QSHC Water Subcommittee** was awarded equipment on a long term loan basis to support their fledgling water quality monitoring program by the **Environmental Protection Agency**. The French River Connection and the Webster Lake Association of Massachusetts and the Thompson water quality monitoring project in the French River in Connecticut concluded their 2006 sampling period and will begin the process of data analysis.

The **Natural Resources Conservation Service** (Liz Rogers) has submitted their streamside riparian buffer design plans to the CT DEP and are awaiting approval for their stream restoration project on the French River in Thompson, near the Community Center. This project will also include a rain garden, wildflower meadow and woodland shade garden.

The **Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Council** (Liz Rogers) Clean Water Act (319 funds) project for nutrient management/agricultural waste in Woodstock is progressing. A study to determine available nutrients, excess nutrients and the feasibility of

creating a regional composting facility to reduce non-point pollution from animal waste is underway. Delpha Very was hired to coordinate this project. There is a potential to work cooperatively with the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District and the Little River Sourcewater Protection Team on data collection.

A **CT Department of Agriculture** Sustainability Grant was awarded to the town of Thompson to hire a consultant to develop, distribute and tabulate a survey to find out how much people are willing to pay for open space. The survey area will target Thompson, Woodstock, Pomfret and Brooklyn.

Willimantic River Alliance (Eric Thomas, CT DEP) celebrated their 10 year anniversary this year. They are currently participating with UCONN on their waste water treatment plan and water quantity issues. As part of the “Know your community resources” program, a tour of a sewage treatment plant at UCONN was arranged.

Hampton Conservation Commission (represented by Dave Goodrich) had a second informational meeting on greenway formulation strategies with **GVI** intern Diane Rimkus. **The Samuel Huntington Museum** received a grant and the Board was able to pay off the mortgage.

Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (Scott Gravatt), applying on behalf of the Little River Sourcewater Protection Plan Team, was awarded an EPA Clean Water Act section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection to purchase or lease a liquid manure applicator that more incorporates the manure into the soil rather than spread it on the soil as a means to reduce NPS from nutrient runoff. The grant has been approved. The contract still needs to be drafted and then go through the signature process. A visit to upstate NY to view equipment in use is being planned.

The ECCD has also been working with **UConn Cooperative Extension System** to promote a method of testing soil for nitrogen content, before applying a “top dressing” (sometimes called “side dressing”) of nitrogen in the late spring/early summer. The tests help the farmer apply just the right amount of nitrogen, potentially preventing over application and saving the farmer money. ECCD staff completed the collection of soil samples on August 9th. In all, they sampled 385 acres. ECCD staff completed the collection of corn stalk samples for nitrogen content testing in October. Approximately 108 acres were sampled.

The ECCD has also been notified that they have been awarded a second year of funding for the TRBP Coordinator position. This funding is being generously provided by the CT DEP through a United States **Environmental Protection Agency** Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant. A third and final year of funding for this position through this program has been applied for on behalf of the Partnership.

Town of Woodstock (Delia Fey, Planner and ZEO) zoning regulations are in the process of being revised. A consultant was brought in to demonstrate what low impact development looks like on a site plan.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Sara Williams) is sponsoring several grant programs for restoring land for wildlife habitats with request for proposal dates approaching. The 2007 Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant is to support projects that restore and protect the health and living resources of Long Island Sound. Applications due December 15, 2006. The US Small Grants program supports public-private partnerships carrying out projects in the United States that further the goals of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act. These projects must involve long-term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated uplands habitats for the benefit of all wetlands-associated migratory birds. Applications are Due December 1, 2006.

Connecticut Audubon Society at Pomfret Center Citizen Science Coordinator, Paula Coughlin and her team of volunteers continued to collect data on stream health in the tributaries of the Little River in Woodstock using the NRCS StreamWalk protocol. This fall, she also trained 16 adults to conduct water quality monitoring utilizing the CT DEP protocol for Rapid Bioassessment, or macro invertebrate studies. Several members of the Woodstock Conservation Commission were trained in order to develop base line water quality data for the town which they will translate into a GIS compatible format with assistance by Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator.

Trout Unlimited, Thames Valley Chapter signed agreements with twenty schools to take part in their Trout in the Classroom program this school year, from Willimantic south to the sound. The schools that will be taking part this year are: Windham Middle School and Windham High School in Willimantic; Pine Point School, Stonington; Sayles Elementary School, Baltic; Mystic Middle School, Mystic; Intergraded Day Charter School, Norwich; Ledyard Center School, Ledyard; Parish Hill High School, Chaplin; N. Stonington Middle School, N. Stonington; Clark Lane Middle School, Waterford; Lillie B. Haynes School, Niantic; East Lyme High School; East Lyme; Kelly Middle School, Norwich; Fitch Senior High School, and Fitch Middle School, Groton. Each school received about 250 trout eggs from the Quinebaug State Hatchery sometime in late September to mid-October. They are still seeking additional mentors for this program. For more information, please visit their website, www.thamesvalleytu.org/TIC.html.

Finally, an exciting **Thames River Basin Partnership** project is being developed for Poquetanuck Cove, a narrow two mile long tidal embayment located 10 miles upstream from the mouth of the Thames River in the towns of Preston and Ledyard, Connecticut. This project aims to control invasive *Phragmites* throughout the Cove, a brackish tidal wetland, over several years by herbiciding and mulching to promote existing native plants including Eastern grasswort, cord grass, bullrush, pond weed, and wild rice. The 1991 US Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Coastal Study: "*Significant Coastal Habitat of Southern New England and Portions of Long Island, New York*" specifically identified Poquetanuck Cove marshes as a significant Coastal habitat site, particularly for its "... regional significant concentrations of wintering and migrating waterfowl, especially several species not commonly found elsewhere, or in similar concentrations in the region". Poquetanuck Cove was designated a bird sanctuary in 1969 and waterfowl hunting was prohibited in 1982. It has been described by Ron Rosza of the CT DEP as a "high priority for invasive species control since it is the largest/best brackish meadow/cattail marsh on the Thames River"

A comprehensive multi-year *Phragmites* control plan for the cove is being developed to include methods, timing of treatments and areas of infestation. Multiple Partners are involved, including the Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator, the CT DEP, the Ledyard Conservation Commission, the Preston Conservation Committee, Avalonia Land Conservancy, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nature Conservancy and private land owners and the list will continue to grow as the project plan develops. This project will fulfill the requirement for a watershed restoration project required by the Nonpoint Source Grant funding year one of the TRBP Coordinator Position.

The next meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership will be at 9:30 AM on January 16, 2007 at the Lisbon Town Hall on Route 169.

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 subscribe, please contact Jean Pillo, Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator at 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.