



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Fall 2013

Volume 28

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 Fall 2013 meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership at NECCOG, then you missed a presentation by Kasey Pregler, a graduate student at UCONN, entitled *Conservation of Bridled Shiner in Connecticut: Issues in Detecting an Elusive Species*. Kasey's study, under advisement of UCONN Professor Jason Voukoun and Neal Hagstrom of CT DEEP Fisheries, was designed to determine if Bridled Shiner, a small bait fish listed as a Special Concern species in Connecticut, is truly a species in decline, or just under represented in population studies. Early fish populations studies relied on seining nets to collect fish. Today, electrofishing is more commonly used to determine abundance, density, and species composition. When performed correctly, electrofishing results in no permanent harm to fish, which return to their natural state in as little as two minutes after being stunned. Stunned fish can be netted, identified and released back to the environment. Kasey's study involved comparing Bridled Shiner populations in areas where they were historically found but recent studies showed were absent. Eighty historic sites were resurveyed using both electrofishing and seining, and of those eighty sites, Bridled Shiner were found at ten sites where they were thought to have been extirpated. Further study is needed before Bridled Shiner can be "delisted". Click [here](#) to read a recent article on Kasey work in the New London Day.

TRBP Updates

The Patchaug River watershed has been proposed as the subject of the 14th annual TRBP Floating Workshop in June 2014. If you would like to serve on the planning committee, or have a suggestion for a relevant topic for the workshop, please contact [Jean Pillo](#). Suggested topics so far include challenges faced by rural towns like Voluntown where much land is state owned; downtown revitalization in Jewett City; invasive plant management in river impoundments; agriculture BMP activity; improved methodologies for water quality monitoring in impounded river systems.

Partner Reports

Due to the temporary government partial government shutdown, our USGS or USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service representatives were unable to attend the TRBP Fall meeting.

The Connecticut Legislature enacted minimum stream flow regulations in 2011 and the Thames River major basin, Southwest Coastal and Pawcatuck watersheds were the first to undergo the process of classification. The draft maps are now viewable online and the CT DEEP invites the public to review the maps and input comments regarding them before Tuesday, December 31, 2013. It is possible to zoom in to a stream and see the justification for the category it has been assigned. Please forward your comments in writing to ct.streamflowclass@ct.gov. Click [here](#) for more information on Connecticut Stream Flow Regulations and Implementation and to link to the online maps.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has also begun the process of updating the Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan ("NPS Plan"). The goal to update the CT NPS Plan has been discussed at focused partner meetings, regional conferences and public meetings. The current Statewide NPS Plan can be found at [here](#).

DEEP has created and will continue to provide timely updates to an [informational web page](#) for this NPS Plan Update project as details become available.

The process to update the statewide NPS plan began with a public stakeholder meeting on October 31, 2013. Stakeholders had the opportunity to review the update process and provide comments on an outline for the draft statewide NPS Plan. An additional public meetings will be held in January with an opportunity to comment on the draft Plan. DEEP encourages further comments as they draft this statewide NPS Plan which will include future strategies and goals for CT's NPS Program. Feel free to forward this information to other stakeholders you believe would be interested.

A Statewide NPS Plan update is required under the USEPA/DEEP Performance Partnership Agreement. A final revised NPS Plan is expected by spring of 2014. An updated EPA approved statewide NPS Plan will allow the State to continue to receive EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source funding for NPS planning and implementation, such as watershed based plans and implementation of priority NPS projects identified in those plans. EPA Clean Water Act funds are currently funding 14 projects in Eastern Connecticut. Eight additional projects are in the pipeline to be implemented.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) staff, working with local officials and stakeholders from Preston and Ledyard, CT together with conservation professionals from many disciplines, have completed the Poquetanuck Cove Conservation Action Planning project. Poquetanuck Cove is a two mile long tidal cove of the Thames River and contains multiple natural features listed as important in the Connecticut Coastal Management Program. The final [Poquetanuck Cove Conservation Action Plan](#) will be incorporated into the Plan of Conservation

and Development in both Ledyard and Preston. An [Intermunicipal Agreement](#) to support the Poquetanuck Cove Conservation Action Plan was signed by the mayor of Ledyard and the first selectman of Preston on September 27, 2013 as part of a National Estuaries Day event. In addition to the signing ceremony, a ribbon cutting for a native plant riparian buffer demonstration project at the end of Royal Oaks Drive in Ledyard was featured, and the car top boat launch located there was dedicated in memory of the late William R. Hasse, former Ledyard Planner and early Poquetanuck Cove advocate. The Poquetanuck Cove Conservation Action Planning program was funded in part by the Long Island Sound Futures Fund. Thanks go to all the TRBP Partners who participated in this project.

Because of high demand for the first unit, ECCD has been able to purchase a second [Aerway](#) system for use in the Little River Watershed. This project was funded in part by EPA Clean Water Act § 319 funds through the CT DEEP. In agricultural areas, an Aerway system is no-till system designed to fracture tough soil to increase air and water movement. As the AerWay moves over the surface, the unique angles of the AerWay Shattertines crack and shatter compacted soil 7" and deeper to open new channels for air and water. Plants are reported to respond with stronger roots and better yields. The manufacturer claims this improves fertilizer utilization, reduces runoff, and results in greater soil moisture consistency. A study completed by UCONN students after the purchase of the first unit showed a dramatic decrease in runoff from a pretreated farm field as compared to a nearby field not pretreated with the Aerway system. The goal of this project is to improve water quality in the Little River watershed in Woodstock, CT.

ECCD is currently involved in three separate water quality investigations. Water quality monitoring for the lower Natchaug River watershed (below the Willimantic Reservoir Dam) and the Mount Hope River is complete. Volunteers trained as part of The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program assisted ECCD staff in 8 weeks of sample collection. The samples were analyzed for *E. coli* at the Connecticut Department of Health. In addition to bacteria sampling, volunteers also completed Stream Walk visual assessments of the Natchaug River and tributaries below the reservoir as part of an effort to track down measured bacteria sources measured at Lauter Park beach in Willimantic. Data analysis is underway.

Sampling in Amos Lake is also complete with the assistance of volunteers from the Amos Lake Association. Amos Lake, a trophy bass lake, experiences algal blooms from excess nutrients. Monthly samples were analyzed for nutrient and other components. Once the data is analyzed, a watershed based plan for Amos Lake will be prepared. The CT Agriculture Experiment Station Aquatic Invasive Plant team completed a 5 year re-survey of Amos Lake at the request of ECCD. Their report will help to determine if invasive milfoil has spread significantly since first reported five years ago.

A Coastal Equine Nutrient Management project being jointly worked on by ECCD and sister organizations the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District and Southwest Conservation District, is nearly complete. ECCD staff have been working with horse owners to improve their manure management practices with a goal of reducing nitrate pollutants from entering Long Island Sound. This project is being funded by a special partnership between the Long Island Sound Futures Fund and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The Last Green Valley, Inc., the non-profit membership organization that manages The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, has extended their contract with ECCD to continue funding TRBP and TLGV WQM coordinator time through December 31, 2013.

The Last Green Valley Water Trails Steering Committee has completed design work for new informational kiosk signs at all of the public access points along the Quinebaug River Water Trail. A dozen new signs will be installed on kiosks this spring, including installation on two new kiosks in Brooklyn and Canterbury that were built by Ellis Tech students. TLGV is also working with the Willimantic River Alliance to complete design work and fabrication for a series of new kiosks along the Willimantic River Water Trail. Both Water Trails are National Recreation Trails.

Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. is continuing with their funding appeal to match the DEEP Watershed Land Acquisition grant awarded to purchase the Babcock Ridge property in North Stonington. This parcel is an important link between two other Avalonia properties located along the Shunock River. To learn more about this property click [here](#) to read a recent New London Day article written by Judy Benson.

The US Army Corp of Engineers manages six flood control dams in the Thames River watershed. The main function of these impoundments is flood control, but compatible recreational activities are also allowed. The recreational opportunities vary by site. Fishing, boating, camping, picnicking, hiking and swimming are permitted if there are no conflicting issues. Swimming is allowed at an enclosed beach area at their [Buffumville Lake](#) impoundment in Charlton, MA, but invasive variable milfoil and fanwort are major problems at the lake. Various methods to combat these aggressive weeds are being considered.

UConn's Natural Resources Conservation Academy - Click [here](#) to see a short outreach piece with short video clips reflecting high school academic summer work within the Eagleville Brook watershed and beyond (several LID projects front and center!) Students continue individual projects back in their community during their own academic year (and will present at the next annual CT Conference of Natural Resources).

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has launched an updated Teachers and Students webpage and they have requested assistance in promoting this information to those who can use these tools for environmental education. Click the following link to visit this webpage <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/people/teachstudent>.

NRCS is accepting applications from landowners interested in implementing conservation practices that improve natural resources on farmland, forestland, and wetland areas through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA) Program, and Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP).

AMA provides financial assistance to eligible agricultural producers. The program provides cost share assistance to address issues such as water management, water quality, and erosion control by incorporating conservation into farming operations.

EQIP provides cost share and incentive payments to implement conservation practices on eligible agricultural land. This program promotes environmental quality and agricultural production as compatible goals.

The WHIP program is for conservation-minded landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat on agricultural land, non-industrial private forest land, and Tribal land.

The deadline to submit applications for the first batching period is Friday, December 20, 2013. Applications received after that date will be accepted and considered, if funds are available. For more information, contact your nearest USDA Service Center: Danielson – (860) 779-0557; Hamden – (203) 287-8038; Norwich – (860) 887-3604; Torrington – (860) 626-8258; Windsor – (860) 688-7725.

News from the Municipalities

The Woodstock Conservation Commission recently completed a trail map for an open space preserve accessible from Pond Factory Road. The property, donated to the people of Woodstock by the Darby family, is locally known as the Fifty Acre Wood. A large scale map is posted on a kiosk at the trail access parking area. Smaller pocket maps are available at the Woodstock Town Hall.

Have you noticed the storm drain stenciling that has been done recently in Putnam? This is part of a comprehensive program to improve the quality of stormwater runoff, the purpose of which is to eliminate or greatly reduce the entrance of pollutants into local watercourses – which are generally the ultimate receptor of stormwater runoff that enters stormwater catch basins. Known as the MS4 (short for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) Program, this EPA-mandated program requires that local municipalities take certain measures to reduce the quantity of pollutants that stormwater runoff carries into storm sewer conveyance systems, thereby increasing the quality of the receiving waters. With the assistance of students in the Putnam High School Transition Program as part of the work component of their Program, the Town has done this stenciling to remind residents that they should not dump pollutants into storm drains because anything dumped into a storm drain ultimately ends up in a local watercourse.

Another important MS4 Program measure is the Town's recent adoption of a *Municipal Storm Sewer Management Ordinance*. The Ordinance establishes methods for controlling the introduction of pollutants into the municipal separate storm sewer system by regulating the contribution of pollutants into the system, prohibiting illicit discharges and illegal connections to the system, preventing non-stormwater discharges into the system, and establishing the legal authority to carry out all necessary enforcement procedures.

Comments or questions relative to the Town of Putnam's MS4 Program may be referred to Don Johnson, Putnam Town Planner, at (860) 963-6803.

Other news

Please mark your calendars for the next general meeting of the Connecticut Invasive Plant

Working Group (CIPWG), which will be held on **Wednesday, November 20, 2013** from **11:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.** at the Valley Laboratory of The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station in Windsor, CT. The agenda will be posted at a later date. Please contact Donna Ellis (phone 860-486-6448; email donna.ellis@uconn.edu) or Penni Sharp (pensharp4@gmail.com) for additional information or if you have any questions.

A new lecture series on Sustainable Agriculture is being offered at the Quinebaug Valley Community College. The kickoff event will take place on Tuesday, November 5 at 7:00 pm in the QVCC Auditorium located on the Danielson Campus with a lecture on “Sustainable Food” featuring John Turenne. Mr. Turenne is President and Founder of Sustainable Food Systems. This lecture is free and open to the public, all are welcome to attend.

Shellfish and Seaweeds Soak Up Nutrients: Long Island Sound National Estuary Program Success Story - The Long Island Sound National Estuary Program is reducing nutrient pollution through comprehensive and innovative strategies. Two projects have been piloting techniques for farming shellfish (ribbed mussels) and seaweed (brown sugar kelp and the red alga, *Gracilaria* sp.). These living organisms naturally ingest organic matter containing nutrients or take up inorganic nutrients. This complements the Program's efforts to control the entry of nutrients into Long Island Sound through sewage treatment plant upgrades and other measures. The end result is cleaner water for fishing, swimming, and other recreational uses. And the shellfish and seaweed that is harvested has an economic benefit as well. To learn more about seaweed harvesting, [check out this video](#) from the University of Connecticut.

EPA & USDA Release New Tools to Assist Rural and Small Water Systems in Providing Sustainable Services - Rural and small water and wastewater systems face significant challenges in providing sustainable services to their communities. Together, EPA and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have developed two new tools to assist such systems. The first, a new Rural and Small Systems Guidebook to Sustainable Utility Management, will help such systems assess their strengths and priorities for potential improvements, and develop an action plan to address these priorities. The second, a "Workshop in a Box," contains a series of materials and instructions to help both rural and small systems and service providers market and conduct workshops based on the guidebook. [Read more.](#)

Workbook Helps Users to Develop Climate Change Adaptation Plans - EPA has released a draft workbook for environmental professionals and city managers to help identify and manage risks associated with climate change, and is seeking comments from the public on the draft. The document, "Being Prepared for Climate Change: A Workbook for Developing Risk-Based Adaptation Plans," provides a systematic process for environmental professionals and city managers for determining important climate risks that should be addressed, along with approaches for building local capacity to understand and manage these risks to protect future generations. The workbook was produced by EPA's Climate Ready Estuaries program, which works with 28 National Estuary Programs and the coastal management community to assess climate change vulnerabilities, develop and implement adaptation strategies, and engage and educate stakeholders. [Read more.](#)

EPA Releases New Climate Science Lessons Plans for Middle Schools Classrooms - EPA has released seven new lesson plans about climate change developed specifically for middle school students. The lesson plans and related classroom activities are tailored to meet the

National Science Learning Standards and the majority can be completed in one class period of 45 to 60 minutes. Topics covered by the lesson plans include: the difference between weather and climate, the sources of greenhouse gas emissions, the carbon cycle, sea level rise, and the impact of climate change on coral reefs. The lesson plans are available on EPA's climate change [website](#) for middle school students.

EPA Launches New Online Mapping Tool for Environmental Impact Statements -

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to consider the impacts of proposed actions, as well as any reasonable alternatives as part of their decision-making process. For proposed projects with potentially significant impacts, federal agencies prepare a detailed Environmental Impact Statement which is filed with EPA and made available for public review and comment. EPA is required to review and comment on Environmental Impact Statements prepared by other federal agencies.

The user can click on a state in the map and is provided with comment letters submitted by the EPA on Environmental Impact Statements within the last 60 days. The tool also provides users with the information they need to identify projects with open comment periods, including how to submit comments.

The tool supports EPA's commitment to utilize advanced information technologies that help increase transparency of its enforcement and compliance programs. EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance has recently launched the "Next Generation Compliance" initiative, designed to modernize its approach and drive improved compliance to reduce pollution.

To use EPA's EIS Mapper, visit <http://eismapper.epa.gov/>.

For more about EPA's NEPA Program, visit: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa/>

Upcoming Workshops

How Your Town Can Support New & Beginning Farmers: Understanding Challenges, Finding Resources

Agriculture Commission Workshop & Networking Opportunity

Thursday, November 21, 2013

6:30 - 9:00 p.m.

Canterbury Community Center

1 Municipal Drive

Canterbury CT

Learn more about the challenges of being a new farmer in Connecticut and towns can do to encourage and support them. More details and registration information coming soon. Direct questions to John Guskowski, AGvocate Program Manager at AGvocate@outlook.com.

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 **January 21, 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.