



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Spring 2008

Volume 8

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 website hyperlinks, but be sure to come back to finish reading the rest of the report.

Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator

If you missed the April 22, 2008 TRBP Quarterly Meeting in Willimantic, those in attendance were given a special presentation on the [Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy for Connecticut](#) by Jenny Dickson of the CT DEP Wildlife Division. She outlined the eight required elements of the plan and how the CT DEP addressed them, and the twelve key habitats and 43 ecological communities that have been identified in Connecticut. Overall, this is a plan that:

1. Addresses the broad array of all fish, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrate species.
2. Uses available funding to address the species in greatest need of conservation and their habitats.
3. Identifies actions needed to conserve species diversity and keep common species common.
4. Builds upon past efforts to conserve all species of wildlife.
5. Encourages the creation of partnerships with conservation organizations at local, state and regional levels to enhance opportunities for implementation of actions to conserve wildlife.

The success of this strategy will be dependant on partnerships that focus on multiple resources, including the wildlife habitat component. The first program implemented under the strategy is the [Grasslands Habitat Conservation Initiative](#).

The [Thames River Basin Partnership Floating Workshop VIII](#) will be held on Friday June 13, 2008. The title of the workshop is “**The Natchaug Watershed Basin, Water For People and Nature**”. The Natchaug River is the least impacted river system in the Thames basin, and the workshop will highlight Partner efforts to preserve and enhance this multi-use resource for future generations. This year’s host will be the US Army Corp of Engineers and our “float” will be on [Mansfield Hollow Lake](#), a Corp maintained flood control project. Mark Smith of [The Nature Conservancy’s Sustainable Waters Program](#), will be this year’s keynote speaker. Registration information and the workshop agenda are posted on the Thames River Basin Partnership website. If you work on Friday’s, this afternoon workshop will be well worth taking a day off to attend. Click [here](#) for more information.

Stormwater runoff from developed properties is increasingly recognized as a problem for both water quantity and quality. The Thames River Basin Partnership has partnered with the [New England Rain Barrel Company](#) to offer rain barrels for use on residential properties at a discounted price. For each rain barrel sold at \$75, the Thames River Basin Partnership will receive \$7.00. The rain barrels can be ordered by calling The New England Rain Barrel Company toll free at 877-977-3135 or online by clicking [here](#). All rain barrel orders must be in by June 4, 2008 to be included in one regional delivery to the Lisbon Community Center, 19 South Burnham Highway (scenic Route 169) in Lisbon, CT. Pickup will be on Sunday, June 8 between 2-5 pm. Coordinate with your neighbors to transport your barrel(s) back home. I hope to see you there!

With the help of a landmark **\$1,000,000 grant** from the [North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#) (NAWCA), 1,100 acres in The Nature Conservancy [Quinebaug Highlands'](#) Natchaug River Watershed will be protected. The project is the result of a partnership between The Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, the UConn Extension System's Green Valley Institute, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wyndham Land Trust, the Towns of Eastford and Woodstock and three private landowners. The NAWCA grant, combined with funding from partners, will permanently protect 11 different tracts within the Natchaug River Watershed. The properties comprise 268 acres of critically important wetlands, more than seven miles of streams, and 832 acres of forest. The transactions will include both fee and conservation easement purchases, including the 98-acre Still River Preserve acquired by the Conservancy in December 2007. This effort is a significant step toward the Conservancy's larger conservation initiative throughout the Thames River Basin to protect habitat critical to breeding and staging waterfowl in Connecticut.

The Nature Conservancy/US Army Corp of Engineers joint proposal for a Thames River Watershed Reconnaissance Study was authorized by Congress but remains unfunded. This study would identify strategies for the protection and restoration of aquatic habitat in the Thames River Basin. To learn more about this proposal and what can be done to support funding this study, contact [Holly Drinkuth](#).

After evaluating the various options available, the [Eastern Connecticut Conservation District](#) has purchased a piece of equipment to fulfill the Woodstock/Putnam [Little River Sourcewater Protection](#) Team Clean Water Act grant. The equipment selected, an Aerway Model AWF-200-AG-4, will make openings in the soil. After pulling this machine over a field, the farmer will follow with his manure application equipment. The manure will penetrate deeper into the soil, as opposed to laying on top, which will result in better retention of the nutrients in place, reducing both the cost of nutrient application from purchased sources, and the runoff of excess nutrients into nearby water resources. Several Woodstock farmers have agreed to use this equipment on a trial bases. Monitoring of runoff will be overseen by UCONN Professor Dr. Jack Clausen to verify the effectiveness of this technology. Advantages of this equipment over other technologies investigated include that in addition to plowed cornfields, it can be used to incorporate manure on grass and no-till fields and it is significantly less expensive to maintain.

In 2005 the CT Department of Environmental Protection commissioned a [Feasibility Study for Alternative Technologies and Utilization for Managing Dairy and Poultry Manure](#). This report evaluated a variety of alternatives that would address the nutrient management issues in CT. The ultimate goal of the project was to identify economically and technically feasible manure management methods for the dairy and poultry industry that would effectively manage surplus nutrients throughout the State of Connecticut.

In the Thames Basin, the [Eastern CT RC&D Council](#) has contracted with the Cooperative Development Institute to provide marketing research and business planning services to conceptualize a composted manure enterprise. This Project supports RC&D's efforts to complete Phase 2 of "Managing Manure Nutrients, Woodstock". The project is funded in part by the CT Department of Environmental Protection through a US Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant. *The Woodstock Nutrient Management Feasibility Study* produced by Wright-Pierce in Phase 1 (July 2007) identified anaerobic digester and compost options for converting surplus manure into energy producing and bio-available products. The focus of this project is to provide support for the implementation of recommended compost options through a composted products marketing study and development of a business plan for an enterprise that can profitably convert manure into a commodity that can be sold in a wholesale or retail environment.

The Eastern CT RC&D Area continues to work and partner with Connecticut's farmers to accomplish this goal. Part of that goal was furthered with the creation of the Connecticut Nutrient Management Website. This website has been setup in partnership with the Connecticut DEP and the EPA to help inform and keep information available and updated for farmers and those with a vested interest in Nutrient Management in the State of Connecticut. Please visit the newly launched website www.ctnm.org and learn more about the exciting potential these studies hold for the future landscape of Connecticut.

[The Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area](#) (ECRC&D) will be co-hosting a *Planning for Brownfield Reuse and Redevelopment Opportunities* workshop with CME Engineering of Woodstock. This workshop will be held on Wednesday, May 28 at Quinebaug Valley Community College. Click [here](#) for more details.

[The Green Valley Institute](#) is co-sponsoring a [Spring 2008 Workshop Series](#) with the Eastern Connecticut RC&D. This series will focus on Advanced Approaches: Addressing Community Growth. The May 8 workshop is titled "A Tale of Two Grotons" and the May 21 workshop is titled "Wastewater Treatment Alternatives". Contact [Sue Westa](#) for more information.

[Connecticut Audubon Society Center at Pomfret](#) hosted a well attended Grassland Birds Initiative Forum in January. CAS holdings in Pomfret include the [Bafflin Sanctuary](#), which includes areas managed specifically for grassland nesting birds.

On Thursday evening, June 5, 2008, CAS Center at Pomfret will host a 2008 [The State of the Birds](#) Report update, presented by Milan Bull, Senior Director of Science and Conservation for Connecticut Audubon Society and Editor-in-chief of CAS's annual "Connecticut State of the Birds" Report. As part of CT DEP's statewide "Grasslands Habitat Conservation Initiative," Milan is also Chairman of the Partnerships & Volunteerism, Information Exchange Subgroup. This free workshop will discuss birds and their habitats, which are remarkably good indicators of environmental health and are clearly associated with our quality of life. The presentation will review what we know about bird populations in Connecticut, how we know it, and will address the serious declines in both species diversity and habitat loss of many of our common birds with suggested management and planning solutions for everyday homeowners as well as municipal planners. Call (860) 928-4948 to register for this workshop.

CT NEMO announced a new website - The [CT LID Regulations Website](#). They have put together a searchable, web-based database that will allow viewers to access Connecticut town

and city ordinances that pertain specifically to low impact development and innovative stormwater management. Rather than providing a model ordinance framework, they have begun to find example ordinances that are already in effect in various CT towns. The website is still in its early stages of development. NEMO staff would like to build on this initial version so as to provide the most useful information for developing effective LID and stormwater management regulations. Please contact [Kathryn Woodruff](#) with any comments, suggestions, and additional regulations not yet included. The goal is for the site to grow and become a functional resource for CT towns when it comes time to amend regulations.

The CT Inland Fisheries Division, Habitat and Conservation Enhancement Program has completed a [Stream Crossing Guidelines Publication](#) which is available online. This publication is an updated summary of prior stream crossing and instream construction window policies repackaged into a more public friendly guidance document.

The Weekly CT Diadromous Fish (No Fish Left Behind) Reports are once again being published by [Steve Gephard](#) of the CT DEP. Alewives are running in all streams from RI to NY, with fish reported in most streams. The Shetucket River was slow to get started this year. The first day the fish lift at the Tunnel Dam was in operation, more Alewives were lifted than in 2007. If you would like to be added to the distribution list for these reports, send Steve an email with the subject heading "add to diadromous fish report list".

The [CT DEP Long Island Sound Program](#) awarded Coastal Environmental Services Inc., a new nonprofit group, the task of pumping sewage out of recreational boats. Coastal Environmental Services will use two pumpout boats in the Mystic River, and for the first time, one in the Thames River. This is a significant expansion of the coverage area and anti-pollution effort. They will cover Pine Island Bay, Mumford Cove and the waters off Groton Long Point, taking away the waste that can pollute swimming areas, shellfish beds, and other aquatic habitats if boaters release it into the water.

The University of Connecticut and the CT DEP have created a new website that offers an underwater tour of Long Island Sound. To access this website, click [here](#).

Interested in receiving news updates from the CT DEP? Sign up for their [eAlert](#) program. The eAlert application allows visitors to subscribe to topics on a website and receive email notification. To sign up for eAlerts, go to the "Subscribe now or update your e-Alerts" link on the lower left hand side of the site. This will bring up a page that lists all the eAlerts available to subscribers. Select the checkbox next to the eAlerts you wish to receive.

With a current flush of money from the [Recreation and National Heritage Trust Program](#) the CT DEP is currently reviewing 15 parcels statewide for potential acquisition. Of those 15, 10 are in the Thames River basin. Properties in communities with an open space budget to use as match have an increased chance of being acquired.

The [Willimantic River Alliance](#) has completed a new online [Parks and Trails Guide](#) to the Willimantic River Greenway. This comprehensive guide is on the recreation page of the Alliance's website just in time for Spring, 2008.

The [Willimantic River Festival](#) will be May 17, 2008. This event is sponsored by the Windham Region [Chamber of Commerce](#).

The USDA Farm Service Agency offers a [Grassland Reserve Program](#) for restoring and protecting grasslands. The program offers various easement options or rental agreements for landowners.

[Celebrating Agriculture!](#) is coming to the Woodstock Fairgrounds on September 20 for the seventh consecutive year. Anyone interested in planning or participating in this event or is just interested in more information is encouraged to contact the USDA Service Center in Brooklyn at (860) 774-8397 x 109.

The [Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor, Inc](#) is continuing to plan their spring 2009 “Source to Sea” initiative. This will be a series of paddling and landside events that celebrate the water resources of The Last Green Valley. Several meetings have been held to plot safe boat access areas and map the level of difficulty for various paddling stretches. Information is still needed for the Moosup and the Pachaug Rivers and possibly related activities that can be held along the Yantic River. For more information, to volunteer with planning this event, or if you have photos of river access points, contact [Lois Bruinooge](#) at (860) 963-7226.

QSHC sponsored a “Bad Bag” contest, encouraging middle school students from Woodstock and Brooklyn to collect plastic shopping bags for the purpose of recycling them. In a three week period, over 109,000 bags were collected, with Brooklyn edging out Woodstock for the trophy.

The very popular QSHC Walking Weekends will be expanded to include events throughout the entire month of October. The new name for this program is [Walktober](#). Organizations wishing to sponsor an event should contact [Lois](#) before May 9th.

[Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.](#) was awarded a Connecticut Land Conservation Council Environmental Stewardship Award at the [25th Annual Conference](#) of the Connecticut Land Conservation Council in April. They were recognized for their efforts partnering with the Thames River Basin Partnership for the Phragmites control project at [Poquetanuck Cove](#).

The [Wyndham Land Trust](#) reported a good year in 2007, with one of their notable projects to acquire an additional 45 acres to their 101 acre [Duck Marsh Preserve](#) on Wrights Crossing Road in Pomfret. The additional acreage contains a observation blind that overlooks the marsh.

A workshop on Habitat-Based Management Planning was presented on May 3, 2008 at the Windham County Extension Center in Brooklyn. This workshop was designed for land trusts and town open space managers to learn how to develop a habitat-based property management plan. The speakers were Juliana Barrett, CT Sea Grant/NEMO; Emily Wilson & John Rozum, CLEAR; Tom Worthley, UCONN Extension; Ruth Cutler, GVI; David Gumbart, TNC. For more information, contact [Juliana Barrett](#) at (860) 405-9106.

The US Army Corp of Engineers manages several flood control projects in the Thames watershed in both Connecticut and Massachusetts. At their [Mansfield Hollow Dam](#) location, ACE is working with UCONN and The Nature Conservancy on a pine barrens habitat restoration project. At [West Thompson Lake in Thompson](#), 30 acres of the property is being managed for grassland bird habitat. Bobolinks and meadowlarks, two grassland nesting bird species, have been observed there. Timber harvesting is being conducted at their West Thompson Lake and [Brimfield](#) and [Hodges Village Dam](#) locations as part of a wildlife habitat management program, in part to supplement their natural resources and recreation budgets that are receiving less

funding support from Federal sources. With assistance from UMASS, Legacy Trees are being marked for preservation and some tree stands are being managed for Old Growth habitat.

The Thames Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited volunteers were busy this spring assisting with trout stocking in the Shetucket, Little, Yantic and Eight Mile Rivers. They also sponsored a Family Fish Day at the Quinebaug Hatchery for TU members. For a list of upcoming Trout Unlimited events, click [here](#).

The [Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments \(SCCOG\)](#) received funding from the CT Office of Policy and Management, under the Regional Performance Incentive Program to establish a web-based Regional Geographic Information System (GIS) which would include data from all 20 SCCOG member municipalities. This would provide quick access to each town's GIS database and provide some GIS capacity to towns that currently have none. SCCOG will contract with a consultant to create and maintain the system while SCCOG staff will be responsible to its member municipalities for managing the system. Over time it will be very important for each town to provide current parcel information so that the system does not become dated. The grant includes funding to operate this system for five years. All 20 SCCOG municipalities indicated their desire to participate in this web-based GIS.

The [Windham Region Council of Governments \(WINCOG\)](#) also received funding through the State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management Regional Performance Incentive Grant. They will create a Regional GIS Data Center to assist member towns in the ongoing development of their digital tax parcel maps and databases, and to provide regional geographic information (GIS) online in an easy-to-use format. The Data Center will create a website and online service in which municipal staff and the general public can access geographic information easily in a “one-stop” regional context.

Also, six WINCOG towns and four Capital Region Council of Government Towns (CRCOG) partnered together to purchase Regional Trail Maintenance Equipment to be shared by the 10 towns to maintain the “Rails to Trails” segments (44 miles of trail) here in Eastern CT. The grant will purchase a trail specific utility vehicle (with trailer) with attachments and a mini-excavator. The Towns will also create a mutual sharing agreement for the trail equipment.

Also receiving funds from the OPM Regional Performance Incentive Grant Program, the [Northeastern Connecticut Council of Governments \(NECCOG\)](#) will be able to create the NECCOG Regional GIS System as described in Section 8 of Public Act 07-239 – An Act Concerning Responsible Growth. The NECCOG GIS program is intended to be a dynamic system responsive to the varied needs of each member town – available on a 24/7/365 basis. The goal of the NECCOG GIS initiative is to establish a foundation of geographic information to support community (town and/or regional) decision-making. NECCOG will employ a GIS Director and two GIS Technicians to operate this program. The Director will oversee the administration of the program and provide technical assistance and training directly to town personnel. The GIS Technicians would be employed to develop and/or correct existing data – with an emphasis on parcel data.

News from the Municipalities

The Town of Ledyard recently adopted conservation subdivision regulations, offering a 40% open space land set aside option for new development. (note: the newsletter originally

incorrectly stated this was mandatory). This effort was well received by the town. The land to be set aside for open space will be determined by the Planning Commission.

The Town of Ledyard is continuing to develop a [Source Water Protection Plan](#) in partnership with the [Atlantic States Rural Water and Wastewater Association](#).

The Town of Lisbon Inland Wetlands Agency is utilizing their newly developed Natural Resource Inventory as part of their upland review for proposed development. This inventory was created with the assistance of the [Green Valley Institute](#).

The Town of Thompson received a grant from the CT DEP Greenways Small Grant Program to develop an educational brochure directed towards residents of the Five Mile River Watershed, highlighting the many significant natural and anthropogenic resources in the watershed, and promoting the importance of permanent preservation. This is an important first step in obtaining greenway status for this watershed, and lays the groundwork for future preservation efforts.

The Town of Thompson also requested an Environmental Review Team review of Jerry's Swamp, one of the ten most noteworthy wetlands in Thompson. The review was conducted in 2007 and the report was received in early 2008. The review will be used to direct habitat management. The Town, through the Conservation Commission, has applied for a LIP grant to manage *Phragmites*.

The Thompson Trails Committee is working with Laurie Giannotti of the CT DEP Greenways Program and John Monroe of the National Park Service to make repairs to a stretch of the Airline Trail, and to extend and make linkages between other existing trails.

On May 10, the Thompson Together Environment Committee and the French River Buffer Committee will be organizing volunteers to begin planting along the French River. For information about what plant materials are still needed or to volunteer to help on this project, contact Thompson Planner, Kevin Kennedy at (860) 923-9475. The French River Stream Buffer Planting plan was developed by the USDA NRCS under a Section 319 Clean Water Act Grant. The restoration will include native buffer plantings, a rain garden, a wildflower meadow and a woodland garden, along with informational signage at the Riverwalk Park in North Grosvenordale.

Judy Rondeau will begin her third season of volunteer water quality monitoring of the French River in Thompson, along with a few select locations on the Five Mile River in May. Additional volunteers are being sought for these once a month, half day commitments. Contact Judy at 860-923-1852 if you can help out.

The Town of Pomfret voted in favor of a \$4 million bond package to be used for the purchase of property development rights and open space. They are aggressively working to match this money with other State and Federal land protection programs, and continue to partner with the Wyndham Land Trust to achieve their goals.

The U.S. EPA announced that Norwich, CT is among five Connecticut communities awarded grant funds through the agency's Brownfield program. The city will use the \$200,000 of Brownfield Clean-Up Funds for clean up activities at 26 Shipping Street, a city-owned property that was contaminated by the industrial activities of former owners. Brownfields are former industrial sites that are difficult to develop due to contamination. The City looks forward to

using these funds to revitalize property in this waterfront area which has great redevelopment potential

Over 400 people volunteered to take part in [Killingly](#)'s Earth Day Town Wide Cleanup Project. Killingly is celebrating their [Tercentennial](#) this year.

More Information

EPA released the third in a series of reports on municipal wastewater collection and treatment technologies. ["Emerging Technologies for Wastewater Treatment and In-Plant Wet Weather Management"](#) provides municipal wastewater treatment system owners and operators with the latest information on emerging wastewater treatment and in-plant wet weather management technology options. It identifies cost effective, innovative and embryonic technologies as well as established technologies with innovative applications. Technical and cost data for more than 60 innovative technologies and more than 25 embryonic technologies are provided. The technologies featured in the report can provide more efficient, advanced wastewater treatment, or better management of wet weather flows at the treatment plant. The previous two reports, ["Emerging Technologies for Biosolids Management"](#), and ["Emerging Technologies for Conveyance Systems: New Installations and Rehabilitation Methods,"](#) are also available on this [website](#).

The US EPA continues to providing tools and timely information to help communities improve sustainability of their water systems. Two new documents that describe how EPA is carrying out efforts to help are the "National Capacity Development Strategic Plan" and "Analysis on the Use of Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Set-Asides: Promoting Capacity Development." EPA works with a number of partners, including organizations that provide technical assistance to small public water systems, to improve technical, managerial, and financial capacity of systems. For more information, click [here](#).

The "Balancing Water Quality and Smart Growth Goals Toolkit" CD-ROM is a compilation of valuable resources and ideas, including a new webcast called "Protecting Water Quality While Meeting Smart Growth Goals." The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has brought these resources together to help local government managers and planning and environmental professionals determine how they can connect their efforts to reach important community goals.

The CD-ROM toolkit includes more than 50 resources, including webcasts, presentations, fact sheets, publications, case studies, and Web links to online resource collections and news articles and sources. To download toolkit's content list, click [here](#). To order a copy, contact lgean@icma.org.

The spring issue of the Connecticut DEP's Pollution Prevention newsletter, *P2 View*, is now available by clicking [here](#).

[Virginia Tech's Center for Total Maximum Daily Load \(TMDL\) and Watershed Studies](#) has developed an [on-line database](#) to house selected TMDL-related information and documents in one central location. The searchable clearinghouse contains three types of resources: TMDL guidance documents, reviews and summaries of TMDL-related technical and trade literature, and state-by-state summaries of TMDL programs across the nation. State summaries are updated regularly for all 50 states and include the approach and methodology used to develop TMDLs in

that state. In total, about 500 documents are available within this database, which was funded, in part, by an EPA grant.

The [EPA Watershed Academy](#) will be hosting another Webcast in their Webcast Series. The May 13 program is titled “Wetlands and Climate Change”. Check this website often for upcoming programs, or to download archived programs when they become available.

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. The schedule for upcoming Thames River Basin Partnership meetings in 2008 is:

Tuesday, July 15 at Project Oceanology, Groton
Tuesday, October 21 TBA

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.