



# Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Spring 2018

Volume 46

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 Project Manager  
Eastern Connecticut Conservation District  
And TRBP Coordinator*

## Special Presentation

If you missed the April 2018 meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership, then you missed a presentation by Chris Elphick of UCONN who gave a presentation on the Connecticut Breeding Bird Atlas Project. This 3 year project involves citizen scientists signing on for one of the 601 blocks the state has been divided into, and spending up to 20 hours per year reporting all evidence of breeding birds within that block. The breeding bird database was last updated in the 1980s. More information can be found at [www.ctbirdatlas.org](http://www.ctbirdatlas.org).

## TRBP Updates

On June 2, the TRBP sponsored a Paddle on Poquetanuck Cove in celebration of the Avalonia Land Conservancy 50th anniversary, TLGV's Spring Outdoors and CT Forest and Parks Trails Day.

TRBP website update – The Rivers Alliance of CT has approved a small grant of \$3000 small grant to fund the development of an updated TRBP website. Work on this project will begin once the contract is signed. A Request for Proposals will be developed for website designers. Partners, please send me your requests for what you would like to see featured on the updated website.

TRBP Plan of Work was extended through July 2018. A \$500 mini grant was awarded by the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut to support 3 meetings where the current plan of

work was reviewed and discussed. New prospective members were invited to the meetings to encourage their involvement in our organization.

The meetings included an introduction to the TRBP, a review of current partners, accomplishments to date, benefits of involvement in the partnership, and discussion on updating our plan of work. The outcome of these meetings will lead to an updated Plan of Work for the organization representing the shared goals of the partners. The goal is to have a revised plan of work ready for adoption by the July TRBP meeting.

The TRBP Floating Workshop #18 was held on June 15. The theme was river continuity. The Chelsea Groton Foundation awarded TRBP a \$500 mini grant to support 20 municipal scholarships for public works or land use officials/commissioners. Project Oceanology offered the use of the Envirolab for this year's workshop.

## **Partner Reports**

One benefit of participating in the Thames River Basin Partnership includes the opportunity to collaborate with other conservation organizations in order to achieve greater success of our shared conservation goals. In recent years, this has been evidenced by interagency cooperation through opportunities for programs funded through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP). The RCPP encourages partners to join in efforts with agricultural producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales through locally-led initiatives.

- The Last Green Valley (TLGV) [Improving Soil Health and Water Quality in the Thames River Watershed](#). The long-term objective of this project is to implement soil health conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program on 500 acres of cropland and show a measurable improvement of edge-of-field and in-stream water quality, including a decrease in nutrient and turbidity levels. Recently, ECCD recruited a dairy farm to participate in the program, applying to NRCS to plant a 5-species mixed cover crop on 300 acres of farmland.
- The University of Connecticut's (UConn) *PATH to Reduce Pathogens in CT Agricultural Runoff* project has completed its first year of water sampling in ten streams known to have high bacteria levels, downstream of agricultural activity. Samples were sent to a specialty lab in Florida.
- The Last Green Valley (TLGV) [Accelerating the Pace of Conservation in the Southern New England Heritage Forest](#). The Last Green Valley Forestry RCPP contract with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service was executed in September and an official project rollout is being planned for Spring 2018. This \$6.1 million project includes \$1.5 million of special EQIP funding for forest management plans and forest conservation practices with a focus on bird habitat. \$4.6 million is included to buy Healthy Forest Reserve Easements from private landowners. The project will support landowners interested in preserving their woods, including surveys, transaction costs and funding for

bird habitat assessments. Landowners within the 1.4 million acre tri-state Southern New Heritage Forest are eligible to participate in the program. Contact [Lois](#) at The Last Green Valley for more information.

Once again, Spring Outdoors in The Last Green Valley (TLGV) took place with dozens of Spring Outdoors activities opportunities listed on the [TLGV website](#). Many different activities included hikes, paddles, music, cleanups, bike rides and more were organized.

Funds are available again this year from TLGV to support non-profit and municipal cleanups. Up to \$500 (paid on a reimbursable basis) is available to fund basic cleanup supplies and food for volunteers. Recipients must keep track of the trash and report totals so we can measure region-wide impacts.

Also from TLGV, this year's round of Historic and Cultural Resources Grants for non-profits and municipalities is open. Projects that will preserve, protect, interpret, promote or market historic and cultural resources are eligible. Grants may range from \$500 to \$4,000, must be matched 1:1 by cash or in-kind contributions. Application deadline is July 26.

A new small grant fund from TLGV for "closing the deal" has just been announced. The Heritage Transaction Fund will help with closing costs for projects that permanently protect significant historic properties or structures, agriculture or forested lands, important wildlife habitat or open spaces suitable for passive, nature-based recreation. Grants between \$2,000 to \$3,000 will be awarded (reimbursement basis) and must be matched on at least a 1:1 ratio. Application deadline is June 14.

Partners working on the Southern New England Heritage Forest Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) expect to launch the Healthy Forest Reserve easement portion of the project this month. Application materials will be available soon for landowners interested in protecting important bird habitat on their property with an easement. Large woodland parcels with connections to other forested tracts are a priority for this program.

#### TLGV Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator's Report

The TLGV Water Advisory Committee met in February to review and approve the 2018 monitoring plans for the TLGV volunteer water quality monitoring program. The Webster Lake Association, French River Connection, Charlton Lake and Pond Association in Massachusetts all submitted their plans. TLGV will organize a second season of monitoring for E. coli bacteria in the Shetucket River. A Lebanon Inland Wetlands Commission representative will initiate a trackdown survey of bacteria in the Ten Mile River and monitor temperature of streams in 4 locations using HOBO temperature loggers. A new pilot program involving cyanobacteria monitoring will be initiated in Roseland Lake in Woodstock this season. The Amos Lake Association will continue summer baseline monitoring in their lake. The results of the Riffle Bioassessment sampling in fall 2017 have not been assessed yet due to limited staff availability.

ECCD staff is working within the 36 towns in their District to install 100 rain barrels and 100 rain gardens. This project is being funded by a Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant through

the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the US EPA. Partners on this project include the Boy Scouts of America, who will help install the rain gardens, The Rivers Network who supply kits for converting recycled barrels into rain barrels and Coca-cola, who will provide the used syrup barrels. Five rain garden workshops and five build-a-rain-barrel workshops have been or will be scheduled in different areas of the ECCD territory. For more information on this project, please contact [Dan Mullins](mailto:Dan.Mullins@comcast.net) at 860-319-8808; Dan.Mullins@comcast.net.

ECCD is monitoring the effectiveness of the woodchip bioreactor installed to intercept tiled drain runoff from a farm in Woodstock in has begun. ECCD is collecting and evaluating the water quality flowing into and out of the bioreactor for 20 sampling events throughout all seasons of the year. Initial results show significant decreases in nitrate-nitrogen and bacteria. ECCD will be conducting a tour of the bioreactor to discuss its purpose, installation and its effectiveness. The tour will be one of TLGV's Walktober events. It will be held on October 24, 2018 at 4:00p.m. The tour will take less than hour, no dogs are allowed and it will be an easy walk. To join us, go to Valleyside Farm, 286, RT 169, South Woodstock, CT (Across from the entrance of the Woodstock Fairgrounds). This project is funded by an US EPA Clean Water Act § 319 grant through the CT DEEP.

Work continues at Fairvue Farm in Woodstock. This spring a new pump-house was constructed and later this summer, underground pipes will be installed to convey agricultural waste to two storage tanks previously installed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. This project is funded in part by an US EPA Clean Water Act § 319 grant through the CT DEEP.

The Roseland Lake Management Plan prepared by ECCD has been accepted by DEEP. The next step will be to work with the Town of Putnam to initiate the development of a Healthy Watershed Collaborative that will focus on implementing key parts of this plan. The Town of Putnam will be hiring a new Water Pollution Control Authority Director in early summer.

ECCD was awarded a contract to initiate an Anguilla Brook Bacteria Trackdown and Watershed Based Plan in mid-May. Water quality monitoring will be delayed until 2019 due to the delay in executing the contract.

In Niantic, ECCD wrapped up the Grand Street Stormwater Improvement project with the installation of 25 locally designed tree well water quality filters to collect and infiltrate stormwater runoff, preventing the contaminated runoff from reaching the existing stormwater drainage system. A workshop was held on April 27, in partnership with UCONN Center for Landuse Education and Research, as part of a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) outreach program.

The Hallville Fishway was opened for fish passage on April 13, 2018. This year, pre-spawned alewife were stocked in Hallville Pond in an attempt to jumpstart the fish restoration efforts in the watershed. This year, the Hallville fishway passed 74 alewife herring, an all-time high.

ECCD is coordinating with the CT DEEP marine fisheries program to continue efforts to restore access to historic anadromous fish breeding areas upstream of Poquetanuck Cove. A Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant application was prepared to match existing funds available for a

fishway over a small dam in Shewville Brook that would open up more upstream breeding habitat opportunities for alewife and other anadromous fish.

On Saturday April 21, 2018, which was International Fish Migration Day, there was a ribbon-cutting at the Scotland Dam. It was held to celebrate the installation and grand opening of the newest and furthest upstream aid to fish migration in the Shetucket River. This new fish lift at the Scotland Dam will allow fish that live in the Atlantic Ocean, but breed in freshwater streams, the ability to migrate further upstream to historic spawning areas. This fish lift is owned by First Light and Power. DEEP Commissioner Klee was on hand to participate in the ribbon-cutting. The Scotland Dam was a stop on the 2007 TRBP Floating Workshop featuring the Shetucket River. In addition to the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Scotland Dam fishway, several other eastern Connecticut dams with fish passage were opened for International Fish Migration Day. Included in the tour was the Hallville Fishway in Preston owned by ECCD.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) released a request for proposals for US EPA Clean Water Act §319 grant funds. Connecticut receives funds from EPA for Section 319 grants that can be passed onto communities, local conservation groups, and other organizations for NPS implementation projects, plans, and statewide NPS management efforts. Proposals were due by May 2, 2018.

An updated draft Biannual Connecticut Water Quality Assessment Report is due to be released by DEEP in May 2018. Watershed stakeholders will be given an opportunity to review and comment on the plan. An announcement of the draft plan's release will be posted on the TRBP Facebook page.

CT DEEP fisheries staff have created an interactive trout stocking map. Use the link below to access the map. Come back often, as it will be updated throughout the season.  
<http://ctdeep.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=70d13bc033854b89a87c04b1d11b1a43>.

CT DEEP Forestry released a new app for people who love their woods. About My Woods, is a free smartphone app. Woodland owners in Connecticut, New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island now have a new tool to help learn about their woods. Foresters, loggers, and others who work in the woods will find it useful, too. The app has been completely updated. Available for both Android and iPhones (and tablets), you can access the app by going to the App Store (Apple) or Play Store (Android) and simply typing "About My Woods" in the search bar. You can also go to [www.aboutmywoods.org](http://www.aboutmywoods.org) and see the app instructional video to learn how to use About My Woods.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service reported that only about a fifth of the available funds for Connecticut through their Environmental Quality Incentive Program have been distributed. This is mostly due to the dairy industry being in a financial crisis. The EQIP program is a cost sharing program, and many dairy farms have either maxed out their eligibility to participate in the program or do not have the required cash to match the EQIP funding.

The passage of the 2018 farm bill has been delayed. This leads to uncertainty regarding funding levels and future programs that will be offered by the USDA NRCS. The emergency watershed protection program for purchasing floodplain easements or homes destroyed by flood and restoring the floodplain may become a FEMA program in the future.

The Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area, in cooperation with the USDA NRCS hosted another workshop in their Healthy Soils Series. The Organic Soils = Healthy Soils workshop was held on April 26, 2018. To learn more about the workshop and presentation, please use this link. <https://ctrcd.org/agriculture/soil-health-initiative>.

The Willimantic Whitewater Partnership selected the final design from three designs presented to the Partnership through the Land Art Generator Initiative, which held a design competition to design the park at Bridge Street, a former brownfield site that has been reclaimed. The winning design, *Rio Illuminado*, can be viewed at <http://www.willimanticwhitewater.org/>

The Southeast Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) hosted two free training events for land use commissioners on April 11th and April 25th, 2018. The training sessions were led by Bruce Hyde, AICP, the Director of the Land Use Academy, University of Connecticut Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR).

### **News from Municipalities**

The Woodstock Conservation Commission and The New Roxbury Land Trust, Inc co-sponsored a workshop on Gypsy Moths on April 17, 2018. The well-attended workshop was held at the Woodstock Town Hall. The last few years have been banner years for gypsy moth population explosions. Tom Worthley, Associate Extension Educator from the UCONN Cooperative Extension System, was the invited speaker.

The Hampton Conservation Commission is working with the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District to find a location to install a rain garden.

The Andover Conservation Commission sponsored an Invasive Plant Species volunteer training on Saturday, April 14, 2018, followed by a 2-hour work party to remove Japanese Barberry growing along the rail trail.

### **Land Trust Updates**

Wyndham Land Trust continues to add land to their Bull Hill Preserve. It was announced in early June 2018 that David Ostrowski and Karen Durlach, residents of Thompson, CT, donated an additional 10 acres of land to the land trust for the Preserve, bringing the total acreage to 771 acres. Most of the acreage is in Thompson, but a few parcels are located in Woodstock.

### **Other News**

Smaller local governments, particularly those with MS4 stormwater programs, can learn how to holistically evaluate the benefits of implementing green infrastructure with this recent report by

the Environmental Finance Center (EFC) at the University of Maryland. Holistically Analyzing the Benefits of Green Infrastructure is a guidance document that details how combining green and gray infrastructure systems allows local governments to lower costs, solve systemic water challenges and enhance a community's quality of life. The EFC places emphasis on first understanding the goal and scope for assessing benefits. This report was developed with support from the Chesapeake Bay Program.

[https://efc.umd.edu/assets/encouraging\\_efficient\\_green\\_infrastructure\\_investment\\_1-23-13.pdf](https://efc.umd.edu/assets/encouraging_efficient_green_infrastructure_investment_1-23-13.pdf)

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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 meets quarterly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month.

Next meeting will be on July 17, 2018. The meeting will be held in the Sea Grant Conference Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the UCONN Avery Point Marine Science Building, located at 1080 Shennecossett Point Road, Groton, CT.

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 previous versions of this quarterly publication from the [TRBP website](#) (Summer 2006 – Spring 2015) or more current editions at <http://thelastgreenvalley.org/learn-protect/watershed-protection/thames-river-basin-partnership>.

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 17 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.