



Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Summer 2014

Volume 31

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*

If you missed the Summer 2014 Thames River Basin Partnership meeting, then you missed a presentation given by Julianna Barrett of CT Sea Grant. CT Sea Grant is leading an initiative called the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). The goal of CIRCA is to increase the resilience and sustainability of vulnerable communities in Connecticut to the growing impacts of climate change on the natural, built, and human environments. This goal will be accomplished by bringing together the world-class research and outreach capabilities of the University of Connecticut (UConn) with the extensive practical experience of the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to create and disseminate practical and sustainable strategies to enhance the resilience of the built environment while protecting natural ecosystems. For more information, click [here](#).

TRBP Updates



The 2014 theme for the TRBP Floating Workshop was the Pachaug River. The event took place on June 20, 2014. The Pachaug River is unique in the Thames River basin. This river appears to be more like a series of ponds strung together by short river segments. The workshop focused on the historical mills that led to the creation of the ponds, the economic development challenges in Griswold and Voluntown after the mills closed, and pond management strategies for the homeowners that cherish the ponds that were created by the dams

that once powered the mills. For more information on TRBP Floating Workshop XIV, the Pachaug River or aquatic weed control in river impoundments, please visit the TRBP website at www.TRBP.org. Click on Floating Workshop 14 in the “What’s New?” box, where information on the Pachaug River has been posted.

The TRBP Plan of Work is scheduled for a review and update before July 1, 2015. TRBP partners are asked to review the current TRBP Plan of Work for compatibility with your organizations current goals. Submit your comments or suggested revisions to Jean Pillo. Please consider serving on the TRBP Plan of Work Steering Committee to help review the submissions and develop an updated Plan of Work.

The TRBP is also seeking members that are willing to serve on the website update committee.

Partner Reports

At the second annual Women Inspiring Conservation in Connecticut award ceremony, this year’s top honoree was Norma O’Leary. Norma currently serves on the Board of Directors of both the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District and The Last Green Valley. A Special Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Norma, who has devoted her life to promoting and expanding sustainable agriculture. For many years she worked on the family dairy farm. After retirement she became an advocate, working tirelessly to educate and promote agriculture in Connecticut. She has served as a board member at the state, regional, and local levels with almost every organization dedicated to agriculture and natural resource conservation. For many years, O’Leary sought to build capacity at the local level by formalizing agriculture’s voice in municipal affairs. From her efforts, the AGvocate Program was born. Since then, more than 20 Connecticut towns have established formal agriculture committees/commissions, and have made great strides in creating farm-friendly policies and regulations. The TRBP wishes to congratulate Norma for this well-deserved recognition.

The [Proposed Massachusetts 2014 Integrated List of Waters](#) that includes the 303(d) List was recently available for public review and comment through August 1, 2014.

The State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) released the draft of the 2014 [State of Connecticut Integrated Water Quality Report](#) for public review and comment. This Report was prepared by the DEEP to fulfill requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act (CWA) under Sections 305(b) and 303(d). The final document will be submitted to the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) following the Department’s consideration of comments received.

DEEP is in the process of updating the Nonpoint Source Pollution Management Plan. The NPS Plan was last updated in 1999. Updates on this plan will be posted to the DEEP [Development of a Statewide Nonpoint Source Management Plan](#) webpage.

The Moosup River has one of the strongest anadromous fish runs in the Thames River watershed basin. An effort to restore this fish run, a small dam has been removed in the center of Plainfield. Design work has been completed on two additional dams.

DEEP announced that funds were made available for municipalities and state agencies to promote the use of electric vehicles (EVs) by sponsoring electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) in major traffic areas such as town halls or downtown locations not served by charging stations. Funding is available for a minimum of thirty new EV charging stations across the state, which will be accessible to the public at no cost. The goal of this program is to support efforts towards putting 3.3 million EVs on the road. Specific details about the incentives available can be found on the [EVConnecticut incentive web page](#) and any questions can be directed to EVConnecticut.

There were 22 applications submitted for funding under the 2014 DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program. Six of the applications were for land in eastern Connecticut. Awards will be announced in September.

[Harmful Algal Blooms](#) are an increasing concern for recreational water quality. Signage warning of a Harmful Algal Bloom have been developed by the DEEP, but the criteria required prior to posting the signs is still under development.

The Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area (ECRC&D) and the King's Mark Resource Conservation and Development Area (KMRC&D) have signed paperwork to merge into a single organization. The organization will be known as the Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area CT RC&D. The former ECRC&D is expanding its scope while the KMRC&D is disbanding as a result of this restructuring.

The 2014 Farm Bill was enacted in February 2014. Under the new Farm Bill, All EQIP eligible producers had their eligibility cap reset to \$0 meaning many of the large dairy farms that were capped out of the program are again eligible to apply for assistance. For more information on NRCS programs and who to contact in eastern CT, please click [here](#).

For smaller, non-traditional farms, the NRCS created a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to fund other conservation organizations to assist with outreach and program goals. The RCPP program is being administered through a competitive application process, with state, regional and national funding pools available.

In an effort to save taxpayers \$1.2 billion, USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack launched the Blueprint for Stronger Service in 2012. He directed agencies to take steps to cut costs and modernize operations. Part of the effort is to begin utilizing technology available that can help accomplish the Blueprint's goals. Covered under this initiative is the implementation of a new technology called Fax2Mail. Fax2Mail is a desktop solution that integrates the power of fax into existing email services. In other words, faxes will become part of NRCS's Outlook email system. As a result all fax machines have been removed from Connecticut NRCS offices as of August 1, 2014.

Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. closed on an 87 acre parcel of land in North Stonington. The [Babcock Ridge](#) land is in the Pawcatuck River watershed. This parcel links two other properties and creates 200 acre wildlife corridor that includes a mile of frontage along the Shunock River.

ALC also accepted 8 small parcels from the Town of Ledyard. These parcels expand on existing preserves in the town.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) is working on a variety of projects in eastern Connecticut.

ECCD is pleased to announce that the Lower Natchaug River Abbreviated Watershed-Based Plan has been accepted by CT DEEP and is now available. This plan includes nine EPA required elements and will serve as a guide to implementation projects to restore water quality in the lower Natchaug River watershed. Click here to view the [Natchaug Watershed-Based Plan](#).

An additional year of funding to support stream flow monitoring in three southeastern Connecticut streams is anticipated.

A coastal riparian area plant buffer demonstration project was recently completed by ECCD staff at Mago Park in Waterford. For more information, click [here](#). Photos of the project can be viewed on [Facebook](#).

A grant to assist horse owners in the Connecticut coastal communities is nearly completed. Recently, BMPs including a concrete block manure composting area, fencing for pasture management and a sacrifice area were installed at a therapeutic riding center in Stonington. A sacrifice area is a small enclosure, such as a corral, run or pen, which is meant to be a horse's outdoor living quarters. It is called a sacrifice area because you are giving up the use of that small portion of land (as a grassy area) for the benefit of the rest of the pastures. Horses should be confined to the sacrifice area(s) during the rainy season and when the pastures become overgrazed.

A second equine focused project will focus on manure management in the Little River and Mashamoquet Brook watersheds, including Pomfret, and parts of Woodstock, Putnam and Thompson. Through this project, ECCD will be able to provide manure compost covers to horse owners as a means to prevent the contamination of stormwater runoff with nutrients and bacteria contained in manure. This project is in the outreach stage.

With support of an NRCS Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG), ECCD successfully worked with an East Lyme farm owner to employ new technology and change how rye grass is incorporated into the soil in spring prior to planting time. A roller-crimper is a cylinder with exterior blades on it that is rolled over the rye grass, pushing it into the soil and crimping the stems. The cylinder is located on front of a tractor. On the rear of the tractor, additional equipment can be attached to plant seed and add fertilizer. This reduces the need to use herbicide to kill the rye grass. It also reduces the number of passes a farmer needs to go over the field during planting time, saving time, fuel and money. The crimped rye grass is converted from winter cover crop to mulch, which then helps to reduce weed growth, conserve water and improve soil health.

In 2013, ECCD installed 5 tree box stormwater filters in the Colony Road neighborhood in East Lyme. Prior to the installation, bacteria counts in stormwater samples going through a

conventional stormwater catch basin measured from 4500 colony forming units (cfu) /100 ml of water sample to over 20,000 cfu/100 ml. The first set of test results after the tree box stormwater filters were installed indicated a significant drop to 320 cfu/100 ml. ECCD will continue to work with the Town of East Lyme to track the stormwater data obtained from the project area. Contracts with DEEP to install additional tree box stormwater filters in East Lyme, Waterford and Groton are in the works. Tree box filters are a storm water retrofit option in urban and suburban areas where space is limited for larger projects.

The ECCD owned fishway installed at the Hallville Dam in Preston passed 47 alewife into their Hallville Pond breeding area this season. This is an increase from 7 alewife in 2013, its inaugural year. Funding has been lined up to remove the Straight Pond dam, which is the next barrier to fish passage upstream from the Hallville Dam. The permitting process is underway.

The United State Geological Survey (USGS) Water Science Center is continuing a cooperative monitoring project in the Thames River.

Fall line nutrient monitoring loads to Long Island Sound recently released.

Upstream Natchaug air and water temperature probes twelve precipitation stations added 12 – 15 continuous monitoring stations

Reactivated the Latimer Brook gaging station in East Lyme on July 1, 2014. Funding from?

Jon Mullaney presentation long term CT water quality trends and dynamic trends concentration change through time stream flow vs concentration

Install storm surge monitoring network in CT. Irene and Sandy 40 station network will be enhanced to 70 5 permanent tide gauges 7 rapid deployment gauges. Thames storm surge gages to Norwich Harbor. Working with towns on the Operations and Management Plans.

News from the Municipalities

The Town of Woodstock Green Team received the Power of Change Award for Municipal Innovation at the State Capitol on June 17, 2014. The Honorable Mention was awarded because Woodstock is the only town in the State of Connecticut to purchase 100% renewable energy for all municipal buildings and to have solar voltaic systems installed on all public schools and other municipal buildings.

Other news

The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and US Army Corps of Engineer have proposed a new rule that will help to ensure the streams and wetlands that feed into our nation's rivers and bays are better protected from pollution and destruction. For over a decade, there has been confusion over which streams and wetlands are protected by the Act, leaving drinking water resources for over 117 million people at risk. That is one in three Americans!

This regulatory confusion has exposed nearly 60 percent of our nation’s stream miles and 20 million acres of wetlands to greater risk of pollution or destruction, and has impacted the livelihood of all Americans, who want and expect water that is safe for them to drink, clean for them to swim in, and healthy enough to support abundant fish and wildlife.

Here in Connecticut, the proposed rule will restore protections to more than 844 miles of small streams that feed into Connecticut’s drinking water sources. According to EPA, more than 2.2 million Connecticut residents get their drinking water from public sources that rely on headwater or seasonally-flowing streams.

The public benefits of the rule – in the form of flood protection, filtering pollution, providing wildlife habitat, supporting outdoor recreation and recharging groundwater – far outweigh the costs. When finalized, this rule will provide the regulatory assurance that has been absent for over a decade, eliminate permit confusion and delay, and better protect the critical water resources on which our communities and businesses depend.

The public comment period on the proposed rule has been extended until October 20. To learn more about what the rule does and does not cover, and submit comments to the EPA, go to <http://www2.epa.gov/uswaters>.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has launched a “Green Infrastructure Collaborative” with the support of six other government agencies at the President’s State, Local, and Tribal Leaders Task Force on Climate Preparedness and Resilience. EPA joined with the U.S. Department of Transportation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Interior, U.S. Department of Defense, and U.S. Department of Energy to release a Federal Letter of Support for the Green Infrastructure Collaborative that outlines Agency commitments, including:

- Technical assistance to provide on-the-ground support aimed at creating integrated green stormwater management and hazard mitigation plans.
- Recognizing innovative green infrastructure projects.
- Working with States to integrate ecosystems and transportation planning.
- Incorporating green infrastructure practices into agency facilities or lands.
- Emphasizing connections to green infrastructure in existing grant programs.
- Distilling and broadly disseminating the best ideas and lessons learned from existing grant programs.

Over the coming weeks, EPA will engage with a range of both public and private organizations to expand this collaborative and align resources to provide a platform for sharing best practices, provide on-the-ground community support, develop actionable planning tools for decision-makers, conducting research on increasing affordability and effectiveness, and align public and private knowledge and resources to promote green infrastructure.

EPA has recently made its soil erosivity calculator available again on its website. The online tool helps determine whether a small construction site qualifies for a waiver from having an NPDES permit. EPA removed the calculator about two years ago to update the database; the new release

is available [here](#). The calculator asks for the project's start and end dates and ...[continue reading](#)

The National Environmental Education Foundation would like help documenting algal blooms in the nation's waters. Algal blooms can occur in water bodies as small as a neighborhood pond and as big as the Gulf of Mexico. When algae grow out of control in our waters, the result can be unappealing, harmful to our health and harmful to the environment. Submit photos of algal blooms for a chance to win great prizes! For more information and official contest rules, please visit: <http://neefusa.org/algalbloomcontest>.

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 **July 15, 2014** at Project Oceanology beginning at 9:30 AM. Juliana Barrett of CT Sea Grant will present an overview of the new Coastal Climate Resiliency Center start up at UConn, Avery Point campus.

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.