



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

April 2007

Volume 4

The Thames River Basin includes the Five Mile, French, Moosup, Natchaug, Pachaug, Quinebaug, Shetucket, Willimantic, and Yantic Rivers and all their tributaries and, of course, the "Thames main stem."

Greetings from the Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator. It is time again to report on the activities our Partners have been involved with that fulfill our Partnership Plan of Work goals and to show the effectiveness of working cooperatively. We are looking to the year ahead as we chart out new goals that include specific Partnership projects and special workshops. We are in the final planning stages for this year's annual Floating Workshop which is scheduled for June 1. Please visit our website for more information about this and other upcoming workshops, meetings and project updates at <http://www.thamesriverbasinpartnership.org>.

-Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator

The **Thames River Basin Partnership** (TRBP) April Quarterly Meeting was hosted by the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Government office in Norwich and was attended by 19 members. John Rozum of the Connecticut **Non-point Education for Municipal Officials** (NEMO) gave a special presentation on the on-line resources to that are available to assist local land use decisions makers. He demonstrated how anyone can build a community resources inventory by following 3 easy steps using their interactive website, <http://nemo.uconn.edu/tools/cri/index.htm>. If you haven't been to this website to view your neighborhood using these tools, make time to do it soon.

NEMO also is a resource for information on Low Impact Development (LID) practices. Their website includes a downloadable 12 page Rain Garden design guide for homeowners. A rain garden is a depression (about 6 inches deep) that collects runoff from a roof, driveway or yard and allows it to infiltrate into the ground. Rain gardens are typically planted with shrubs or perennials, and can be colorful, landscaped areas in your yard that will also provide important environmental benefits.

Elaine Trench of the **U.S. Geological Survey** (USGS) reported that Jon Morrison is working on the report that covers phosphorus and sediment data and phosphorus mass balance in West Thompson Lake (upper Quinebaug River Basin). He expects that the report, which is part of a project conducted in cooperation with the **Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection**, will be ready for colleague review within the next few weeks. Jon, who is the USGS Data Section chief, will be meeting with Mickey Weiss of **Project Oceanology** to discuss potential collaborative work in monitoring the Thames estuary. The USGS is interested in using its Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler (ADCP) to identify flow patterns in the estuary.

Holly Drinkuth, representing both the **Green Valley Institute** (GVI) and **The Nature Conservancy** (TNC), is continuing to work with several Connecticut towns in conducting a Co-occurring Resource Analysis as a means to prioritize land most desirable to be pursued for permanent open space protection through various means. As a result of this effort, the **USDA**

Natural Resource Conservation Service is creating a new list of Farmland Soils of Local Importance for the towns of Eastford, Hampton, Ashford and Chaplin.

In another cooperative venture, The **GVI** and **TNC** are working with the **Chaplin Conservation Commission** and the **Eastford Conservation Commission** to produce an informative brochure entitled “Celebrating the Natchaug River in Chaplin and Eastford” This brochure will present a history of the river as it is used for both humans and nature, and will be distributed to area residents as an education tool. The Natchaug River System was recognized as an important Connecticut Greenway in 2006.

Finally, the **GVI** will be hosting a special workshop “Protecting Public Drinking Water Sources and Aquifer Protection Areas” on May 21 at the Windham County Extension Center in Brooklyn. Jennifer Pagach of the **CT Department of Public Health** & Kim Czapla of the **CT Department of Environmental Protection** will present the latest regulations regarding source water protection efforts and regulations in the State of Connecticut. For more information contact Susan Westa at 860-774-9600 or susan.westa@uconn.edu.

Alicia Watson, **Colchester Inland Wetland Agent**, introduced the newly hired **Colchester Town Planner** Adam Turner. The Town of Colchester recently adopted an Open Space Plan and is working to get two greenways designated on the Yantic River.

Mike Goodwin of **Trout Unlimited (TU) Thames Valley Chapter** announced an upcoming outing they are sponsoring with the Joshua Trust at Gurleyville Gristmill in Mansfield on May 5, 2007 beginning at 9:30 AM. They are offering a day of demonstrations and information exchange, including streamside bioassessment, fly-casting demos, fly-tying demos and a tour of the only stone gristmill in Connecticut. Refreshments will be available. Bring your fishing gear and enjoy the Fenton River at the height of fishing season. The mill is off Chaffeeville Road.

Work is also proceeding on a pedestrian bridge at Hewitt Pond spillway in North Stonington. Permits have been secured and work parties organized to prepare the site for the installation that is scheduled for June. **Trout Unlimited** has been working with the **CT DEP Parks Department** and others on this project.

Liz Rogers of the **USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)** , representing the **Eastern Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area (ECRC&D)** updated us on the Spring 2007 Land Use Leadership Alliance (LULA) Training Academy. LULA was created to build capacity for change among land use leaders at the local level of government. The Land Use Leadership Alliance Training Program is a four-day course that teaches participants how to use land use law, consensus building, and community decision-making techniques to achieve sustainable community development. This spring’s workshops are taking place at the **Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG)** office and are filled to capacity. The session is supported through a grant from the **Connecticut Department of Agriculture Farm Viability Program**.

The **ECRC&D** is also progressing on Phase I of a farm nutrient management project in Woodstock and the surrounding towns with funding supplied by a **US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)** Clean Water Act Section 319 grant awarded by the **CT Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**. Phase I of this project is to complete a feasibility study utilizing an engineering firm. This study should be complete by June, after which Phase II, a

marketing study, will begin. The goal is to reduce nonpoint sources of water pollution by composting animal waste with leaves and other materials to produce marketable compost.

The **Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor Water Quality Monitoring Program** is preparing for the 2007 season. The Water Subcommittee received funding to purchase water quality equipment and outreach materials from the **CT DEP** and the **MA DEP**, as well as additional equipment from the **EPA** Equipment Loan Program. Training dates have been scheduled for the summer Stream Walk program. Paula Coughlin, Citizen Science Coordinator for the **Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS) Center at Pomfret** will be offering free training from 9 AM until noon on Friday, June 8, Friday, June 15 and Saturday, June 16. A forth training date in the southern area of QSHC territory has been scheduled at St. Anne's Church in Preston, CT on Saturday, June 30 from 9 AM until noon. **USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service** staff will conduct this training session. To register for any of these free training dates, please call Jean Pillo or Paula Coughlin at the CAS Center at Pomfret at (860) 928-4948. There will be an emphasis for collecting Stream Walk data on the French River in Thompson and all the tributaries to Poquetanuck Cove in Preston and Ledyard this season, but collection of data on streams of local interest will also be supported.

The **Water Subcommittee of the QSHC** will be co-hosting a special workshop with the **Woodstock Conservation Commission** on April 26 at the Woodstock Town Hall. This workshop is entitled "Beneath the Surface; Understanding the Lakes that We Love" and will feature Dr. David Mitchell reviewing basic lake ecology, as well as an overview of the Sturbridge Great Ponds Study he has led as a member of the **Sturbridge Conservation Commission**. Greg Bugbee of the **Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station** will discuss aquatic invasive species and their management and Chuck Lee of the CT DEP will review the focus of lake monitoring at the state level in Connecticut.

The **Webster Lake Association (WLA)** and the **French River Connection (FRC)**, two Massachusetts organizations interested in the water quality in the French River watershed will be able to continue their water quality monitoring this season with support of the **QSHC Water Subcommittee**. The French River confluences with the Quinebaug River in Thompson, CT. A grant from the **MA DEP** has paid for the purchase of an In-situ Troll 9500 multi-parameter portable unit that has been fitted with probes to monitor pH, dissolved oxygen, turbidity, conductivity, depth and temperature. With support from the **MA DEP**, these non-profit volunteer organizations will be updating their Quality Assurance Project Plans (QAPP) to include the calibration procedures now required as part of their monitoring regimen. In previous years, they rented a pre-calibrated unit. Other funds from the MA DEP grant will be used to support further hydrology studies conducted by Dr. Mauri Pelto of **Nichols College** in Dudley. Dr. Pelto has been setting up and field calibrating flow gauges in many streams in the upper parts of the Quinebaug and French River watersheds, which in turn are read by volunteers who report back to him for a stream flow study he has been conducting.

Judy Rondeau of **Thompson** has volunteered to locally coordinate a second year of water quality monitoring on the French River this season, and wishes to expand this effort to also collect data on the Five Mile River as well.

Lee Szurba of the **Lisbon Conservation Commission** reported that the Lisbon Board of Selectman has approved the initiation of a Natural Resource Inventory for the town. They are also beginning the process of splitting their Inland Wetlands Agency and the Conservation Commission into two separate entities.

The **Eastern Connecticut Conservation District** (ECCD) held a Landscape Gardening Workshop at the Lisbon Community Center on April 10, 2007 in conjunction with their annual spring plant sale. Master gardener Kim Lang led this workshop. She enthusiastically covered topics such as the advantages of native plants, how to group plants, what to do after planting, and much more. At press time, ECCD staff and volunteers are wrapping up one of the largest annual plant sales in the organization's history!

The **ECCD** is also progressing with their fish ladder project in Preston. The land is cleared at the site and all the engineering bids are in. They are beginning to evaluate the bids at this time.

The **ECCD** is continuing work on the manure stacking project in the Woodstock and Thompson farms. This project involves stacking manure with other materials under varying field conditions with the goal of reducing nonpoint sources of water pollution. Their field work is complete and the process of data assessment is underway.

The **Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection** (DEP) on January 25 presented a Green Circle Award to the **Thompson Together Environment Committee** of Thompson, for outstanding volunteer environmental projects that have improved the quality of the environment and increased environmental awareness in the State of Connecticut. DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy presented the award at a ceremony at the Thompson Public Library.

Thompson Together Environment Committee projects:

- A Community Art Show is an annual event that showcases environmental artwork created by citizens who live or work in Thompson. The Committee also assisted in the organization of local school art shows.
- Community Service Days with Marianapolis Prep School have been on-going since 2005. Projects included painting the Merrill Seney Community Room at Thompson Town Hall, washing town trucks and busses, and working in town parks and trails in 2005. During 2006 student activities included trail maintenance at Bull Hill Trail, washing busses and trucks at the Highway Garage, and cleaning the bays at the Transfer Station.
- In 2006 the Committee hosted a unique "Treasure Hunt Day" where town residents put unwanted "treasures" on their lawn with a "FREE" sign and the public was encouraged to ride around Thompson, admire the scenery and litter-free roadways and select some "treasures" to bring home.
- Four annual roadside clean-ups have been organized to celebrate Earth Day 2005 and 2006 with more than 450 volunteers who helped clean the French and Quinebaug Rivers on Earth Day. Volunteers collected almost 700 tires, twenty propane tanks, nine batteries, three televisions, six major appliances, almost seven tons of metal and eight tons of rubbish over the two years.
- The Thompson Trails Committee published its first edition of the Thompson Trails Map, with descriptions and maps of eight trails in Thompson and helped secure funds to connect the Airline Trail from Thompson to Putnam.
- The Committee held a joint fundraiser with the Northeast Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation to raise funds for riparian buffer plantings along the French River in Riverside Park.

The TRBP salutes the Thompson Together Environmental Committee and encourages them to continue to be a role model group for others to emulate.

The **Wyndham Land Trust** (WLT) has acquired 22 acres of hardwood forest abutting its Bosworth preserve on Wrights Crossing Road in Pomfret, CT. This was made possible by generous assists from the **Town of Pomfret** and by the bird watching community which arose as one great flock with another assist on a land acquisition project.

A formal opening is being planned for the WLT boardwalk on their Little River Preserve in Woodstock. This 300 foot long boardwalk, constructed of composite wood materials, was made possible by a grant from the **Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor** and by the enthusiasm, encouragement and generosity of numerous friends and supporters. The boardwalk may be accessed from a parking area on Little Pond Road, a short distance from Rt. 171. The WLT board firmly believes that getting out into wetlands and experiencing their complexity and beauty is a valuable first step in understanding their role in the landscape we inhabit.

The **Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection** has drafted revisions to their Stormwater Management Standards and they are accepting public comments on these proposed revisions. New sections and technical changes are also being added. The proposed regulations are intended to encourage stormwater recharge, the increased use of low impact development techniques, improved operation and maintenance of stormwater best management practices, and the removal of illicit connections from stormwater management systems. A summary of the proposed changes can be downloaded from their website at <http://www.mass.gov/dep/service/regulations/proposed/stormsum.pdf>. Public hearings will be held throughout the state in early May. The hearing for the Central Region will be held at CERO on Thursday, May 3 from 2:30 to 5:00 PM.

The watershed restoration project task requirement by the year one TRBP Coordinator support grant is awaiting funding approval before we can proceed with the floristic survey of Poquetanuck Cove or schedule the herbicide application to control the invasive *Phragmites australis* that is degrading the habitat of this important brackish water environment. Poquetanuck Cove is a tidally influenced tributary of the Thames River and located between Preston and Ledyard. The **Ad-Hoc Committee for the Restoration of Poquetanuck Cove**, which is made up of representatives from **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc**, the **Ledyard Conservation Commission**, the **Preston Conservation Advisory Committee**, the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** as well as the **TRBP Coordinator**, continues with their effort to inform the local population about the important natural resource values of this area. On January 17th, Dave Kozak of the **CT DEP Long Island Sound Program** was invited to meet informally with the local population to discuss the importance of permanent preservation of land abutting Poquetanuck Cove and its tributary streams. State Representative Tom Reynolds (Preston, Ledyard) attended this meeting and discussed the watershed restoration project in detail with the committee, which subsequently led to his writing a letter of support to DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy, expressing his full endorsement of this project. Outreach efforts aimed at the local population continue. A informational brochure is planned. Address lists of all cove and tributary stream abutters are being updated. A walk on **The Nature Conservancy** property that has significant cove frontage was sponsored by the **Ledyard Library** Family Fitness Program on April 14. A paddle on the cove, sponsored by **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc** is scheduled on June 1, as part of the **Connecticut Forest and Parks Association National Trails Day**. For more information on the paddle, visit the TRBP website calendar at <http://www.thamesriverbasinpartnership.org/calendar.shtml>.

Stream Walk training in support of the Poquetanuck Cove Plan of Work for this project has been scheduled for June 30 at St. Anne's Church in Preston. Any one interested in taking part in this

training and participating in the visual assessment of the cove tributaries is asked to contact Jean Pillo at (860) 928-4948 or by email at trbp_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net.

The year two US EPA Clean Water Act grant awarded to the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District by the CT DEP in support of the TRBP Coordinator position is awaiting final signatures. This year of funding requires the TRBP Coordinator, Jean Pillo to assist in a storm water retrofit project that will reduce nonpoint source pollution in a CT waterbody in the greater Thames River watershed basin. The project should benefit a waterbody listed as impaired in the 2006 water quality assessment conducted by the CT DEP. A Storm Water Retrofit Steering Committee has formed and will meet to discuss potential projects once the final signatures are collected. If you think you may have a project that qualifies for fulfillment of this grant requirement and would like the assistance and guidance from our coalition of organizations, please contact Jean Pillo at (860) 928-4948 or email her at trbp_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net.

The Thames River Basin Partnership is a voluntary, cooperative effort to share resources, and strives to develop a regional approach to resource protection. The Partnership is made up of a variety of agencies, organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, companies, and individuals interested in the environmental health of the Thames River basin. If your group is interested in being included in the next update of this newsletter or to e-subscribe, please contact Jean Pillo, Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator at trbp_jeanpillo@sbcglobal.net or call (860) 928-4948. The TRBP Coordinator is funded in part by the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection through a United States Environmental Protection Agency Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant.