



Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Spring 2014

Volume 30

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 Spring 2014 Thames River Basin Partnership meeting at The Last Green Valley new office location at 203B Main Street in Danielson, CT, then you missed a presentation by John Guzskowski of CME Associates who is currently providing services as the AGvocate Program Manager. The AGvocate Program, funded by a CT Department of Agriculture Farm Viability Grant, began in early 2009. Guided by a Steering Committee, the AGvocate Program provides Northeast Connecticut Towns with technical assistance to initiate Agriculture Commissions; review and implement tax reduction options; plan for farmland protection, encourage buy local opportunities, explore methods to promote local farms; include agriculture in town plans; and pass right-to-farm ordinances. In the first three years of the program, fourteen towns were directly involved in the program and the creation of new municipal Agriculture Committees or Commissions was the direct outcome. The program that started in northeastern Connecticut now stands as a model for the entire state. For more information, contact John Guzskowski, AGvocate Program Manager at 860-455-8251 or AGvocate@outlook.com.

TRBP Updates

Floating workshop theme for 2014 will be the Pachaug River. This event will take place on June 20, 2014. The Pachaug River is unique in the Thames River basin. It appears to be more like a series of ponds strung together by short river segments. While the workshop agenda is still under development, the workshop will feature the different challenges for economic development in the watershed towns of Griswold and Voluntown. An indoor workshop at the Griswold Town Hall will be followed by a float on Pachaug Pond, where we will learn about aquatic weed management, dam maintenance and other topics related to the ponds and fish management. Further workshop developments will be posted to the TRBP website at

www.TRBP.org. Click on Floating Workshop 14 in the “What’s New?” Box, where information on the Pachaug River will be updated periodically.

Partner Reports

CT DEEP has a new Commissioner – Robert Klee. Commissioner Klee was previously the Chief of Staff for former Commissioner Dan Esty for the last three years. He was unanimously approved as Commissioner by the Connecticut State Senate in February. For more information on Commissioner Klee, click [here](#).

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District has hired a new Executive Director to replace Scott Gravatt, who retired after serving in the leadership role for over 12 years. Dan Mullins has taken on the position of Executive Director with a high level of enthusiasm for the conservation projects and programs completed by the ECCD. Dan can be emailed at Dan.Mullins@Comcast.net or by telephone at 860-887-4163 EXT 602. His main office is in Norwich at the USDA Service Center located at 238 West Town Street.

The new farm law, the Agricultural Act of 2014 (2014 Farm Act), was signed on February 7, 2014, and will remain in force through 2018—and in the case of some provisions, beyond 2018. The 2014 Farm Act makes major changes in commodity programs, adds new crop insurance options, streamlines conservation programs, modifies some provisions of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and expands programs for specialty crops, organic farmers, bioenergy, rural development, and beginning farmers and ranchers.

Key program changes include:

- Financial assistance programs: The Environmental Quality Incentives Program, or EQIP, will absorb the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program and make similar practices available. The Conservation Stewardship Program and Agricultural Management Assistance will be continued.
- Easement programs: The agency’s key easement programs will be merged into a new program called the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, or ACEP. ACEP includes the former Wetlands Reserve Program, Grasslands Reserve Program and Farm and Ranchlands Protection Program. Funding for wetland and grassland protection expired Sept. 30, 2013, and the 2014 Farm Bill reinstates funding for these critical efforts under ACEP.
- Partnership programs: The agency’s regional conservation efforts have a home in a new program – the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, or RCPP. Critical conservation areas for this new program will be designated by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. NRCS will also select project areas at the state and national level.

To learn about technical and financial assistance available through conservation programs, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted or contact New London County District Conservationist Javier Cruz at 860-877-4163 ext. 307 or Windham County District Conservationist Ray Covino at 860-779-0557 ext. 102.

The National Conference on Cover Crops and Soil Health was held on Feb. 17-19, 2014 in Omaha, NE. This conference brought together 300 agricultural leaders and innovators to explore how to make American agriculture more sustainable through improved soil health. Several presentations presented at this conference are now available to view online. Click [here](#) for more information.

The Eastern Connecticut RC&D Council will be hosting a workshop on June 7, 2014 entitled *A Soil Health Approach: Permaculture and Urban Gardens* at the Tolland Agriculture Center located at 24 Hyde Avenue in Vernon, CT. This workshop, beginning at 9 AM – 4 PM, will present an innovative and interactive experience dedicated to Soil Health and specifically focused on permaculture and urban gardeners around New England. This workshop series is being funded by USDA-NRCS, Connecticut. For more information, please contact Windham County District Conservationist Ray Covino at 860-779-0557 ext. 102.

CT DEEP and CT Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) staff are planning additional guidance and outreach work to tie in the statewide Impervious Cover guidance document soon to be released by DEEP. NEMO has developed an informative “DIY” website on impervious cover guidance here, and at <http://nemo.uconn.edu/ic-guide>. DEEP Water program staff are wrapping up a statewide Impervious Cover guidance document, not formally developed into a TMDL analysis, that will assist greater Thames River basin communities.

CT DEEP is in early planning discussions with USDA-NRCS CT staff on hosting a Soil Health workshop for DEEP staff at the Hartford office.

DEEP and NRCS-CT and US EPA are partnering under the NRCS National Water Quality Initiative with a current focus in the Little River watershed (Woodstock and Putnam area). This coordinated focus is supporting multiple projects in the watershed in an effort to improve water quality.

DEEP staff continues to support several agricultural research and BMP projects through the Watershed/NPS program, including partnering in grant-funded projects with Eastern CT Conservation District, Eastern CT RC&D Area, and University of Connecticut. Watershed areas include Little River in Woodstock, Mashamoquet Brook in Pomfret, AFO/CAFO nutrient management region-wide, a horse paddock BMP demonstration project at UConn Storrs campus in Mansfield, research to convert dairy manure fiber as alternative nursery plant growing media, and research on organic turf and no pesticide turf demonstration approaches region-wide.

The DEEP Voluntary Water Quality Monitoring Program has really ramped up its outreach and assistance with volunteer monitoring groups across the state. Meg Ruta has worked closely with Jean Pillo of The Last Green Valley, Inc., Judy Rondeau of Eastern CT Conservation District, and others in the greater Thames River basin on River Bioassessment for Volunteers and Stream Temperature monitoring procedures, equipment calibration, data management, and related outreach and training information. DEEP is in the initial planning stage for a volunteer water monitoring summit scheduled for July 25 – details coming soon!

DEEP State Parks, Trails and Greenways continue financial support through a CT Recreation Trail Grant for the development of water trail information kiosks along the Quinebaug River and the Willimantic River. New kiosks are being installed later this spring.

CT DEEP has nearly completed the drafting of the 2014 statewide Integrated Water Quality Assessment. The report should be available for review and comment later this spring. This assessment cycle includes some new stream/river segments previously unassessed, due to access to DEEP Inland Fisheries survey data that augment the Aquatic Life Use support assessments.

DEEP has posted a tentative notice of determination for a NPDES utilities-related wastewater permit renewal (CT0000957) for the Pzifer, Inc. Groton facility. These wastewaters are associated only with the facility's support/operation and not with any research and development laboratory wastewaters (all of those wastewaters have been incorporated into a permitted discharge that goes to the City of Groton sewer system. Thames River water is used as non-contact cooling water for its power, steam, and chilled water generation operations. An informative permit fact sheet is posted [here](#).

Lower Moosup River Dam #1 in Plainfield is slated for removal this summer (2014). This dam, located upstream of the Route 12 crossing is a barrier to fish passage in the river. The removal is expected to take a few days. DEEP Inland Fisheries staff has developed memoranda with American Rivers, Inc. and Princeton Hydro, which has led to the completion of design work. Project managers are waiting for local permit approvals from the Town of Plainfield. Funding assistance is being provided by Millennium Power Partners, LLC through the Quinebaug River Millennium Management Team.

Related to this set of resource issues, CT DEEP has been hosting quarterly River Restoration Work Group meetings with agency programs and with organizational partners including American Rivers, Inc, Save The Sound, Inc. and The Nature Conservancy. A matrix of fish passage barrier projects is being developed, and additional river restoration project needs are being solicited by this group.

World Fish Migration Day was celebrated this year on May 24th. The day's events were co-sponsored/coordinated by the DEEP, The Nature Conservancy- CT Chapter, and Princeton Hydro. Seventeen sites were selected for participation. There was a kickoff morning presentation at the Lyme-Old Lyme High School in Old Lyme which was open to the public. Afterwards, a "progressive" fishway tour to five fishways in New London County was held. ECCD's fishway at the Hallville Dam was included in this tour.

DEEP continues to review submitted comments to the proposed Greater Thames, Southeast Coast and Pawcatuck River Streamflow Classifications. There is no announced date when DEEP will publish the final classifications in the Connecticut Law Tribune.

DEEP has posted a notice of intent to adopt the Total Maximum Daily Load for Bacteria-Impaired Waters Covering the Pawcatuck River Watershed. To view this public notice, please click [here](#). Prior to adoption of the Pawcatuck TMDLs and the appendix amendment to the Core Document, the Commissioner will consider comments that are received by June 9, 2014. Written

comments should be directed to Mr. Chris Sullivan at christopher.sullivan@ct.gov or Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse, Planning and Standards Division, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127. Other questions should be directed to Chris Sullivan at (860) 424-3514 or via email.

DEEP Forestry prepared a project application for the FY15 Forest Legacy program for “Whip-poor-will Woods”. This involves 7 separate parcels, combined for more than 1,500 acres, within two watersheds within the Stafford-Somers area, including the Scantic River (flows to the CT River) and the Edson Brook and Roaring Brook areas (flows into the Willimantic River, a northwest tributary of the Thames River). The application is now in the mix within a very competitive national platform.

2014 has been designated the Year of the Salamander. Lots of great information, education, events and activities are associated with this. One source of information is through the DEEP Wildlife Division. Click [here](#) for more information.

The 2014 Angler's Guide is now available on line at <http://www.ct.gov/deep/anglersguide>. It is also available in an interactive digital book format at www.eregulations.com/connecticut/fishing.

The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) is pleased to announce that the Environmental Professionals' Organization of Connecticut (EPOC) has awarded a \$4,710 grant to expand TLGV's watershed education program for middle school students. The funds will be used to bring hands-on lessons about our rivers and lakes into more classrooms. Students will learn about water pollution and the simple steps each person can take to prevent it.

TLGV is pleased to announce the availability of funds for nonprofit organizations and municipal, regional, state or federal agencies that sponsor a 2014 Earth Month or River Cleanup in the region.

- * TLGV will reimburse your organization up to \$500 for expenses like publicity, cleanup supplies such as trash bags and work gloves, and food for your volunteers.
- * TLGV will also help publicize your event and work with you to recruit more volunteers.
- * In 2013, 1095 volunteers removed more than 13,000 pounds of trash from our rivers, parks, and roadways!

For more information on how to apply for funding and schedule a cleanup event, click [here](#).

The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program is ramping up for the 2014 season. Contact Jean.Pillo@ConserveCT.org for more information or for volunteer opportunities.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District has completed the Lower Natchaug River Watershed Based Plan. The [approved plan](#) is available on the DEEP website.

ECCD has also completed a review of the Mount Hope River and compiled a matrix of projects that will lead to water quality improvements in the river. DEEP comments are being incorporated into the final document.

Working with the Amos Lake Association, ECCD is in the process of drafting a watershed based plan to address the issues of nutrient loading impacting water quality in the lake. Review of the draft plan concepts with the Amos Lake Association has been completed.

Stream flow data has been collected by ECCD in southeastern Connecticut for a year. ECCD is negotiating with DEEP for funds to complete another year of flow monitoring in the three streams.

As an implementation project for both the Little River and Mashamoquet Brook Watershed Based Plans, ECCD was awarded funding to work with small farm owners, mostly horse owners, to improve manure handling and reduce contaminated runoff from impacting water quality in those watersheds. Contact Matt Snurkowski for more information at Matt.Snurkowski@Comcast.net or call 860-887-4163 EXT 603.

The 2014 CIPWG Symposium *Invasive Plants 2014: Where Are We Now?* will be held on Tuesday, October 7th at the Student Union building on the UCONN campus in Storrs.

The **CT 10% Campaign** is a statewide initiative to promote locally grown products. It is a collaborative project led by buyCTgrown and UConn Extension. This campaign is meant to increase consumer awareness and education about sourcing locally grown. Both consumers and businesses of all sizes (restaurants, schools, hospitals, grocers, caterers, etc.) are being encouraged to take a pledge to buy local products. Click [here](#) to learn more about the program and to take the pledge.

Avalonia Land Conservancy will once again be hosting a paddle on Poquetanuck Cove in cooperation with the Connecticut Forest and Parks Association 2014 Trails Weekend. This event will be held on June 7 beginning at 8 AM – 11 AM. Participants are required to provide their own canoe/kayak, personal flotation device, beverage, and snack. Meet leaders Anne Roberts-Pierson and David Bainbridge at the public access car-top boat launch at the end of Royal Oaks Drive (off Arrowhead Drive in Ledyard). Sponsored by Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. (avalonialandconservancy.org). Rain cancels. Pre-registration is REQUIRED. Questions and to register: contact Anne Roberts-Pierson, (860) 464-8101.

The Connecticut Coast Guard Academy is scheduling the fall field season for their Cadets and is interested in coordinating water quality monitoring projects in the Thames River to complement other projects. Contact Deanna.L.Bergondo@uscga.edu for more information.

News from the Municipalities

The Town of Woodstock “Green Team” has been selected to receive an award at the Power of Change Awards event on Tuesday, June 17 at the State Capitol. This award is in recognition of their achievements in energy efficiency programs.

The Brooklyn Conservation Commission has been working on improving the wildlife habitat value on a portion of the Riverside Park property. This property abuts the Quinebaug River. A tour of the park was held on April 29.

The Killingly Conservation Commission is concerned regarding a local landowner's plans to breach a series of five dams withholding water in the Whetstone Brook watershed. The landowner is proposing to breach the dams to reduce the liability risk. The property owner has expressed an interest in working with conservation groups on other options. Contact Donna Bronwell of the Killingly Conservation Commission for more information.

Other news

A recent [study](#) ties a significant drop in toxic mercury levels in two types of freshwater game fish with Massachusetts' ongoing efforts to reduce mercury emissions from waste incinerators, power plants and other sources. The data show that in a mercury "hot spot" near several solid waste incinerators, levels of mercury in largemouth bass and yellow perch dropped by more than 40 percent after localized mercury emissions were cut by 98 percent. The data also show a 13 percent statewide mercury reduction in largemouth bass and a 19 percent reduction in yellow perch between 1999 and 2011. The study, published by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), demonstrates that the drop in mercury levels in fish is tied to the state's efforts to reduce sources of mercury pollution, eliminate unnecessary mercury uses and enhance recycling of mercury-containing products, according to officials.

Through the Massachusetts Zero Mercury Strategy and the regional Mercury Action Plan, Massachusetts has reduced its mercury emissions by more than 90 percent since the late 1990s, according to DEP. Efforts have included improved pollution controls on coal-fired power plants, municipal solid waste combustors and medical-waste incinerators, and in the dental sector. Legislation prohibiting many unnecessary uses of mercury in consumer products and enhanced recycling of mercury products have also been adopted.

On May 6th, the U.S. Global Change Research Program released the Third National Climate Assessment. The report summarizes the impacts of climate change on the United States, now and in the future. A team of more than 300 experts guided by a 60-member Federal Advisory Committee produced the report, which was extensively reviewed by the public and experts, including federal agencies and a panel of the National Academy of Sciences. The Third National Climate Assessment describes the impacts of climate change across ten geographic regions of the United States, and in economic sectors such as agriculture, energy, and health. The descriptions translate scientific insights into practical information that can help decision-makers and citizens anticipate and prepare for climate-change impacts.

The report is available for download and can be explored in an interactive format through the new U.S. Global Climate Change Research Program website - <http://globalchange.gov>. An important feature of this interactivity is the traceability of the data and other information in the report, giving users the means to refer back to this data for analysis and decision support.

To view the National Climate Assessment as a full report, highlights, or an overview, visit: <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov>.

For links to key resources such as the adaptation chapter of the report and federal adaptation resources, visit: <http://globalchange.gov/explore/adaptation>.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers jointly released a proposed rule to clarify protection under the Clean Water Act for streams and wetlands that form the foundation of the nation's water resources. The proposed rule will benefit businesses by increasing efficiency in determining coverage of the Clean Water Act. The agencies are launching a robust outreach effort by holding discussions around the country and gathering input needed to shape a final rule. For more information, click [here](#).

EPA has released “[Greening CSO Plans: Planning and Modeling Green Infrastructure for Combined Sewer Overflow \(CSO\) Control](#),” to provide municipalities and sewer authorities with tools to help quantify green infrastructure contributions to CSO control plans. Communities with combined sewers often view green infrastructure as an attractive way to reduce stormwater flows going into their sewer system, thus helping to reduce capital and operational costs at publicly owned treatment works. Greening CSO Plans will help communities make cost-effective decisions to maximize water quality benefits. The resource explains how to use modeling tools such as EPA’s Storm Water Management Model (SWMM) to optimize different combinations of gray and green infrastructure to reduce both sewer overflow volume and number of overflow events.

EPA has published a final rule that changes existing regulations that apply to stormwater discharges from construction activities. Compliance with this regulation will result in significant reductions in the discharge of sediment and other associated pollutants to water bodies. The rule also furthers the EPA's goals of improving resiliency of the nation's waters and infrastructure to climate change by requiring permittees to provide and maintain buffers around many surface waters at construction sites and reducing downstream siltation and flooding. Click [here](#) for more information.

A fact sheet on “Improving Community Resiliency with Green Infrastructure” is now available on the EPA green infrastructure website: http://water.epa.gov/infrastructure/greeninfrastructure/upload/gi_resiliency.pdf.

Yale-Myers Forest covers 7,840 acres in Ashford, Eastford, Union and Woodstock. Each summer, they host free seminars at their forest camp on current research topics under study there. The public is invited to attend.

This summer’s workshop series will feature the following topics:

- June 12th Food Webs in Small Temporary Ponds
Meredith Atwood, PhD candidate, Yale F&ES
- June 26th Amphibian conservation: at the crossroads of stress and infection
Emily Hall, PhD candidate, Washington State University
- July 10th Rivers and Watershed Health in the Quiet Corner
Jenn Hoyle, PhD student, Yale F&ES
- July 24th Plant defense and herbivore offense in old-field ecosystems
Karin Burghardt, PhD candidate, Yale F&ES

All seminars begin at 7:30pm, but all are invited for refreshments starting at 7pm.

Directions:

From New Haven: I-91 North to I-84 East. Take Exit 71, left off the ramp and straight through 2 stop signs and 2 blinking lights, onto a dirt road, and then back to pavement for ~1.75 miles.

Look for an orange gate on the left. 150 Centre Pike, Eastford.

Locally: Head west on Centre Pike from the junction of Rte 171, look for orange gate ~1 mile on the right.

From Massachusetts: I-84 W, Take exit 74 toward CT-171, left at Holland Rd, 1st left onto CT-171 E, follow 171 E through 3 turns (~7 miles). Follow directions from above.

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.