



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

July 2007

Volume 5

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. In this issue of the TRBP Partners in Action Report, I am pleased to be able to report on several projects that exemplify successful partnering efforts, including the TRBP supported watershed restoration project at Poquetanuck Cove in Preston and Ledyard. In the competitive grant funding arena, the benefits of working collaboratively are many, and networking through contacts made at TRBP sponsored workshops can be a huge benefit.

-Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator

Did you miss the June 1, 2007 Thames River Basin Partnership Floating Workshop VII, "Rolling on the River" bus tour of the Shetucket River Watershed? If you did, then visit our website, <http://www.thamesriverbasinpartnership.org> and click on Floating Workshop VII in the "What's New" box for a PowerPoint slideshow of what you missed. Thanks to a generous donation from **Pfizer Corporation**, and contributions from Norwich Public Utilities, the **Willimantic Whitewater Partnership** and the **Willimantic River Alliance**, 35 participants experienced a simulated upstream migration from Norwich to the Windham Mills in Willimantic. Tour participants learned that rivers are useful for multiple functions by both humans and wildlife. Not all of these uses are always compatible, but with careful planning rivers can be managed for people and nature.

At the July 2007 TRBP Quarterly Meeting, hosted by **Project Oceanology** at scenic Avery Point, the 2007/2008 TRBP Plan of Work was approved. To view the current TRBP Plan of Work, you can download it from the TRBP website under the Workplan tab. Also at this meeting, Mike Dietz of **CT NEMO** gave an informative presentation on alternate stormwater management techniques, including rain gardens. For more information about Low Impact Development strategies, visit the **CT NEMO** website at <http://nemo.uconn.edu>.

The fall quarterly meeting of the **Thames River Basin Partnership** will be on October 16, 2007 beginning at 9:30 AM at the **Northeastern Connecticut Council of Government (NECCOG)** office on Route 12 in Dayville, CT. Helene Hochholzer of the **CT DEP** will give a presentation on the State Forest Resource Plan. All are welcome.

Funding from multiple sources has been approved for the **Thames River Basin Partnership** led watershed restoration project at Poquetanuck Cove. This project is being overseen by the TRBP Coordinator as a required task as part of the FY05 EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 funds provided by the **CT DEP**. The multiphase project includes:

- Conduct a year long multi-seasonal plant survey to locate rare native plant communities.
- Initiate a multiyear herbicide and mulching program to eradicate the *Phragmites*, taking special care to protect the rare plant communities previously identified.
- Conduct follow up monitoring to assure the *Phragmites* does not become reestablished.

- Conduct StreamWalk visual assessments of all Cove tributaries to get baseline watershed health information and to inventory current areas of concern.
- Continue to educate landowners that how they manage their land affects water quality.
- Encourage additional preservation of land adjacent to Poquetanuck Cove and its tributary streams.

This project has received pledges for financial support and in-kind service from many partners. The TRBP Coordinator was instrumental in directing the majority of these funding and in-kind service requests.

- **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.** which owns approximately 2 acres of *Phragmites* impacted land on the Preston side of Poquetanuck Cove agreed to serve as the applicant for most funding associated with this multi-year project and to administer the grants once awarded.
- The **Town of Preston** has been supplying meeting space at their community center for multiple meetings and workshops and has been helpful in providing lists of contact information for property owners in the project area.
- The **Town of Ledyard** included \$2000 in their fiscal year 07/08 budget in support of this project. Those funds will support the multi-seasonal floristic survey of the cove. The Ledyard Conservation Commission has been extremely supportive by providing multiple hours of in-kind labor to map the cove areas impacted by *Phragmites* and photo-documentation of the extent of the problem, and research into property owners in the project area. This effort helped to emphasize the critical nature of this project.
- **The Nature Conservancy (TNC)** has pledged \$3000 in support of the multi-seasonal floristic survey of the cove. TNC owns a significant parcel of land with cove frontage on the Ledyard side of the cove. TNC will oversee this phase of the project.
- A **CT Department of Environmental Protection** Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) grant was awarded to **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.** on behalf of all affected property owners to pay for 75% of the estimated \$24,000 cost of the multiyear *Phragmites* herbicide/mulching program. This herbicide/mulching program will be coordinated by the **CT DEP Wetlands Habitat and Mosquito Management (WHAMM)** program.
- A **CT Corporate Wetlands Restoration Program** grant was awarded to **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.** on behalf of all affected property owners for the remaining 25% match required by the CT DEP LIP grant.
- **Pfizer Corporation** donated funds to **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.** to produce and mail to each property owner in Preston and Ledyard along Poquetanuck Cove or a tributary stream to Poquetanuck Cove an informative brochure about the overall project scope to date. This brochure also contains information about what each land owner can do to protect the cove, including permanent preservation. The brochure was created and produced by the TRBP Coordinator.
- **The Rivers Alliance of Connecticut** has pledged to donate *The Importance of Streamside Buffers* brochures to be distributed to all property owners along Poquetanuck Cove and its tributary streams (approximately 350 pieces). These will be distributed by the **Poquetanuck Cove Preservation Committee**.
- The **Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor** Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator organized a StreamWalk visual assessment of all Poquetanuck Cove tributaries to collect information on the current health of the watershed and to inventory areas of concern. Twenty-two volunteers participated in training and will be collecting data in the summer of 2007. Training for this water quality monitoring program was

provided by **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service** Stream Walk training team, Seth Lerman and Todd Bobbowich.

The Poquetanuck Cove Preservation Committee is made up of representatives of **Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc.**, **The Preston Conservation Advisory Committee**, the **Ledyard Conservation Commission** and the **US Fish and Wildlife Service**, as well as the **Thames River Basin Partnership Coordinator**.

The Stream Walk assessments in the Poquetanuck Cove watershed are in progress. The floristic survey is scheduled to begin in late summer 2007 and be completed by late spring 2008. The multiyear herbicide program is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2008. The TRBP Plan of Work has been amended to provide continued support of this project. For a complete project report, visit the TRBP website and click on Poquetanuck Cove.

Trout Unlimited (TU), Thames Valley Chapter reported that a 44 foot long pedestrian bridge was installed over the spillway of the Hewitt's Pond Dam, a popular fly fishing spot on the Shunnock River. The pond is stocked by state with trout each spring. This bridge restores fishing access to both sides of the dam and reconnects the Narragansett Trail, a Connecticut Blue Blazed Trail. The previous walkway across the spillway was removed in 2004 due to deterioration. The Narragansett Trail was relocated to a ford downstream of the dam. This ford was sometimes impassible due to high flow in the Shunnock River. The ford also restricted access to the dam for fishermen.

Thames Valley Trout Unlimited has worked since early 2005 to restore the crossing over the spillway. Trout Unlimited worked in partnership with The Connecticut Forest and Park Association on this task. The Connecticut Forest and Park Association maintains the blue blazed trails. Additional support was provided by the **CT DEP State Parks Division** and by **Avalonia Land Conservancy** volunteers. A Recreational Trails Grant was secured in March 2006 from the **CT Department of Environmental Protection** using funds provided by the Federal Highway Administration. A dam maintenance permit was secured from the Department of Environmental Protection, Inland Water Resources Division, this spring to allow excavating on the dam for bridge abutments. Work began in April 2007 on constructing the abutments and approaches to the bridge. A steel bridge with a wooden walkway was purchased from Contech Bridge Solutions, Inc., of Alexandria, Minnesota. This bridge was set in place using a crane provided by Industrial Engineers, Inc., of Uncasville. The bridge is now open for public use.

Work has begun on a "Shallow Water Wetland Habitat Enhancement Project" at the **Connecticut Audubon Society (CAS)** Center at Pomfret Bafflin Nature Sanctuary. The shallow water habitat designed by **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)** staff will be about one half-acre in size and will have two pool areas. One will be a semi-permanent shallow pool with the other a deeper pool to hold more permanent water. There will be a small, water control structure in a low dike to control pool elevations. The water levels will be determined depending on the season and bird migrations. This enhanced wetland will be created using the **DEP WHAMM Program's** low ground pressure equipment. The USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service planned, designed and provided primary funding for the project under their Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP). Other partners involved in the project are the **US Fish & Wildlife Service**, Stewart B. McKinney National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS), the **Connecticut Audubon Society** and the **DEP WHAMM Program**.

CAS anticipates this new habitat to be used by migrating shorebirds, herons, rails and waterfowl. The area will be monitored by the **Connecticut Audubon Society** and will compliment their Northeast Corner environmental education programs offered to all ages year round.

Also the **Connecticut Audubon Society Center at Pomfret**, an additional twenty-two new individuals were trained to participate in Stream Walk assessments of wadeable rivers and streams by Paula Coughlin, CAS Citizen Science Program Coordinator this season. Working cooperatively with Jean Pillo, QSHC Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator, watershed maps containing topographic information were produced for the upper Five Mile River in Thompson for members of the **Quaddick Lake Association**, who wish to gather information on the health of the tributary streams that flow into Quaddick Lake. Stream Walk data is collected in the summer months when stream flow is traditionally lower and the air and water temperatures are warmer. Data sheets will be returned to Ms. Pillo in September and the results tabulated.

The official ribbon cutting for the **Willimantic Whitewater Partnership's** purchase of property at 28 Bridge Street took place on Wednesday, August 1st at 10:00 with Senator Williams, Representative Pawelkiewicz and First Selectman Paulhus attending, among others. This purchase could not have been possible without the help of The Savings Institute and Senator Don Williams, along with many other organizations and individuals. WWP vision of a waterfront park along the banks of the Willimantic River is becoming a reality.

The 3.5 acre parcel, which includes the riverbed and a partially breached dam, is the centerpiece of the Partnership's efforts to restore the Willimantic River and surrounding land. The property will also serve as the local trailhead for the East Coast Greenway, the rail-to-trail project running from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. WWP has already begun removing debris and enhancing the site with the help of EASTCONN's Summer Youth Employment Program. Fifteen regional teens, ages 14-18, are working to improve the appearance of the property. The Savings Institute assisted in the financing for the purchase, and the SI Foundation provided a \$25,000 grant that WWP has used for the environmental analysis prior to the purchase. In addition, Senator Don Williams facilitated a \$50,000 Connecticut grant specifically for the purchase of this property.

The planned linear riverside park will ultimately connect the Airline and Hop River multi-purpose trails, roughly from Mackey's, along the Railroad Museum to Bridge Street. Partnering with the Town of Windham, WWP has secured \$1.8 million in Federal funding for this phase of the project. These funds will be used to repair the old train trestles over the river, and build trails along the riverbank connecting these two existing bike/walk trails. The trail will then continue to the future trailhead that will be located at the new acquired Bridge Street property. In addition, the WWP is actively planning for an in-water kayak, canoe and boating park throughout the same stretch of river. The Partnership has just completed initial feasibility studies for this in-water component of the project.

The **Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor** will lead the planning of a "Source to the Sea Expedition" of the Thames River watershed. This event is tentatively scheduled to take place in 2009. The vision is for all towns and various organizations to contribute in some way. Some may paddle down their tributary to the Quinebaug or Shetucket River to join in a growing flotilla, or else send something that represents their town or organization that will make the journey to Long Island Sound to represent the connectedness all towns have within the watershed. If you would like more information or would like to be involved in planning this event, please contact Lois Bruinooge of the Last Green Valley at (860) 963-7226.

The **CT Department of Environmental Protection** has announced the Request for Proposals for the FY08 EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source grant round. Information on this grant and the updated criteria are available on the CT DEP website http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2719&q=325594&depNav_GID=1654. RFPs are due to Stanley Zaremba by October 15, 2007.

The **CT DEP** Department of Inland Fisheries, working cooperatively with Norwich Department of Public Utilities and FirstLight Power Resources and the **US Fish and Wildlife Service** has compiled this season's data on anadromous fish passage in the Thames River watershed. The Greenville Dam fish lift was successfully moving fish into the Shetucket River. Occum Dam fish ladder, completed in 2005, passed its first shad with some fine tuning. The new Tunnel Dam fish lift in the Quinebaug River also passed its first anadromous fish, although additional adjustments will need to be made at that site.

Judy Rondeau of **Thompson** has completed her report for the 2006 season for water quality monitoring of Thompson portion of the French River and the 2007 season is underway. Ms. Rondeau has also been of assistance to Mauri Pelto of Nichols College, helping him to locate appropriate locations for stream flow monitoring stations for the tributaries that feed Quaddick Lake. M. Pelto works with students to calibrate the staff gages. The **Quaddick Lake Association** will assist with this project by providing periodic measurements.

The **Thompson Together Environment Committee**, Chaired by Norma O'Leary, successfully led their 5th annual town river clean up in April. Norma O'Leary was presented a Lifetime Achievement Award on June 1 by the **Connecticut Greenways Council** for her involvement in the Thompson Land Trust and trail development.

Official Greenway designation was awarded to Judd Brook, Pine Brook and Meadow Brook in the **Town of Colchester** by the **Connecticut Greenways Council**. These new greenways make connections to the Airline Trail State Park and other town owned open space and recreational areas.

The **Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments** final draft of the Regional Plan Of Conservation and Development will be the subject of a public hearing on Monday, October 15, 2007, at 7:30 pm at the SCCOG office, 5 Connecticut Avenue, Norwich, CT. Comments may be forwarded to the SCCOG via email office@seccog.org or in writing through October 15, 2007. The entire plan can be downloaded from their website <http://www.seccog.org/>.

Mickey Weiss and others at **Project Oceanology** will be working cooperatively with Jon Morrison of the **United States Geological Service** (USGS) to begin a study of the upper Thames River with the goal to look at impacts of currents on hypoxia (low oxygen) in Norwich Harbor during high and low current periods.

Dr. Weiss will be teaching this fall at **Connecticut College**, focusing on the Thames River for the laboratory portion of his course. The class will begin during the Norwich Harbor hypoxia season.

The **Eastern Connecticut Conservation District** (ECCD) is continuing their efforts to install a fish passage at the Hallville Dam in Preston. They have selected an engineering firm to draw up the specifications for the fish ladder.

This year, the Connecticut Conservation Districts will be jointly hosting the annual Northeastern Regional Conservation District meeting. This meeting at the Mystic Hilton involves twelve states and the District of Columbia. For more information, contact Scott Gravatt at (860) 774-8397 ext. 203.

The **ECCD** will be serving as project managers for the stream back restoration at John F. Simonzi Sr. Memorial Park in Putnam. This project includes installation of lighting and a canoe launch.

Due to a family relocation, Greg Smith has resigned from the **ECCD**. Ms. Pat Young will be filling the full time position as his replacement in mid August.

The **Town of Killingly** has updated their inland wetland regulations to stress low impact development strategies on all future projects by incorporating references to 2004 CT Stormwater Quality Manual. They are promoting the use of rain gardens or modified rain gardens and grass swales to manage storm water on site. Contact Eric Rumsey, Killingly Planner 1/Wetland Agent at (860) 779-5311 for more information.

Cat Hollow, a former mill site, is dedicated to become a town owned park. The developer of an abutting property has donated a portion of the land to the **Town of Killingly** to develop trails that will be connected to the new park, and will also pay for a bridge crossing of Whetstone Brook.

Killingly is also moving forward with their river trail expansion. Jolley Gravel has donated to the town an easement on 250 foot wide strip of land along the Quinebaug River that will allow them to extend the River Trail to the CT DEP owned property in the southwestern corner of the town.

Killingly Intermediate School 8th graders from Ms. Coolidge's and Mr. Jahoda's science classes teamed up with Mrs. Akers' **Pawcatuck Middle School** students to monitor the water quality of Thames River Watershed. Students performed many test that included pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, and fecal coliform for several local streams and rivers. Students started sampling in Northern Connecticut and worked their way south ending up in the Long Island Sound.

A May 31 culminating presentation was held at the Von der Mehden Hall on UCONN campus involving an i-movie and PowerPoint presentation based on the students' water quality results. Invited guests included **Thames River Basin Partnership** Coordinator, Jean Pillo, Eric Thomas, Thames River Coordinator for the **CT DEP** and **UCONN** Professor Robbins.

The **Town of Lisbon** is exploring the option of dividing the Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commission into two separate town commissions. With **Green Valley Institute** assistance, they have begun a Natural Resource Inventory of the town. The Inland Wetlands Agency recently reviewed a proposal for a new shopping mall across from Lisbon Landing which would result in 35 – 45 acres of permanently protected open space.

The **Eastern Connecticut Resources Conservation and Development Area** is planning several upcoming workshops:

On September 19, Reena Shaw of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will present the findings a Woodstock cost of services/fiscal impact study, followed by Paul Stahl of the Green Valley Institute presenting the Lebanon cost of services/fiscal impact study results. Robert Johnston of UCONN will share the results of a "willingness to pay" survey. The survey area included Thompson, Woodstock, Pomfret and Brooklyn. and was funded by a CT Department of Agriculture Viability Grant awarded to the Town of Thompson. This meeting will take place at EastConn facility in Hampton.

On October 30, Patrice Carlston, Planner for the Town of Somers, CT will give a presentation on limited development techniques. Fran Armentano, Planner from the Town of Granby, will follow with regulations for land protection. This workshop will take place at the EastConn facility in Hampton.

Still early in the planning stages, at the end of November, an afternoon round table discussion about the Transfer of Development Rights program will be followed by an evening workshop on the discussion results.

For further information on any of these workshops, contact Liz Rogers, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service RC&D representative at (860) 870-4942 ext. 105.

Thirty-six people took part in the spring 2007 Land Use Leadership Alliance (LULA) Training Program. This session, held at the Northeastern Connecticut Council of Government office, was supported through a grant from the Connecticut Department of Agriculture Farm Viability Program. The Land Use Leadership Alliance Training Program (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. LULA is designed to help local leaders and communities accomplish this by building a network of local leaders with extensive knowledge in land use law and collaborative techniques.

Available now from www.cttrips.com is a 48 minute DVD entitled *BETWEEN LAND & WATER* Life Stories of Connecticut's Amphibians. Filmed entirely in Connecticut, it shows the life cycle of frogs and salamanders and the connection between the water and the land in their life stories.

The **French River Connection** had a successful cleanup in Dudley, Massachusetts. Fifteen volunteers cleaned roads near the river, bringing in several truckloads of trash. Although hampered by high water, they accomplished a lot for the two town Earth Day events.

At the **Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor** Annual meeting, the **French River Connection** was awarded one of three Green Neighbor awards by the **Green Valley Institute** for "treasuring, respecting, and protecting the French River, by working to clean it after years of neglect, and for planning increased recreational access including trails, parks, and canoe/kayak put-ins, and for helping to keep the Last Green Valley Green". The vision of the French River Connection is for the French River and its shoreline to become a resource that is used, enjoyed, and treasured by residents and visitors to the French River region. The river's natural and cultural heritage will be appreciated and protected, recreational activities and gatherings along the river will be encouraged, and the economic benefits of a healthy, active riverfront will be realized.

Wyndham Land Trust (WLT) closed on the an additional property in Pomfret, CT adding an additional 44 acres to an existing 101 acre duck marsh preserve. The property was purchased with funding assistance from the CT DEP Open Space Land Acquisition Grant, with matching funds provided by the Bafflin Fund and the Town of Pomfret.

On Saturday, June 23, Selectman Delpha Very of Woodstock cut the blue ribbon guarding the entrance to the boardwalk which snakes its way for three hundred feet into the wetlands of Wyndham Land Trust's Little River Preserve. The Little River Preserve began with a 15 acre land donation made in 2001. This was followed by a second donation, 12 acres in 2005. That same year the remaining 12 acres were acquired. As a result, the entire 40 acres lying between the Little River, Route 171 and Little Pond Road in Woodstock are protected in perpetuity. They will continue to serve the usual functions of a wooded riverine wetland such as the stabilization of the river banks and the temporary storage of excess flood water. Green vegetation will continue to remove carbon from the atmosphere and provide food and cover for a great variety of wildlife. The boardwalk will permit dry shod access to the area and at the same time relieve visitors from having to cope with the entanglements inherent in areas of dense vegetation. It is the hope of the Wyndham Land Trust that it will encourage use of the site for educational purposes.

The **Wyndham Land Trust** received recognition from the **Connecticut Greenways Council** for the development of the Little River Greenway boardwalk at the June 1 National Trails Day Celebration in Old Lyme.

The **Council on Environmental Quality** released its annual report on the condition of Connecticut's environment at the end of June. In addition to the PDF version that has been available online (which is good for printing and copying), we have a new version that was designed for reading on our website. You can find it at <http://www.ct.gov/ceq/AnnualReport>.

The FY06 US EPA Clean Water Act grant awarded to the **Eastern Connecticut Conservation District** by the **CT DEP** in support of year two of the TRBP Coordinator position has been signed and went into effect on May 31, 2007. This year of funding requires the TRBP Coordinator 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. 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.