



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Summer 2011

Volume 11

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](#). Due to extreme winter weather, the TRBP was unable to meet in the winter of 2011. This newsletter includes partner updates through Spring 2011. Our partners continue to prove 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 summer meeting of the Thames River Basin Partnership meeting at Project Oceanology, then you missed a presentation on Hypoxia in the Thames River given by Mike Whitney, of UCONN Avery Point Marine Science Department and Mickey Weiss of Project O. Norwich Harbor is located where the Shetucket and Yantic Rivers converge into the Thames River. The Thames River is an estuary, where fresh water mixes with saltwater from Long Island Sound. Each year from June until October, Norwich Harbor experiences hypoxic conditions. The dissolved oxygen concentration often drops below 2 mg/l. This causes mass die offs of the organisms that live in or on the bottom. The cause of hypoxia is excessive nutrient inputs from land runoff and outflows from sewage treatment plants. Dr. Whitney's study of the currents in the Thames River demonstrated that tidal currents carry nutrients from downstream locations upstream to Norwich Harbor in addition to the nutrient sources from upstream locations.

TRBP News

The 11th Annual Thames River Basin Partnership Floating Workshop was held on June 24, 2011. This year's workshop theme focused on the Conservation Efforts in the French River Watershed and The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program. The workshop took place at Point Breeze Restaurant in Webster, MA, followed by an on-water field trip on Webster Lake. Members of the Webster Lake Association provided pontoon boats for tour of the lake. This year's workshop was funded in part by The Last Green Valley. The workshop was attended by 32 people.

Those present at the summer meeting voted to extend the Thames River Basin Partnership FY 2011 Plan of Work through the Fall meeting in order to assess which organizations may be

impacted by Federal and State budget cuts. A committee will be formed to prepare a FY2012 Plan of Work. Anybody interested in serving on this committee should contact Jean Pillo at Jean.Pillo@ConserveCT.org.

Partner Reports

As of July, 1, 2011, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection has been merged with portions of the Department of Public Utilities Control. The new agency is known and the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP). Daniel C Esty has been named by Governor Malloy as Commissioner of this new combined agency. Agency website information is still accessible at www.ct.gov/dep but will transition to a new URL in the future. A new agency logo will be forthcoming to share with TRBP for website and other uses.

DEEP's Watershed Management program has updated its website to include a number of watershed based plans and documents developed for river basins and projects across the state. A range of watershed sizes, principle NPS concerns, management approaches and partnerships can be found in the documents. New watershed plans within the Thames basin include Spaulding Pond (Norwich), Mashamoquet Brook (Pomfret), and Eagleville Brook (Mansfield). http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2719&q=379296&depNav_GID=1654

DEEP's Nonpoint Source Management Program contacted FY2011 Section 319 NPS grant applicants of their funding status during the week in mid-July. The DEEP nonpoint source program received 20 pre-proposals, requesting a total of more than \$2.6 million. The NPS Review Committee collectively reviewed the pre-proposals and chose 7 projects for potential funding based on a FY11 target funding level of \$1.6 million (approximately a quarter of a million less than last fiscal year) to support staff, programs and projects. Announcements of the tentative grant awards to applicants within the Thames River Basin shared will be announced by the Fall 2011 quarterly Partnership meeting.

DEEP's Non Point Source Management Program has issued an RFP for the Fiscal Year 2012 Section 319 NPS grant round. The Partnership and others should look carefully at the stated priorities, which include implementation projects tied to approved watershed based plans in the Thames River basin and beyond. Applications need to be submitted by September 15, 2012. http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2719&q=325594&depNav_GID=1654

As a reminder to long term Partners, and as some background material for new Partners, the Thames River Basin Coordinator was funded for three consecutive years through a CT DEP Section 319 NPS program agreement with the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District. As an agreement task to wrap up the Year 3 agreement in 2009, Jean Pillo developed a final grant report. It includes a Conclusions section with several Partnership activities that could be established or continued if funding was secured to reactivate the Coordinator position. The document is linked on the TRBP website under the Projects tab.

The delayed 2010 Connecticut Integrated Water Quality Report to Congress has been approved and is posted on the agency website. The next biennial reporting cycle has already begun in time for an anticipated Fall 2012 release.

http://www.ct.gov/dep/cwp/view.asp?a=2719&q=325610&depNav_GID=1654

[USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) (NRCS) Conservation Activity Plans Program is co-sharing the cost of energy audits with agricultural producers. They are also able to provide

funding assistance for forest land owners who own 10+ acres of forested land to hire a professional forester to develop a forest management plan.

A future program expansion for the NRCS, in cooperation with SeaGrant, will include development of management programs for the shellfishing industry. This program is scheduled to begin in 2012.

The NRCS is interested in expanding the Locally Led Workshop Initiative in Connecticut. NRCS is interested in learning more about the resource concerns of the local population in advance of the next round of Farm Bill funding. TRBP is an outcome of a Locally Led Initiative in the 1990s. A list of their current funding opportunities can be found at this link http://www.ct.nrcs.usda.gov/2012_signup.html.

[Avalonia Land Conservancy](#), working with the US Fish and Wildlife Service on a Challenge Cost Share Initiative, will be installing an educational kiosk at the Poquetanuck Cove Royal Oak Drive car top boat launch in Ledyard, CT. The new kiosk will be dedicated at 10 AM on September 24, 2011 as part of [National Estuaries Day](#) festivities. Avalonia, US Fish and Wildlife Service, UCONN SeaGrant and Eastern Connecticut Conservation District staff will be on site from 10 AM – noon with hands on exhibits. An early riser's paddle on Poquetanuck Cove will take place at 7 AM during high tide. A Poquetanuck Cove Canoe/Kayak Trail Guide, printed on water resistant paper, will also be printed as part of this initiative. This Canoe/Kayak Guide is based on the prototype produced for the TRBP Floating Workshop 10 in 2010. For more information, or directions, contact Anne Roberts Pierson at 860-464-8101.

Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc has obtained a Grassland Preserve Grant through the DEEP Office of Long Island Sound Programs for their Wequetequok Property in Stonington Cove.

[The Last Green Valley](#) has received a funding commitment from Connecticut Light and Power to sponsor several projects, including an expansion of the Volunteer Water quality monitoring program, water trail activities and a conference on the status of water quality and quantity in the region. The target audience for this conference will be volunteers rather than agency staff. The projected time frame of this conference is late winter. If anybody is interested in serving on the planning committee, contact Lois Bruinooge at 860-774-3300.

The [US Geological Survey](#) USGS will soon be updating the nitrogen load report through 2009, which includes several monitoring locations in the Thames watershed. This project is being led by John Mullany. This regional nutrient load trends analysis of 121 stations from Maine to New Jersey includes several stations in Connecticut.

USGS reports that future funding for sustaining stream gage stations is uncertain due to the current fiscal situation.

The [Eastern Connecticut Resource and Development Council](#) is a non-profit organization that formerly functioned under the guidance of a RC&D Coordinator employed by the USDA NRCS. The federal RC&D program was eliminated due to budget cuts. The Council has several ongoing projects. They are working to develop a plan to function without NRCS staff support.

The [Eastern Connecticut Conservation District](#) reported that all easements required for the installation of the Hallville Fish Ladder have been acquired and the fish ladder project is moving forward. ECCD staff are also wrapping up a Track Down Survey in the Baker Cove watershed in Groton. Baker Cove is listed as impaired due to exceedance of bacteria that indicate the water is contaminated with fecal material. This restricts the area from recreational shellfish harvesting.

ECCD has also completed a project to assist a local farm in Woodstock to decrease non-point source pollution that has been implicated in the impairment of North Running Brook in Woodstock and is currently working with a second farm in Woodstock to install roof gutters on a dairy barn to redirect stormwater away from manure contaminated areas. A third project in Woodstock to install three demonstration rain gardens or riparian buffers is underway. Volunteers involved with The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program have been assisting with the collection of water samples involved in several of these ECCD projects.

The [Groton Open Space Association](#) has been working with Dave Kozak of the DEEP Office of Long Island Sound Programs to promote Low Impact Development in local regulations. In addition, they are utilizing USDA NRCS Wetlands Habitat Improvement Program funds for to restore early successional habitat, important for the New England Cottontail on properties they manage.

The [Thames Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited](#) participated in a two-day regional leadership meeting. They continue to advocate for stream flow regulations in Connecticut. The future of the Trout in the Classroom Program is a concern due to the scheduled closing of the fish hatchery, the source of their trout eggs. Their members have been involved in an effort to remove Mile-a-Minute vine in the Shetucket River Watershed. Mile-a-Minute vine is an aggressive invasive species with rapid annual growth rates.

Mike Whitney of UCONN Avery Point has been awarded funding from the National Science Foundation to develop hydrodynamic models for smaller coastal watersheds along the Connecticut Coast.

Jen Pagach of the DEEP Office of Long Island Sound Programs presented a series of workshops focused on Climate Change involving local, state and federal stakeholders in Groton. The workshop series is available online for anybody to review. The Connecticut Climate Network demonstrates how Connecticut municipalities are or should be adapting in anticipation of changing climate conditions. The Town of Groton included adaptive strategies to address a 6" sea level rise in their Plan of Conservation and Development. OLISP's current focus is to seek new communities interested in Low Impact Development strategies. A request for proposals for climate change monitoring is open until September 15, 2011.

[Atlantic States Rural Water and Wastewater Association](#) is involved with the Town of Montville on a request to evaluate Miller Pond as a potential drinking water reservoir. They are also currently involved with the Town of Putnam to develop a well field plan focused on the industrial park. They recently completed a project for Barkhamsted and will be working with the Town of Salem soon. Other future projects include identifying potential aquifer areas in Thompson and Old Lyme.

The 11th Annual [Celebrating Agriculture Day](#) will be held on September 24, 2011 from 9 AM – 3 PM. Admission is free. Come early for a hearty farm breakfast for a \$5 donation.

News from the Municipalities

The Town of Thompson is working with several partners to construct a new community services facility. This new facility will be built to LEED standards, including low impact development design in the parking area.

The Ledyard Conservation Commission has been working to convert a 1.5 acre plot of land to a native grass plot. The plot was formerly hosting multiple invasive species.

The Lisbon Conservation Commission is involved with updating their town open space inventory. The Town of Lisbon has land use regulations that allow for an open space set aside as part of the subdivision regulations, but the Conservation Commission wishes to influence the local Planning and Zoning Agency to apply that option more often instead of the fee in lieu of open space option. Their current focus is on the development of a wildlife corridor extending from Canterbury to the Taftville/Norwich line, and the open space option is an important tool to achieve that goal.

The Town of Lisbon will be installing solar photovoltaic panels on select town buildings soon.

The Woodstock Conservation Commission is working with the Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission on the Town's updated Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD). The goal is to roll the Conservation Commission's advisory Plan of Open Space and Conservation directly into the town's official planning document. The outcomes of the Co-occurring Resource Inventory Analysis, developed with the Green Valley Institute, will be included in the PoCD update.

Other news

EPA to offer Free Watershed Academy Webcast on Sept. 22nd

[Nitrogen and Phosphorus Pollution Series: State and Local Policies to Restrict the Use of Phosphorus Lawn Fertilizer](#)

Join EPA for a free webcast on September 22nd titled "Nitrogen and Phosphorus Pollution Series: State and Local Policies to Restrict the Use of Phosphorus Lawn Fertilizer." Fertilizers, leaves, grass clippings, animal waste, and eroded soil are all sources of phosphorus. When they are swept or washed into the street or nearest storm drain, they end up in your local lake or river where they can cause algal blooms and other water quality problems. This webcast will highlight legislation passed by Minnesota, Michigan and the Chesapeake Bay states to restrict the use of phosphorus lawn fertilizer and will share key lessons learned. This webcast is one in a series on the important issue of nutrient pollution. [Register and download the webcast presentations.](#)

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 [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 on Tuesday, October 18, 2011 beginning at 9:30 AM at the Connecticut Audubon Society's new Lois Orswell Grassland Bird Conservation Center, located at 218 Day Road, Pomfret Center, CT.

Look for updates at www.trbp.org. Please mark your calendars to save the date. Meeting content and locations will be posted on the TRBP [Calendar](#) of upcoming events, or 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. Funding support for FY 11 for TRBP Coordinator time has been provided by The Last Green Valley. 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.