



Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Fall 2019

Volume 52

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 Plan of Work](#) and in support of our common mission statement to share organizational resources and to develop a regional approach to natural resource protection. I hope you enjoy reading about these activities as much as I enjoy sharing information about them with you. For more information on any of these updates, just click on the blue website hyperlinks in this e-publication, but be sure to come back to finish reading the rest of the report.

*Jean Pillo, Watershed Conservation Project Manager
Eastern Connecticut Conservation District
And TRBP Coordinator*

Special Presentation

If you missed the fall TRBP meeting, you missed a presentation by Lynn Stoddard of the Eastern Connecticut State University Institute of Sustainable Living on the [Sustainable CT](#) initiative. This program, designed for Connecticut municipalities, is a roadmap for sustainability. The vision of the program is for communities to strive to be thriving, resilient, collaborative, and forward-looking. They build community and the local economy. They equitably promote the health and well-being of current and future residents, and they respect the finite capacity of the natural environment. Participation in the program is voluntary, but there are incentives for towns that are enrolled. To earn a bronze or silver level designation, municipalities must complete elements from nine different categories to earn points. At the time of the TRBP meeting, there were 89 municipalities registered in the program and 22 have been certified; 17 at the bronze level including Ashford, Groton, New London, Scotland and Waterford and 5 at the silver level, including Coventry, Mansfield and Windham. An innovative new program added to the initiative is to provide fast, flexible funding to support local projects throughout CT through crowd-source funding combined with cost share funding. If your community is not yet involved with this program, or to get more information, visit the Sustainable CT website at <https://sustainablect.org>.

TRBP Updates

On the TRBP Facebook page, the TRBP Coordinator posted 22 updates on our partners' activities during the last quarter. If you would like to get more information out to the public, email the information in a cut and paste format to Jean.Pillo@comcast.net.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Project Summaries

The 2014 Farm Bill included new ways for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to innovate, leverage additional contributions, offer impactful solutions and engage more participants. One such program was the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The purpose of the program is to promote coordination with partners to deliver conservation assistance to agricultural producers and landowners. This is done by providing technical assistance through agreements and direct funding for conservation practices. Through Thames River Basin Partnership meetings, partners meet to discuss ways to collaborate on projects like these. TRBP is partnering in all three of these projects by providing outreach support.

FY14/15 (State level funding) The Last Green Valley is lead partner in this \$400,000 NRCS RCPP project entitled **Improving Soil Health and Water Quality in the Thames River Watershed**. This project addresses two national priorities (soil health and water quality), and all five Connecticut state priorities (water quality degradation, soil erosion, soil quality degradation, degraded plant conditions and livestock production limitations). Utilizing the RCPP, four collaborating partners will implement soil health conservation practices through EQIP on cropland in eastern Connecticut's Thames River Watershed. The long-term objective of this project is to show a measurable improvement of edge-of-field and in-stream water quality, including a decrease in nutrient and turbidity levels, thereby improving soil health and water quality in the area.

Project update: The EQIP funding for financial assistance for this project has been obligated, but funding for technical assistance remains so ECCD can assist producers with conservation planning and their EQIP applications. Water quality monitoring was started on selected fields during the 2019 growing season.

FY15/16 (State level funding) The University of Connecticut is the recipient and lead partner in an RCPP project entitled **Path to Reduce Pathogens in CT Agricultural Runoff**. This \$669,000 NRCS RCPP project is focused on unacceptably high bacteria levels in Connecticut's rivers and shellfish beds. This is, in part, caused by runoff from agricultural operations. To address water quality degradation, ten conservation partners are collaborating to achieve the objectives of the project: University of Connecticut, Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, The Last Green Valley, Inc., CT Department of Agriculture Bureau of Aquaculture, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, CT Sea Grant, Stonington Shellfish Commission, CUSH, Inc. (Clean Up Sound & Harbors), the Thames River Basin Partnership, and UCONN Extension.

Project update - Mike Dietz of UCONN CLEAR/CT Non-Point Education for Municipal Officials held a technical quarterly partner meeting in October 2019, his first quarterly partner meeting since assuming the role of lead investigator. Discussions were held on expanded water quality monitoring and farm visits to introduce NRCS funding opportunities.

FY16/17 (National level funding) The Last Green Valley (TLGV) was awarded \$6,144,000 through the NRCS RCPP program for **Accelerating the Pace of Conservation in the Southern**

New England Heritage Forest. The Southern New England Heritage Forest (SNEHF) is a uniquely-positioned forest corridor stretching north along the Connecticut and Rhode Island border to the Quabbin Reservoir in Massachusetts. A remarkable partnership of non-profit organizations and regional, state and municipal agencies are offering private woodland owners a suite of NRCS tools for sound management and forestry conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Permanent protection through easements under the Healthy Forests Reserve Program is also available. This project will serve as a “conservation pipeline” of forest and bird habitat plans, EQIP practices and HFRP easements on private forestlands in order to accelerate the pace of conservation in SNEHF.

Project update – The response to the easement opportunity through the Healthy Forests Reserve Program (30 landowners representing 2500 acres of forested land) has been overwhelming and not all applicants can be included under this project. The next step for this project phase will be to close on the easements after title work, hazmat due diligence and restoration plans are drafted. Phase 2 applications for forest management plans and bird habitat surveys were accepted through January 18, 2019. Dozens of properties were selected and the Audubon organizations in the 3 states are currently conducting bird surveys and foresters are assessing the properties in preparation for developing Forest Management Plans. A second round of applications for bird surveys and forest management plans was announced on October 1, 2019 and the deadline for applications in Connecticut and Rhode Island is December 31, 2019. Massachusetts continues to accept applications on a rolling basis. For more information, visit the [TLGV website](#).

Long Island Sound Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program Update:

UConn Extension is offering farmers help with conservation plans and a free soil test as part of the Long Island Sound Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program. Soil tests are an important first step at assessing current soil resource conditions in order to adopt management strategies that promote nutrient retention and cycling within fields saving the producer time and money. Space in the program is limited. For more information call 860-486-7176 or email Katherine.vanderwoude@uconn.edu.

For more information about USDA NRCS RCPP opportunities, please visit the NRCS website at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/farmland/rcpp>.

Partner Reports

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) seeks public comments on its interim final rule for the Conservation Stewardship Program. CSP, the nation’s largest conservation program in terms of participating land, is designed to help farmers have more robust conservation activities. The rule – now available on the Federal Register – takes effect upon publication and includes changes to the program prescribed by the 2018 Farm Bill.

Changes to CSP include:

- Increasing payment rates for adoption of cover crop rotations.
- Introducing a new supplemental payment for advanced grazing management.
- Creating one-time payment for developing a comprehensive conservation plan.

- Providing specific support for organic and transitioning to organic production activities.

As part of implementing the 2018 Farm Bill, NRCS has streamlined CSP by basing contracts on funds instead of acres, bringing it in line with the agency's other large conservation program, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Additionally, NRCS is aligning CSP with EQIP through common applications, contracting operations, conservation planning, conservation practices and related administrative procedures.

The interim final rule becomes effective upon publication in the Federal Register. NRCS invites comments on this interim rule through **January 13, 2020**. Electronic comments must be submitted through [regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) under Docket ID NRCS-2019-0020. All written comments received will be publicly available on <http://www.regulations.gov>.

NRCS will evaluate public comments to determine whether additional changes are needed. The agency plans on publishing a final rule following public comment review.

CSP is offered in all 50 states and the Pacific and Caribbean areas through continuous sign-ups. The program provides many benefits, including increased crop yields, decreased inputs, wildlife habitat improvements and increased resilience to weather extremes. CSP is for working lands including cropland, pastureland, rangeland, non-industrial private forest land, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe.

NRCS will make available \$750 million for interested producers in Fiscal Year 2020. Sign-up periods for CSP will be announced in the coming weeks. Additionally, CSP participants may have an opportunity to renew their contracts in the first half of the fifth year of the five-year contract.

For more information on how to sign up for CSP, contact your local NRCS field office.
Danielson (860) 779-0557
Norwich (860) 319-8803

The Norwich office of USDA NRCS is currently managing over 50 contracts for various projects. This includes a large agriculture waste management project in Preston.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) is continuing its efforts on many soil and water conservation projects in or near the Thames Watershed:

Anguilla Brook Watershed Based Plan update: after 10 weeks of E. coli monitoring, the results were that the Anguilla Brook mainstem did not exceed water quality standards for fecal bacteria, but two upstream tributaries did not meet Connecticut water quality standards. Further investigation of those polluted streams using a visual assessment known as the StreamWalk protocol were conducted. Anguilla Brook is the main freshwater tributary for Wequetequock Cove in Stonington, CT. The cove does not meet water quality standards for shellfish consumption.

The Southeast Connecticut Stormwater Collaborative was funded for a second year with support from the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. This initiative has been expanded to include additional towns outside of New London County. For more information, please visit the [website](#).

With funding provided by a Long Island Sound Futures Fund, ECCD is moving forward with the design phase of a fishway that will allow migratory fish to pass over the Shewville Dam in Ledyard. After review of proposals by multiple firms, a design firm has been contracted with and the designing phase is under way.

ECCD also wrapped up the Baker Cove Goose Management Project. This project was funded by a US EPA Clean Water Act §319 Grant through the CT DEEP. The project focused on nuisance resident geese that impact water quality in Baker Cove. Shellfish in Baker Cove are not safe to harvest for direct consumption because of high levels of fecal bacteria in the cove, and geese were identified as a potential contributor. The geese are also a safety hazard at the Groton/New London Airport. The end product of this project was the development of a matrix of management measures that could be used to control the expanding goose population. Another product of this project was to establish the Baker Cove Watershed Committee. The committee will meet quarterly to share ideas and collaborate on implementing actions recommended in the Baker Cove Abbreviated Watershed-Based Plan and Canada Goose Management Matrix.

ECCD has also been coordinating a series of Little River Healthy Watershed Collaborative meetings for stakeholders concerned with water quality issues in Little River, Muddy Brook and Roseland Lake in Woodstock. An October meeting was held to share an interpretation of the water quality data collected by The Last Green Valley Roseland Lake Monitoring Team. A portion of the funding for this monitoring effort was provided by the Town of Putnam. Putnam withdraws surface water from Little River downstream of Roseland Lake. Roseland Lake is effected by summer cyanobacteria blooms when the water temperature at the surface exceeds 25°C and the bottom of the lake is anoxic. The data showed that copper sulfate applied to the lake surface in early August did not have lasting impact on water clarity or cyanobacteria concentrations in the lake surface.

Upper Natchaug Healthy Watershed Implementation Plan Project: The kickoff meeting for the upper Natchaug Watershed was held on August 29. Stakeholders from municipalities, conservation organizations and government agencies meet at Camp Woodstock. Holly Drinkuth of The Nature Conservancy led off the meeting with a Recap of the Natchaug River Conservation Action Plan (CAP) process and the resulting intermunicipal agreement signed by the CEOs of the 8 towns in the watershed. Goals of the current project were discussed as well as a Natchaug River survey that has been distributed for public input. Please take a moment to participate in this [survey](#) if you haven't already done so to let them know what you think a healthy watershed should be. The next meeting will be held in December 2019 and feature CT DEEP summarizing water quality data that will define the current state of the watershed.

Projects wrapped up by ECCD during this quarter include the Woodchip Bioreactor Monitoring Project in Woodstock that measured the effectiveness of using woodchips as a water quality improvement filter for water drained through a tile drainage system installed under a farm field.

Tile drains are an approved practice by the USDA NRCS. Their use below a farm field allows farmers to access otherwise poorly drained fields earlier in the season and therefore extend the growing season. An unintended consequence of tile drains is that they transport water soluble nutrients away from the fields and can create water quality issues in surface water into which they drain. The results of the woodchip bioreactor monitoring showed that woodchips are an effective means to reduce nitrate nitrogen concentrations in tile drained runoff. The average effectiveness was a 94% reduction. It was determined the system shed soluble orthophosphate during the summer when the flow was intermittent through the system. For more effective orthophosphate removal, a secondary treatment system would be required. The results of *E. coli* monitoring in the inlet and outlet wells was inconsistent.

ECCD also wrapped up a multiphase nutrient management project at a large dairy farm in Woodstock. This project involved installation of a high/low flow separator for any silage leachate, capturing the concentrated low flow leachate and directing it to the manure storage tanks. The silage bunkers on this farm were relined. The project also involved building a pump house designed to pump dairy manure to a liquid/solid separator. The liquid portion of the manure then continues on to be stored in large manure storage tanks installed with USDA NRCS assistance. The solids are recycled in the dairy barn as bedding for the cows. This project, and the Woodchip Bioreactor project above, were featured at two farm tours organized by ECCD. The first was for local farmers, CT DEEP and USDA NRCS staff. The second was part of the National Association of Conservation Districts Northeast Annual Meeting.

The Last Green Valley (TLGV) and Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECD) have entered into a cooperative agreement to fund coordination services for The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program and the Thames River Basin Partnership for another year at the same level of funding as FY 2019. This is the 15th year of this special partnership.

TLGV is in the process of developing its next 10 year vision and planning document. Public input was solicited at multiple events. If you haven't participated in any of this discussion yet, please consider taking a few moments to complete this [survey](#).

TLGV is launching a new citizen science effort to protect the starry skies of the National Heritage Corridor. TLGV is known as the dark spot along the eastern United States megalopolis between Boston and Washington DC as seen from space at night. Light pollution is threatening that distinction. For information on how you can join this effort, click [here](#).

The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) recently awarded \$12,000 in grants to four local organizations to preserve, protect, interpret, promote or market historic and cultural resources.

- Killingly Historical and Genealogical Society in Killingly, CT was awarded \$1,000 for its "Preserving the Past" project. The project will catalog and preserve historic photographs, postcards, maps and other items and make them more accessible to the public.
- Norwich Historical Society in Norwich, CT was awarded \$4,000 for its project called "Restoration of the circa 1759 David Greenleaf House." The house is a historic property on the grounds of the Leffingwell House Museum and the funds will go directly toward restoration of

the rear lower level of the home to create an accessible space to accommodate more visitors for events and programming. Renovation of the space will allow both the Leffingwell House Museum and the Norwich Historical Society to expand programming and events.

- Thompson Together in Thompson, CT was awarded \$4,000 for its project called “Thompson Cemetery Restoration II.” The grant will fund cleanup and repair work at six of the town’s 24 cemeteries. The grant will help fund an ongoing effort of the committee to preserve and conserve the cemeteries, which had been neglected for many years. All the cemeteries play an important role in Thompson’s history.
- Town of Thompson, through its Trails Committee, was awarded \$3,000 for its project called “Traveling Through Thompson: Directional and Interpretive Signage to Protect & Promote Thompson’s Historic and Cultural Resources.” The Town will develop a consistent signage plan to promote and protect Thompson’s resources and provide valuable information to visitors to enhance their experience. Many of the town’s historic locations will receive signage.

The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Update:

- Volunteers completed 10 weeks of monitoring in the Willimantic River at 7 boat launches from Safford Springs to Windham. The results show that some of the sites exceed water quality limits for E. coli following rain, suggesting stormwater runoff as the source of this contamination. Samples following dry weather were all within the acceptable range.
- Temperature data loggers were deployed at 10 locations in the Mount Hope River watershed. These loggers were part of a study requested by CT DEEP fisheries to determine if groundwater withdrawal near the river was impacting water temperature downstream. The results indicate there was no significant effect. Grants Brook, a small tributary to the Mount Hope River in Mansfield, was determined to meet the temperature requirements of cold water habitat.
- The results from the Roseland Lake monitoring team were used to show the relationship of surface water temperature, and dissolved oxygen and phosphorus at the lake bottom to cyanobacteria bloom cycles in the lake.

TLGV organized its 30th season of Walktober events, featuring hikes, paddles, bike rides, equestrian and other outdoor events, celebrating the diversity of cultural and natural resources in The Last Green Valley. Over 200 events were available in which to participate. The City of Norwich hosted the most events for the 2019 TLGV Walktober season.

The City of Norwich is a Sustainable CT municipal applicant. The city applied for funding to support a series of meetings to gather input on its Plan of Conservation and Development update.

Norwich is also continuing with a mill deconstruction project along the Yantic River near Uncas Leap. The lot will be open space and a parking lot off site.

The CT DEEP is preparing a Request for Proposals, expected to be released in mid-December, for another round of EPA Clean Water Act § 319 Non-point Source Grants. This year, DEEP will fund fewer, large scale projects that have documentable high pollution load reduction potential. TRBP will post this grant announcement on its Facebook page when it is available.

The Niantic River Watershed Committee has hired a consulting firm to prepare an update of the Niantic River Watershed Based Plan. The original plan, prepared in 2006 by Kleinschmidt Associates, is in need of updating because many of the objectives have been implemented and new information has become available.

The update is focusing on:

- which stated plan goals/objectives have been met,
- which goals/objectives have not been met,
- identification and evaluation of barriers to goals not met,
- identification of additional concerns not included in plan (eg. climate change/coastal resiliency),
- development of new implementation recommendations for 10 year period.

This update to the Niantic River Watershed Based Plan is being funded by a US EPA Clean Water Act § 319 NPS Grant through the CT DEEP, as well as funding from the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut.

The Niantic River Watershed Committee was awarded \$15,636.60 by the Long Island Sound Futures Fund to develop a social marketing program for residents aiming to reduce or eliminate the use of fertilizer on lawns in the Niantic River watershed of Long Island Sound in East Lyme and Waterford, Connecticut. The project will prevent 10,000 pounds of nitrogen from fertilizer flowing into the Niantic River and ultimately Long Island Sound.

Niantic River Watershed Committee, Inc. will deploy a social marketing strategy to encourage 700 local residents to use less or no fertilizer on their lawns in the Niantic River watershed, East Lyme and Waterford, Connecticut. Social marketing applies commercial marketing ideas to engage people to take action voluntarily around shared community problems. The Niantic River is a natural, commercial and community resource with poor water quality due, in part, to nitrogen in fertilizer that flows from lawns into the river and Long Island Sound. Excess nitrogen causes problems like algal blooms which harm the environment and reduce public enjoyment of the Sound. The project is based on a model of social diffusion where neighbor-to-neighbor communication is used to spread the word and encourage collective community action to adopt lawn care practices resulting in reduced fertilizer use to improve water quality. Project activities: 1) Recruit community members to serve as a steering committee; 2) Identify neighborhoods for outreach near the river; 3) Recruit and train 20 local volunteers to conduct one-to-one visits with information and messages designed to encourage residents to adopt new lawn care practices and to share the practices with neighbors; and 4) Conduct follow-up visits to learn if the changes in lawn care were maintained and shared with neighbors. This project will expand upon a pilot project that showed promise to reduce a common type of nitrogen pollution into all waterways that feed the Sound.

The [Pachaug River](#) basin, featured in the TRBP Floating Workshop in 2014, is a low gradient stream with many dams. The ponds behind the DEEP owned and managed dams have invasive aquatic species issues, and this summer, Hopeville Pond experienced a cyanobacteria bloom that caused the closure of the swimming area at Hopeville Pond State Park. The river originates in Voluntown at the outflow of Beach Pond and flows through Griswold before it drains into the Quinebaug River at Jewett City. Beach Pond straddles the CT/RI border. Aquatic invasive species have unfortunately been introduced into Beach Pond. Waterfront residents requested an aggressive drawdown (8 feet) of the pond as a potential control measure, but the watershed is not large enough to refill the pond in spring. State officials from CT DEEP and RI DEM are communicating on how to address issues in Beach Pond. At this time, there is no intermunicipal/interstate agreement for cooperating on lake drawdowns or a planning strategy that coordinates efforts in that watershed.

The CT Department of Agriculture recently released a Request for Proposals for the Farm Viability Grant Program. The deadline for applications has passed. The Farm Viability Program provides matching funds for CT municipalities, groups of municipalities, regional Council of Governments, and/or agricultural non-profit organizations for projects that directly impact and/or foster agriculture viability. The grant would fund up to \$49,999 of matching funds with a requirement for a 40% match from the applicant.

The Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards (314 CMR 4.00 or SWQS) form the foundation of the state's surface water quality programs, and provide the legal basis for controlling the discharge and runoff of pollutants into the state's surface waters. In October, MassDEP released proposed amendments to the SWQS that update toxic pollutant criteria for the protection of aquatic life and human health in accordance with recommendations published by the USEPA. The proposed amendments also designate additional cold water streams, update and clarify certain site-specific criteria, and make the basin tables clearer and consistent.

The public comment period on the proposed amendments closed on November 8, 2019. MassDEP is in the process of reviewing all comments received and making final revisions to the regulations. Copies of the final revisions will be made available on DEP's website following promulgation. Copies of the proposed regulations and background documents are available on MassDEP's [website](#).

The Connecticut Forest & Park Association, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection and Eastern Connecticut Forest Landowners Association will be co-hosting an event. If you are a woodland owner, this will be an opportunity to get together with other woodland owners and natural resource professionals to discuss the future of Connecticut's forests. Andrea Urbano, a Service Forester with CT DEEP, will discuss what changes we can expect to see in Connecticut's forests as a result of climate change, and how these changes interact with other threats to our forests. We will also discuss what we can do to help create resilient forests through the upcoming changes. Bring your questions and concerns about your woodland. Resources for further action will be provided, including information on cost-sharing opportunities for land management practices. Time for snacks and networking will round out the evening.

When: Thursday, December 12, 2019 - 6:00pm - 8:00pm; Snow Date December 19

Where: James L. Goodwin Conservation Center
23 Potter Road
Hampton, Connecticut 06247
For Questions, Contact:
Lena Ives helena.ives@ct.gov
(860) 455-9534

The Connecticut Audubon Society has released its annual [State of the Birds Report](#).

The Connecticut Audubon Society was awarded \$75,000 to provide education and deliver targeted stewardship of American oystercatcher and other migratory shorebirds and habitat along the Long Island Sound coastline of Connecticut. The project will increase public awareness about the value of sharing the shore with birds among recreational users and reduce disturbance to the birds' breeding and roosting sites.

The Connecticut Audubon Society will build awareness and engage beachgoers, boaters, local government and residents in efforts to avoid disturbing nesting and migrating shorebirds such as the American oystercatcher along Connecticut's Long Island Sound beaches. Human disturbance to nesting and foraging bird habitat on popular beaches has a negative impact on iconic Connecticut coastal bird species. The project will engage people who enjoy and municipal government who manage the beaches to be active players in shorebird protection. Project activities: 1) Dozens of volunteers will conduct friendly one-to-one interactions with beachgoers; 2) Install signs and fencing to protect up to three high priority sites; 3) Provide ongoing support and education to up to three local municipal governments about shared management of the beaches for people and birds; 4) Conduct three public and municipal workshops and active social media outreach about this project; and 5) Evaluate the value of the outreach effort using such measures as the reproductive success of species like American oystercatcher. Partners: Audubon Connecticut and Roger Tory Peterson Institute.

The Connecticut Audubon Society Center at Pomfret hosted a free lecture series focused on climate change. The first lecture was titled *Climate Change and How We Are All Part of the Solution*. The second lecture was titled *Biodiversity, Climate Change and the Sixth Extinction*.

A Climate Change Town Hall sponsored by the Yale Meyers Forest Quiet Corner Initiative on October 24. The meeting featured former DEEP Commissioner, Robert Klee. The topic of the discussion was Energy and Environmental Solutions for Connecticut in the Anthropocene.

Connecticut Fund for the Environment and Save the Sound are partnering on a project with the Alewife Cove Conservancy planning to remove a 1970s dam in Connecticut that has blocked alewife herring from returning from the ocean to freshwater spawning grounds. The \$187,000 grant from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund will help pay for the removal of the dam in Alewife Cove along the Waterford-New London line. The groups report the project will restore three miles (five kilometers) of a migratory corridor that will benefit alewife as well as sea lamprey and American eel.

Thames Valley Trout Unlimited (TVTU) was awarded a Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant for planning for fish passage at Papermill Pond Dam in Little River, Sprague, CT. The project will conduct an engineering alternatives analysis, prepare designs, and commence pre-application consultations with federal and state agencies to advance installation of a fishway on the Papermill Pond dam located in Sprague, Connecticut. It will set the stage for how to address a large barrier that has obstructed fish migration to Long Island Sound for over 150 years.

TVTU organized a river clean up in the Moosup River in September. TVTU volunteers also continue to assist CT DEEP fisheries to collect water temperature and flow data in Merrick Brook, a Class 1 Trout Management Area.

TVTU volunteers delivered trout eggs to the schools involved in its Trout in the Classroom program. The students will raise trout fingerlings in their classroom while collecting water quality data from the tank. A date will be arranged when the students can release to a stream the trout fingerlings they raised in their classroom. Fifteen schools in eastern Connecticut are involved with this program.

The Rivers Alliance of Connecticut hosted a Watershed Networking Conference at the Lear Conservation Center, located in Ridgefield, CT on October 30. This conference focused on stormwater, stormwater utilities and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit requirements.

Unfortunately, Rivers Alliance will no longer be able to offer small watershed assistance grants in the coming years.

The UCONN Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) hosts webinars focused on topics useful for land use planning. Recent topics included Sea Level Rise Affecting Road Flooding and Marsh Migration Along CT's Coast, Stormwater Utilities in Connecticut and Getting to 2% - Case Studies in Impervious Cover Disconnection. All webinars are archived and available to download from CLEAR's [website](#). To see a list of upcoming webinars, please visit this webpage <https://clear.uconn.edu/webinars/schedule.htm>.

Working Lands Alliance and American Farmland Trust - New England announced the release of their first short film that highlights why Connecticut's farmland preservation program is critical to the economic viability of our state's dairy farms! Unconventional Conservationists: [Connecticut Dairy Farmers' Fight for Land Protection](#) was edited and produced by WLA Intern Adeline Kim.

Sea Research Foundation, Inc. will provide school-based, distance learning, field based experiences, and programming at Mystic Aquarium focused on green careers around Long Island Sound in Mystic, Connecticut. One strategy to develop resilient and sustainable Long Island Sound communities is to increase exposure to Sound-based career and educational opportunities for middle and high school students. Project activities: 1) Deliver unique programming about STEM careers, career pathways and information from working professionals to 805 students and 20 teachers grades six –twelve; 2) Six online distance learning programs to allow students to see first-hand what it is like to rehabilitate an injured marine mammal that has stranded along the

shores of the Sound and more; 3) Two school visits by members of the Aquarium's Research department to discuss their pathway from student to established professional and how their career directly impacts the health of the Sound; 4) Three stewardship field trips to state parks and land trust preserves to engage students in hands-on conservation activities such as a marsh restoration project on the Sound; and 5) Five Aquarium-based visits providing an inside look at Sound-based research and water quality. This project will help shape the next generation of Long Island Sound stewards.

News from Municipalities

The City of Groton was awarded \$50,596.49 from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund to identify tools for a strategic plan to address vulnerabilities and risks to coastal resilience in Connecticut. The project will provide actions to improve the City's response to future storms and sea level rise.

The City of Groton will identify tools for the next two to five years to address coastal resilience in the City of Groton, Connecticut. The City has 11 miles of coastline (78% of its overall boundary) on Long Island Sound and currently lacks a coastal resilience plan. Home to anchors, vital to defense, health and education including Electric Boat/General Dynamics, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, and the University of Connecticut Avery Point, the City is actively engaging around coastal resiliency planning starting with preparation of its Plan of Conservation and Development followed by a Community Resilience Building Workshop which brought together government, nongovernmental organizations, the university and industry to prioritize vulnerabilities. It established a Coastal Vulnerability Working group to create a formal Coastal Resiliency Action Strategy and Hazard Mitigation Plan. This project will help advance plan development. Project activities: 1) Develop a working tool, outlining actions to respond to threats specific to the City and Connecticut coastal communities; 2) Identify, assesses and prioritize risks and vulnerabilities; 3) Conduct a senior management 'round table' to identify governmental structure and management opportunities; 4) Conduct a public event to educate the public and businesses about resiliency; and 5) Outline public communication and education measures emphasizing disenfranchised and non-English speaking populations and business planning/recovery tools.

The Town of Sprague was awarded \$48,900 from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund to develop engineered plans to remove barriers to fish passage on Beaver Brook, Sprague, Connecticut. The project will address two barriers to fish migration at the mouth of the brook for alewife, blueback Herring, American eel, and sea lamprey along an important migratory riverine corridor of Long Island Sound.

The Town of Sprague will prepare permit-ready engineered designs to remove barriers to fish passage at the Post Office and Harrington Apartments dams on Beaver Brook a tributary of the Shetucket River, Sprague, Connecticut. These two dams are the first two barriers along an important riverine migratory corridor preventing fish from fully accessing upstream spawning habitat. Riverine migratory corridors are river systems that drain to Long Island Sound. Migratory fish use these rivers to travel and dams can block their passage from the Sound to rivers to spawn. The project sets the stage for the co-benefit of restoring a natural stream

channel, stream flow, and providing a streambank buffer to enhance community resilience to storms and floods. Project activities: 1) Conduct community meetings concerning the project and designs; 2) Assess requirements for water handling, sediment management, and access, and describe methods for dismantling the structures, removal and disposal of debris, and habitat restoration including streambank stabilization; 3) Conduct pre-application permit meetings with federal and state agencies; and 4) Complete and submit two permit-ready designs. In the future when the barriers are dismantled 4.2 miles of habitat will be reconnected for anadromous and 3 miles for diadromous fisheries.

On October 12, 2019, the Town of Windham held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the reconstructed Hop River Trail Bridge over the Willimantic River.

The Connecticut Forest and Parks Association, in cooperation with the Town of Woodstock, is developing a new hiking trail on a forested property in north Woodstock. The trail access will be from a parking area near the Woodstock town beach. A spring completion and opening of this new trail is being planned.

The Woodstock Conservation Commission is preparing to launch a Pollinator Pathway Initiative. The primary focus of the initiative is establishing pollinator-friendly habitats and food sources for bees, butterflies, hummingbirds and other pollinating insects and wildlife. The three concepts being promoted are:

1. Rethink your lawn. Reduce the size, mow less, avoid chemical fertilizers, and leave grass clippings and leaves.
2. Plant natives and remove invasives. Native plants and trees provide food and shelter for local pollinators and other wildlife.
3. Avoid pesticides. Herbicides and insecticides negatively affect pollinators, water quality and human health.

Early discussions with abutting towns indicate the initiative will become a regional effort.

The Sea Research Foundation was awarded \$9,654.92 from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund to provide 16 educational programs for middle and high school students and their teachers to expose them to Long Island Sound and STEM career resources, engaging them in hands-on scientific activities and mentorship from working professionals at Mystic Aquarium, Connecticut. The project will open pathways for youth to achieve a better understanding of their connection with Long Island Sound and to green careers in the watershed.

Land Trust Updates

The New Roxbury Land Trust hosted a lecture on Coyotes, Connecticut's Top Canines on October 20. The presentation was given by Lena Ives, a Naturalist that works at the Goodwin State Forest.

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 meets quarterly on the 3rd Tuesday of the month.

Next meeting will be on January 21, 2020. Meeting location TBD.

If you are not already on the e-distribution list for this publication, sign on to our TRBP Distribution list <http://thamesriverbasinpartnership.org/subscribe>, or you can download previous versions of this quarterly publication from the TRBP website <http://thamesriverbasinpartnership.org/newsletters>.

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 19 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.