



# Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

winter 2021

Volume 57

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 winter TRBP 2021 meeting, you missed a special presentation featuring Tom Olson and Larry Dunn of the Town of Groton Conservation Commission (GCC). They provided an overview of the Town's Open Space and Conservation Plan. The Plan had not been updated in 30 years. The new open space plan includes economic considerations as well as natural resource conservation. In a 17-month process, with the involvement of the local community, GCC developed seven priority concerns. GCC also developed an economic model to determine a score-based comparison. The key recommendations in the plan include the expansion of green belts based on economic and habitat resource needs, and to maximize the potential score when applying for open space funding assistance. The final plan was presented at a public hearing to promote awareness and garner support. GCC's presentation was recorded and can be viewed at this link <https://youtu.be/WIsQgGKp0Z0>. The documents from the presentation are available at [https://www.groton-ct.gov/government/boards\\_and\\_commissions/conservation/documents.php](https://www.groton-ct.gov/government/boards_and_commissions/conservation/documents.php).

## TRBP Updates

A backlog of TRBP newsletters has been uploaded to the TRBP website, along with the annual report, meeting agenda and minutes. It was discovered in late December that the TRBP website could not be edited. The TRBP Coordinator, with the assistance of Cairns Oresky, the website designer, invested many hours resolving the issue. Our apologies to anyone who was unable to access the website during this period.

A reminder was issued at the Winter meeting that the TRBP Plan of Work is set to expire in 2021. All partners are asked to review the current TRBP [Plan of Work](#) and be prepared to discuss its update at the April 2021 meeting.

### **TRBP Floating Workshop 2021**

It was agreed upon at the TRBP meeting that the Coordinator should plan a Covid-19 compatible TRBP Floating Workshop for this year and that a “bring-your-own-boat” event would be the best solution. A paddle event in an embayment along the Town of Groton shoreline was proposed. Potential partners for the event could include the Town of Groton, Project Oceanology and Avalonia Land Conservancy. Members of TRBP will be planning an educational, memorable and safe event. Contact Jean.Pillo@comcast.net if you have any suggestions or would like to help plan the TRBP Floating Workshop XXI.

TRBP Facebook page has 139 followers. Please keep sharing the information posted on the TRBP FB page so we can build our social media audience. If you would like to get more of your organization’s information out to the public through the TRBP FB Page, 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 is 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, partners meet to discuss ways to collaborate on projects like these. TRBP is conducting outreach for three Regional Conservation Partnership Programs.

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**. The 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). Through the TLGV RCPP, four collaborating partners are implementing soil health conservation practices on cropland in eastern Connecticut’s Thames River Watershed. Funding to implement the practices is provided by Natural Resources Conservation Service through its Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP). The long-term objective of the project is to improve soil health, as well as edge-of-field and in-stream water quality by decreasing nutrient and turbidity levels.

Project update: The EQIP financial assistance for this project has been obligated. However, funding for technical assistance remains, some of which is being used to update the 2009 *Muddy Brook and Little River Water Quality Improvement Plan*. The *Plan* update involves developing an inventory of agricultural resource concerns in the Little River watershed

(Woodstock/Putnam). Water quality monitoring on selected fields was discontinued in November and will resume in spring 2021.

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 (PATH)**. This \$669,000 NRCS RCPP is focused on reducing 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: ECCD, in partnership with NRCS is working on conservation plans for a number of farms in the southeastern portion of the watershed, with recommendations for practices to improve stormwater runoff and erosion. Some of the practices include grassed waterways, manure storage facilities and bedded pack facilities requiring Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMPs). One or more of these projects may be selected for PATH funding. To understand producer reluctance to apply to NRCS for financial assistance, UCONN's Anita Morzillo is surveying farmers.

FY16/17 (National level funding): The Last Green Valley (TLGV) was awarded \$6,144,000 through NRCS' RCPP 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 is 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. In order to accelerate the pace of conservation in SNEHF, the project serves as a "conservation pipeline" of forest and bird habitat plans, EQIP practices and HFRP easements on private forestlands.

Project update: The Last Green Valley (TLGV), the MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership (MassConn) and the Northern Rhode Island Conservation District (NRICD) recently promoted an opportunity for woodland landowners of ten or more acres to obtain forest management plans with bird habitat assessments. This resulted in 5500 acres of forestland under contract for a forest management plans! NRCS is conducting due diligence prior to closing on permanent easements on another 1100 acres of forested land. For more information, visit the [TLGV website](#).

Long Island Sound Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program Update:

The Long Island Sound Regional Conservation Partnership Program held a 2020 Healthy Forest Reserve Program Grant Round for Vermont landowners. The grant round closed on July 24, 2020. A 589-acre property in Victory, VT, for which a restoration plan for Marten and other species has been developed, is being appraised. Late in 2020, an additional \$500,000 became

available as one of the early CT applicants opted out, so new properties in RI and CT for ACEP ALE projects are being evaluated.

On Soil Health, the contract with the New Hampshire Association of Conservation Districts (NHACD) was finalized in December 2020. Total deliverables amounted to \$ 199,019.08, more than the \$196,900 contract. At the close of the project, deliverables consisted of 57 Resource Evaluations, 34 Conservation Plans (including 6 Grazing Mgt Plans), 9 Nutrient Management Plans and 37 Follow-Up Visits.

University of Vermont is working in three states (VT, NH, MA) and has a caseload of 215+ farms, with 183 farms visited, 118 Conservation plans, 88 farms documenting at least one conservation practice, 70+ UVM-NRCS referrals and 31 case studies. University of Rhode Island has completed 25 conservation plans, 51 URI-NRCS referrals and 24 NRCS applications, fulfilling all deliverables under the contract.

The project will be wrapped up in May 2021. 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/farmbill/rcpp>.

## **Partner Reports**

A series of meetings is planned to gather public feedback on developing the priorities and goals for the proposed Connecticut National Estuarine Research Reserve (<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Coastal-Resources/NERR/NERR-Home-Page>). Outcomes from the meetings will be used to inform the Draft Management Plan for the Reserve. Ten meetings are planned, occurring between February 3, 2021 and March 12, 2021. The meetings will be used to identify ideas and to assess priorities in preparation for drafting a Management Plan. All meetings will be recorded and will be available to the public; comments on the meetings will be accepted through the end of April. There will be multiple opportunities during 2021 to provide comments on the Draft Management Plan. If you would like to discuss the topics of the following meetings, contact Jamie Vaudrey (UConn, [jamie.vaudrey@uconn.edu](mailto:jamie.vaudrey@uconn.edu)) or Kevin O'Brien (CTDEEP, [kevin.obrien@ct.gov](mailto:kevin.obrien@ct.gov)):

- Thu, Feb 4 – Overall Strategic Plan
- Wed, Feb 17 - Coastal Training Program
- Fri, Feb 19 - Research & Monitoring Program
- Wed, Feb 24 - Education Program
- Fri, Feb 26 - Stewardship: Resource Management, Visitor Access, Allowed Uses
- Wed, Mar 3 – Partnerships: Friends group, NERR Advisory Board development
- Fri, Mar 5 - Administration Plan (staffing, roles & responsibilities), Volunteer Plan, Communication Plan
- Wed, Mar 10 - Facilities and Properties Development and Improvement Plan
- Fri, Mar 12 - Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Strategic Plan – this topic will be addressed during all other subject-area meetings and synthesized into a plan during this meeting.

The 2020 Open Space and Watersheds Land Acquisition (OSWLA) grant selection process is underway within DEEP and the Advisory Committee, with a possible Governor's announcement in the next 1-2 months. In related news, the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation is developing prioritization policies for the grant program. The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District is representing eastern Connecticut in this initiative.

TRBP partners are encouraged to utilize the DEEP Water Quality Planning listserv. To sign up for occasional notices from DEEP, go to the DEEP webpage [here](#).

The Connecticut Greenways Council continues accept nominations for official state-designated greenways; go to the CT Greenways Council nominations webpage [here](#). For background, see CT statewide map and brief descriptions of all officially state-designated greenways [here](#). There are 77 designated greenways to date including a few dozen within the greater Thames and Southeast coastal watersheds.

The Connecticut Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) conducted a meeting on 1/15/21 to present the final GC3 Near-Term Recommendations Phase 1 report, *Taking Action on Climate Change and Building a More Resilient Connecticut for All*, (link to [Draft Report](#)), following the close of the public comment period on January 6<sup>th</sup>. The GC3 discussed implementation actions being taken to address the recommendations and reviewed next steps to continue the GC3 'Phase 2' planning process in 2021. The goal is to deliver all near- and long-term recommendations for climate action to the Governor by December 31, 2021. Some sections are relevant to TRBP and should be considered during the Plan of Work update later this year.

CT Non-Point Source Management (Clean Water Act Section 319) grant is managed by DEEP. Submission of proposals for the 2021 grant round closed on 1/14. DEEP received 15 applications from across CT, with 6+ from organizations within the greater Thames River/Southeast Coastal Basins region. Application reviews and scorings will be completed in the next couple of months. Awardees should be notified by Summer 2021.

Exciting news in dairy farm management and nutrient management: The Fort Hill Ag Grid LLC solid waste facility permit application (Fivemile River basin, Thompson) has been submitted to DEEP to construct and operate an anaerobic digester (AD). Also, Hytone Farm Ag Grid LLC (Willimantic River basin, Coventry) has received a State grant for design of an AD. These will be among the first farm-based ADs in Connecticut using on-site dairy manure incorporated with off-site organic (e.g.) waste. A much larger scale commercial anaerobic digestion facility has been established in Southington.

A "related issues" note from DEEP: DEEP Water programs are moving away from providing letters of support because they put staff in a potential conflict of interest when reviewing and scoring proposals. Staff can continue to provide resources to be used for proposals.

The Connecticut Storm Water Quality Manual and the CT Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines are currently being revised. CT DEEP is in the final process of hiring a qualified consulting firm to update both documents. The project is intended to incorporate more climate resilient practices such as low impact development and to address stakeholder concerns about the document's usability. A draft document is projected to be complete October 1, 2021. DEEP will



conduct an informational public webinar and comment period in mid-summer 2021. DEEP project managers anticipate that the Council on Soil and Water Conservation will need review and approve the revised documents. A workgroup, created during the summer of 2020, is overseeing the process and has developed a scope of work. A proposal was received and elements of the scope of work are being prioritized to align with the project budget. The next steps include finalizing the State purchase request approval and bringing the selected contractor into the workgroup process. Updates can be provided at the TRBP April and July meetings.

DEEP Water Ambient Monitoring program plan for 2021 – A last call is out for requested ambient monitoring locations (esp. for assessing BMP installations impacting impaired waters).

DEEP is conducting a pilot project through a statewide lake nutrient Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) with a technical appendix for Bantam Lake (Litchfield and Morris) and a watershed plan authored by a US EPA contractor using CWA §319 NPS grant funds. For information about the project, go [here](#).

DEEP's Division of Forestry has developed a webinar for Forest Practitioners on Avenza Maps™ and has offered to conduct the webinar for municipal inland wetlands agencies. Avenza Maps™ is a popular mobile map app which allows you to download maps for offline use on your iOS or Android smartphone or tablet, then use your device's built-in GPS to track your location on any map. You can plot and record location information, measure distance and area, and plot photos. Municipal inland wetlands agency staff and members may find this app useful when conducting site walks or investigating a potential violation. The webinar is scheduled for March 5, 2021 from 10AM – 11:30AM. Registration is not required but the program is limited to the first 200 participants. The webinar will be conducted through Zoom <https://ctdeep.zoom.us/j/99250234840?pwd=L0VUZHV5MXBTdWFLUERFelZlL2hhdz09>, and a question-and-answer session will follow the presentation. For additional information contact David.Beers@ct.gov or 860-965-8975.

Riverine Migratory Corridor (RMC) and Tidal Wetlands (TW) work groups under the Long Island Sound Study have updated work plans including several eastern Connecticut entries.

- TW - Cranberry Pond TW Restoration (Waterford), need alternative analyses funds/Dominion option.
- TW - Alewife Cove Restoration (Waterford/New London) is considered maintenance not restoration for Long Island Sound Study metric needs.
- TW - Barn Island (Stonington) culvert replacements (I-IV impoundments). A 2021 Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) permit for the pipes was issued. The project is complex and needs more funds – currently not sure of viable construction timeline due to project complexity and DEEP staff shortages. For TRBP partners involved with such projects involving regulatory water needs, some DEEP staff changes were proposed. If these changes go forward, Brian Golembiewski will take over as Enforcement Supervisor, and Bill Sigmund will take over as Permitting Supervisor for the Eastern Region. And Michael Grzywinski will continue in Eastern Region as well, working for Bill instead of Brian.

The FirstLight Scotland Hydro fish passage project on the Shetucket River did not complete a post-fish passage installation 3-year monitoring requirement, due in 2020, as a result of extended drought and low flow conditions. FERC has approved a one-year extension to allow the final year of monitoring in 2021.

EGP/Willimantic Power #1 and 2 (Willimantic River) Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) relicensing process is underway for two hydropower generating facilities located at the Windham Thread Mills in the lowermost Willimantic River, with expected permit issuance by 2025.

The Wyre-Wynd Hydropower facility on Aspinook Pond/Quinebaug River in Jewett City is undergoing the preliminary FERC relicensing process as well.

DEEP has issued a tentative Section 401 Water Quality Certificate for the New London State Pier Expansion project (Thames River, New London) and currently mitigation options involving fish habitat are being discussed. A public hearing may occur in the near future.

In 2019, the Connecticut General Assembly established an Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp fee to establish a dedicated source of funding for Connecticut lakes and ponds for addressing aquatic invasive plants and cyanobacteria blooms. CT DEEP opened a first grant round under the program. Project proposals were due on February 12, 2021. If you missed this deadline, the Connecticut Federation of Lakes has reported a second RFP will likely be issued soon.

<https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/News-Releases/News-Releases---2020/DEEP-Announces-Availability-of-Grants>

CT DEEP staff have pioneered an innovative method to monitor stream connectivity using trail cameras to monitor stream levels, providing a cost-effective method that will help inform stream management efforts. Read more about it at this link. <https://portal.ct.gov/.../DEEP-Staff-Pioneer-Innovative>.

The Niantic Nitrogen Work Group is continuing to meet quarterly and conducted a meeting on 2/1/21 to get an update on data synthesis and the Nitrogen effects project of the Niantic River Estuary. Additionally, staff from the Millstone Environmental Lab provided an update about water quality data and the status of eelgrass (submerged aquatic vegetation/SAV) survey work.

The Thames Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited is continuing to make progress on the design of a fish passage project for Papermill Pond in Sprague. 35% designs are complete, and TU is working through some design challenges with CT DEEP. The project is currently delayed until more data becomes available.

Project Oceanology's (Project O) school programs and summer camp have been severely impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, Project O has been fortunate to receive funding through several grants. One is a NOAA grant for the Thames River Watershed Resilience Project, which involves working remotely with schools on climate change resiliency. Each school is required to complete a stewardship action project. For example, fourth-grade students

at Ashford Elementary School will be stenciling storm drains and installing a rain barrel at their school. Project O is looking for partners to expand the program.

Project O is also working in partnership with the Norwalk Aquarium on an initiative to remove ghost lobster traps – abandoned traps left behind after the crash of the lobster industry. When located, the traps cannot be removed without a special permit, so they are working with commercial fishermen to remove the traps.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District is continuing to lead the [Eastern Connecticut Stormwater Collaborative](#), sharing resources and information about EPA's MS4 General Stormwater Permit, assisting municipalities to implement the Permit's six minimum control measures. The Collaborative has been funded by Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut. Though funding for the project has been exhausted, ECCD will continue to coordinate quarterly meetings for the foreseeable future while exploring alternative funding options.

ECCD has a signed contract with Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation under an existing Source Water Protection Project. For the project, ECCD will update the 2009 Muddy Brook and Little River Water Quality Improvement Plan (Woodstock/Putnam), bringing it into compliance with USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service requirements for eligibility under the National Water Quality Initiative. Little River is a source of drinking water for the Town of Putnam. A Little River Watershed Collaborative meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2021 beginning at 9 AM. Contact [Maura Robie](#) for more information about meeting registration.

Also in the Little River watershed, ECCD completed a project to design a manure storage facility and purchase precision planting equipment for Elm Farm in Woodstock. Additionally, manure injection equipment was purchased for Valleyside Farm, also in Woodstock. The project was funded by CT DEEP with a US EPA CWA §319 grant. CT DEEP also awarded ECCD funding to construct the manure storage facility and a silage bunker. Construction of both facilities will commence this spring.

Progress continues on the design of the Shewville Dam fishway. An A-2 survey indicated the land where the fishway will be installed involves multiple properties with different owners, so discussions are underway with the owners about providing construction and access easements. Following review of the design and comments from stakeholders, Milone and MacBroom is advancing the design to the next level. An archaeological study has been completed. The minor impacts from construction of the fishway will not significantly impact archaeological resources so construction of the fishway will likely move forward pending approval of easements by the property owners and acquisition of funding.

ECCD has begun work with the four towns in the Niantic River watershed on a major stormwater retrofit project. This project will be in the towns of East Lyme, Waterford, Montville and Salem and include the installation of 20 storm drain filter units, 6 tree filters, rain gardens and rain barrels. The project is being funded by the CT DEEP with a US EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 grant.



Last fall, ECCD completed its portion of The Natchaug Healthy Watershed Protection Plan. CT DEEP is in the process of completing its portion of the plan, so the final draft of the Plan has not been released. In anticipation of initiating the next step, which involves starting the Natchaug Healthy Watershed Advisory Board, ECCD staff has been seeking funds to support the creation and coordination of the regional watershed advisory board.

For the most recent US EPA Clean Water Act §319 grant round, ECCD submitted three applications for projects in Woodstock, Groton and East Lyme. ECCD has also applied for a grant from the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut to implement its Green Schoolyard Initiative.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of New London County is involved with developing contracts with farms for the current fiscal year. NRCS is contracting with Technical Service Providers from New York State and Maine to prepare [Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans](#), with several of these plans being developed for producers in the Thames River watershed. Recently completed or projects underway include a manure storage facility in Preston; an early successional habitat project; a stream restoration project; and cover crops at a number of farms not previously involved in NRCS programs.

Upon retirement of Joyce Purcell, Carol Grasis has replaced her as Connecticut NRCS Assistant State Conservationist for Programs.

The Worcester County Conservation District serves several Massachusetts municipalities in the upper reaches of the Thames Watershed. They are currently involved with a soil health initiative for farmers as well as small landowners. This effort is being funded through the USDA NRCS and MA Department of Environmental Protection.

The Last Green Valley, Inc. is the managing entity for The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor. TLGV's funding through the National Park Service is set to expire in 2021, along with funding for 29 other National Heritage Corridors across the United States. These organizations are working together on legislation that would preserve their federal funding. There are currently 55 National Heritage Corridors across the country. The Last Green Valley supports the Thames River Basin Partnership through a cooperative agreement with Eastern Connecticut Conservation District to provide TRBP coordinator services. The TRBP Coordinator organizes quarterly meetings and plans and conducts the annual Floating Workshop.

TLGV's Spring Outdoors programs will be returning from March 20 to June 20, 2021. While it will be different, efforts are being made to ensure participation size will be appropriate to allow for physical distancing. All Spring Outdoor programs will require pre-registration and masks. Members & Partners may host a Spring Outdoors. All you have to do is fill out the easy online form [here](#).

The team leaders for The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program presented their 2021 monitoring plans for approval at the February TLGV Water Advisory Committee meeting. While monitoring from boats will be limited to family groups, the teams are prepared to follow Covid-19 safety protocols while in the field collecting data this season.

State of Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) purchased development rights on more than 1,000 acres of farmland in 2020. DoAg permanently protected 13 farms including four farms in the Thames River watershed in the towns of Lebanon, Lisbon, Thompson and Voluntown. This accomplishment was possible through strong partnerships with Connecticut Farmland Trust, USDA-NRCS, municipalities, land trusts, and most importantly, the farm families willing to participate in the program.

DoAg announced a change to the Farmland Restoration Program (FLRP) application process. Historically, the FLRP has accepted applications year-round. However, to streamline the process, an annual deadline has been implemented. The application deadline for projects planned in the upcoming calendar year closed on January 15, 2021. The FLRP is a voluntary program to restore lands into active agricultural production with the main objective of increasing food and fiber production in Connecticut. The program focuses on restoring and improving land with prime and important farmland soils, in accordance with a Farmland Restoration Program Plan. Each application can qualify for a reimbursement payment of up to \$20,000. Questions regarding the FLRP can be directed to Lance Shannon: Lance.Shannon@ct.gov; or via phone at 860-713-2531 or 860-993-4088.

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) LIS Future Funds 2020 grant awards in eastern CT included the following:

- Ensuring a resilient coastal forest to address changing climates in southeastern CT (UConn), Hoffman Evergreen Preserve, Stonington;
- Planning for a Nature-like Long Pond fishway design for Long Pond (CFE/Save The Sound), Whitford Brook, Ledyard; and
- Completion of a Watershed Management Plan II (City of New London) for New London.

The annual Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources (CCNR) will be held virtually this year on 3/15/2021. A conference website is being set up.

At the following link, forestry experts Dr. Mark Ashton and Dr. Joseph Orefice of Yale School of Forestry explain the threats to Connecticut forests and the solutions we can all be a part of. <https://sustainability.yale.edu/.../yale-experts-explain...>

The French River Connection, a non-profit organization focused on preservation and revitalization of the French River corridor in the towns of Webster, Dudley and Oxford, Massachusetts, is in the process of shutting down their organization. Its accomplishments are many and its members' efforts will have lasting impacts in the communities in which they were involved.

The 43rd Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions Annual Meeting & Environmental Conference was held on Saturday, December 5, 2020. This year, it was held as an online event. The conference theme was "Putting Science to Work for Society: Helping to Protect Connecticut's Environment During the Pandemic," and featured a keynote address by Jason C. White, PhD, Director of the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, followed by workshop sessions on invasive plants, wetlands law in Connecticut, best approaches to wetlands regulation during the pandemic, and understanding the State water plan.

## **News from Municipalities**

The Town of Groton, in cooperation with the Baker Cove Watershed Committee, is working on an interactive online map highlighting stormwater management practices and other amenities in the Baker Cove watershed.

As part of a STEAP Grant project, the Town of Bolton completed a Bolton Lakes watershed management plan. Bolton Lake is in the Hop/Willimantic River in the upper northwest Thames watershed basin. The project involved a certified lake manager, multiple towns, the Friends of Bolton Lakes, the Bolton Lakes Watershed Conservation Alliance of the 4 watershed towns, and others. Issues in Bolton Lake include aquatic invasives, harmful algal blooms and swimming/recreation use impacts, along with excess nutrients, lake drawdown coordination, and aquatic and habitat conservation.

The Lebanon Inland Wetlands Commission, in cooperation with The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program, is planning to focus on a temperature monitoring study of Goshen Brook in 2021.

After a slow initial rollout in 2020 because of the Covid-19 virus, the Woodstock Conservation Commission will again be promoting a town-wide [Pollinator Pathway Initiative](#) in 2021 and will welcome adjacent towns that want to participate.

The Town of Woodstock has approved expending money from the town open space account to supplement funds available from the CT Department of Agriculture Purchase of Development program for the purchase of the development rights on a significant parcel of farmland. This project has not yet closed.

Updates to the Town of Union's Plan of Conservation and Development (2021) is underway. The town is seeking watershed information and planning aspects from DEEP and local watershed stakeholders, especially on Mashapaug Lake.

## **Land Trust Updates**

Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC) is working with Connecticut Sea Grant on developing a land management project on its Hoffman Evergreen Preserve in Stonington. The intent is to select trees and shrubs that are more resilient.

Through a donation, ALC has acquired additional land to expand its Bell Cedar Swamp preserve in North Stonington.

ALC has also been negotiating an easement with Groton Utilities to extend the Great Oak Greenway with an overall goal of connecting the Pine Swamp Preserve in Ledyard to the Thames River.

Avalonia owns 12 properties that are tidally affected and are receptive to permitting scientific studies and educational programming on them. Contact [info@avalonialc.org](mailto:info@avalonialc.org) for more information.

The Last Green Valley staff met Joshua's Trust preserve stewards to review a cartop boat access site on the Trust's new preserve (Schmid's Overlook) on the lower Willimantic River in Coventry. There is good potential to incorporate the site into the National Recreation Trail, designated the Willimantic River Water Trail, to augment launch sites below Eagleville Lake dam.

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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 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month.

Next meeting will be on April 20, 2021. Special presentation topic 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 21 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.