



# Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Winter 2023

Volume 64

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 this winter's special presentation, then you missed a presentation by Eric McPhee, a Supervising Environmental Analyst from the CT Department of Public Health Drinking Water Division. He demonstrated a new online mapping tool developed to inform objective decision-making for open space planning with a focus on drinking water source protection. This project has been funded by USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service through Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation. Staff at UCONN CLEAR, who developed the mapping tool, are in the final review phase. The mapping tool scores large open space parcels relevant to their value for drinking water source protection.

The CT Source Water Protection GIS will:

- increase stakeholder knowledge of source water protection and the increasing algal bloom problems in CT,
- expand the capacity for source water protection in CT by increasing stakeholder access to technical information and GIS,
- provide information and assistance to land-use decision-makers, and
- support funding proposals for land acquisition, protective easements and mitigation projects.

A final project rollout is expected in spring 2023.

## **TRBP Updates**

The Thames River Basin Partnership is recognized by Highstead as a Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP). Highstead coordinates monthly RCP meetings and workshops for RCP coordinators to network and share ideas. The TRBP coordinator participated in a 3-part RCP Leadership Training Workshop series presented by the Institute for Conservation Leadership. The workshop featured tools to facilitate meeting interactions, jam boards to share ideas and how to set ground rules for meetings.

At the December 2022 RCP meeting, the TRBP coordinator co-presented with Northeast Pollinator Pathway co-founder Donna Merrill, about the initiative. The TRBP presentation focused on inclusion of the Pollinator Pathway Initiative in the TRBP work plan, as well as its value to and use by Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) in drafting grant funding proposals.

Following-up on Linda Colangelo's presentation at the October TRBP meeting, the TRBP coordinator, Jean Pillo, was introduced to members of the organization at a Healthquest meeting.

TRBP renewed its website for another year. The website has been updated to include the most recent TRBP documents including the fall newsletter and the FY22 annual report. The report noted that several new online mapping resources are available including the TLGV Mega Mapper and the future DPH Sourcewater protection mapping tool demonstrated.. Other new mapping tools include environmental justice community maps for CT and MA. If there are other mapping applications relevant to TRBP's mission that you would like included on the mapping resources page of the TRBP website, please send a link Jean.Pillo@Comcast.net.

The TRBP Floating Workshop is being planned for June 2023. The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District, on behalf of the TRBP, applied for and was awarded a workshop sponsorship from Chelsea Groton Bank for this year's program. This sponsorship will allow TRBP to offer deeply discounted workshop fees to individuals from communities recognized on the [Environmental Justice Communities Map](#). The theme for this year's Floating Workshop is Community Resilience. If you would like to help plan or present at this year's workshop, please contact Jean.Pillo@comcast.net.

## **Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) 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 (RCP). 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.

Funding for the TLGV RCPP, *Improving Soil Health and Water Quality In the Thames River Watershed*, expired on June 25, 2021. This project is now completed. A summary of final project outcomes is available at this link. <https://thamesriverbasinpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/TLGV-RCPP-Improving-Soil-Health-and-Water-Quality-in-the-Thames-Watershed-Project-Summary-Presentation.pdf>.

FY15/16 (State level funding): The University of Connecticut was the recipient and lead partner in an RCPP, *Path to Reduce Pathogens in CT Agricultural Runoff (PATH)*. This \$669,000 NRCS RCPP was focused on reducing high bacteria levels in Connecticut's rivers and shellfish beds, which is, in part, caused by runoff from agricultural operations.

Project update: This project has been completed and the final project report has been submitted to USDA NRCS for review.

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 (HFRP) is also available. 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: This is the last year of the Forest Management Plan (FMP) and Bird Habitat Assessment (BHA) program with SNEHF project. Below is the status of those plans:

- CT – 51 landowners with FMP/BHA with a total of 2941 acres and 2219 acres in completed plans
- MA – 71 FMP/BHA with a total of 4786 acres and 4394 in completed plans
- RI – 31 FMP/BHA with total of 1135 acres and 876 acres in completed plans.

Total for all three states is 153 FMP/BHA with a total of 8,872 acres and 7,489 in completed plans. The remainder are slated to be completed by spring of 2023.

The project is moving to completion of the Healthy Forest Reserve Conservation Easements on 2 properties in CT totaling 202 acres in Mansfield and 181 contiguous acres in Hampton/Scotland/Chaplin/Windham. The 181 acres are all owned by the same family/trust and stretch between the 4 towns. We expect to complete the easement deeds in 2023.

It is also moving to completion the Healthy Forest Reserve Easements on properties in MA and RI with approximately 400 acres in MA and 200 acres in RI.

The forestry RCPP program has been extended until September 2023.

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**

### **The Last Green Valley (TLGV)**

Landmark Legislation was passed that will ensure the long-term stability of The Last Green Valley. President Joe Biden recently signed into law the National Heritage Area Act (S. 1942), continuing overwhelming bipartisan support of the National Heritage Area program. The Act ensures the National Park Service will continue working with The Last Green Valley and other national heritage areas for the next 15 years. It also allows each heritage area to receive National Park Service funds. While The Last Green Valley's designation as a national heritage corridor has never been in question, The Last Green Valley, Inc.'s (TLGV) authorization to work with the National Park Service and receive funding was set to expire on September 30, 2023.

TLGV has developed expertise in assessing trails for people with mobility challenges, and they are offering their services to assist local communities in the TLGV National Heritage Corridor. TLGV staff and volunteers use a rolling buggy (nicknamed Gertrude) with an on-board computer to measure distance, slope and cross-slope of trails. Team members visually assess the trail for obstructions and take additional measurements. All of the information is compiled, and the team produces graphics and handouts with objective, factual information that people can use to determine whether a particular trail is suitable for their abilities. Not all trails are suitable for this assessment. To be considered, most of the trail should have a grade less than 8% and cross slope less than 5%. If you have a trail you believe meets these requirements and would like to request an assessment, please contact LyAnn@TLGV.org.

### **The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program update**

During FY 22, a total of 74 volunteers collected water quality data from 83 locations and donated a conservative estimate of 885 hours of their time during that process. Several volunteers participated in more than one type of monitoring throughout the year.

HOBO temperature data loggers were placed in 12 locations to collect water temperature data at hourly intervals. Ten were placed in time to collect a full season of summer data. Two were put in later to gather upstream/downstream temperature data related to a riparian buffer installation at a shopping mall. Of the 10 full-season sites, three of them were pulled early due to the drought. One failed to record data. Six data sets were submitted to CT DEEP for upload to the Volunteer Stream Temperature Monitoring (VSTeM) mapping application. Assessment of whether any of the data sets met the cold-water stream standards has not yet been completed.

Volunteers for the Riffle Bioassessments by Volunteers (RBV) program assisted collecting data from 9 monitoring sites through November 30th. The season, which is traditionally slated to begin on September 1, was delayed due to severe drought conditions. Of the 9 sites, an unofficial review of the data indicated that 8 of the sites may have met the 4 or more pollution sensitive bug threshold to indicate the streams meet the "fishable" standards based on the CT Water Quality Standards and Classifications. The voucher samples collected at each site have been sent to CT DEEP for official review. Results are pending.

Currently, volunteers are collecting salt runoff data using the Izaak Walton League of America salt watch monitoring protocols. Volunteers are monitoring at least six sites this season with the hope of further expanding the project next winter.

Following the US EPA Cyanobacteria Monitoring Collaborative SOPs, cyanobacteria blooms from 3 lakes in eastern Connecticut were sampled and the samples were shipped to the EPA lab in Chelmsford to be assessed for a suite of cyanotoxins and species identification. The results of the sampling are pending.

For various reasons, several team leaders have decided to step down, so current efforts are focused on recruiting new volunteers to fill their shoes and planning the 2023 water quality monitoring season.

### **Eastern Connecticut Conservation District**

Work continues on the Long Island Sound Futures Fund project, *From Rain Gardens to Riparian Buffers: Pollinator Pathways for a Healthy Long Island Sound*. A riparian buffer was installed at Groton Elks on Birch Plain Creek. Several rain gardens were installed in Groton and others are in the planning stages including a rain garden at Stonington Marina where a riparian buffer will also be installed. Workshop/workdays are being planned for additional projects in the project area..

Also in Stonington, at a condominium complex located on Quana Duck Cove, a suite of stormwater green infrastructure projects is being installed. Various elements of the project are at different stages of planning. The first phase of the project, invasive plant removal, has been completed with follow-up controls planned for 2023. Twenty downspout planters are being designed and constructed by students at Grasso Tech. One rain garden is planned for spring installation. The riparian buffer along the cove frontage will be replanted and/or enhanced once the invasive species control has been completed. This project is being funded in part by a Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant.

LISFF – (statewide grant) – Urban Waters and Underserved Populations: ECCD is working with staff and students at Harbor Elementary School in New London to install stormwater retrofits on the school's campus. The project is being planned currently with the goal of implementing it this spring.

Funded by a NOAA B-WET grant, ECCD is collaborating with Project Oceanology to install additional Green School Yard projects as part of Project O's Outdoor Learning Alliance. Outdoor classroom facilities will be developed at Mahan Elementary School in Norwich and Kolnaski STEAM Magnet School in Groton.

Work continues on the Little River Watershed Based Plan update. ECCD staff will be meeting with agricultural producers to assess their needs for financial assistance for projects that will improve their farming operations while addressing environmental concerns. This project is funded by USDA NRCS and is being administered by Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation.

ECCD received an award of \$820,000 from Long Island Sound Futures Fund to assist a dairy farmer in Lebanon to construct a free-stall barn with manure management facilities. ECCD anticipates receiving an executed contract in late spring, so quite likely the project will

commence after May 1<sup>st</sup>. The producer is using \$364,000 of his NRCS EQIP funding and providing a match of \$205,000. This project is being funded by a grant from Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

Status of the Shewville Fishway Project: ECCD awaits the execution of access and construction easements on three properties upon which the fishway will be constructed. ECCD is finalizing a budget for the fishway construction and anticipates putting the project out to bid by mid-March, if there is enough funding in the EB Mitigation fund being administered by CT DEEP Fisheries.

Looking to the future, ECCD is seeking funding support to begin first steps for implementation of the Anguilla Brook/Inner Wequetequock Cove Watershed-Based Plan and the Natchaug Healthy Watershed Protection Plan. The first step to implement the plans is to form watershed committees consisting of local stakeholders. The committees will be charged with developing work plans to implement recommendations from the respective plans. A Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund application has been submitted for the Anguilla Brook/Inner Wequetequock Cove committee, and an EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 grant has been submitted to CT DEEP to fund the Natchaug Healthy Watershed Advisory Board.

ECCD will be seeking funding from Long Island Sound Futures Fund to assist a producer in Baltic to construct a silage bunker with a leachate collection system and to assist a producer in North Stonington to construct a manure pit and free-stall barn with manure management facilities.

For CT's five conservation districts, the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation submitted a grant proposal to CT Department of Agriculture under its Climate-Smart Ag Program. Under the proposal, ECCD requested funding to assist the Eastern Pequot Tribe to expand its community agricultural operations and to assist 3 producers in the Little River Watershed to purchase seed drills.

### **CT DEEP Watersheds Program**

The watersheds program has fully onboarded 4 new staff, 3 of whom will primarily support the Long Island Sound Study elements of the watershed program; the fourth staff is primarily supporting the Nonpoint Source Management program. Most staff are working a hybrid schedule between the Hartford office and teleworking.

The FY2023 Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Grant application period closed on 2/9/2023. The program webpage has been updated to list recent nonpoint source grant-awarded projects across Connecticut, including 12 within the greater Thames River watershed. The next phase will be to link project final reports and geographic locations for each project.

CT DEEP has posted a Request for Proposals for the Connecticut Recreational Trail Grants. Applications are due by 3/1/2023. The grant program description and a link to the detailed instructions and application are available at [DEEP Requests Proposals for Recreational Trails Grants](#).

CT DEEP programs across the agency have been working on a GIS open data website that is now available for public use. Recently added data layers of interest to TRBP participants include Assessed waters, Impaired Waters, Natural Diversity Data Base Maps, DEEP recreational trails,

and connected sewer service areas. For more information, go to CT DEEP GIS Open Data Website (arcgis.com). <https://ct-deep-gis-open-data-website-ctdeep.hub.arcgis.com/>

Requests for DEEP Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) reviews can now be submitted on-line, via DEEP's ezFile website. Information is available at <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/NDDB/Requests-for-NDDB-Environmental-Reviews>. The NDDB performs hundreds of environmental reviews each year to determine the impact of proposed development projects on state-listed species and help landowners conserve the state's biodiversity. This new on-line process enables many routine inquiries to be answered quickly and automatically, as well as improves the ability to obtain information for management and conservation plans. You can help the NDDB by submitting observations of state-listed species.

CT DEEP has completed the in-house review of the comprehensive Natchaug River Watershed Protection Plan and will be releasing the document for public review and comment. This public review is anticipated to occur in Spring 2023. ECCD completed the implementation portion of the Plan in 2020.

### **Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation**

Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation, in collaboration with CT DEEP, will be hosting a public webinar on February 22, 2023 at 2 PM. The webinar will feature updates to the CT Stormwater Quality Manual and the CT Soil Erosion and Control Guidelines. Information on the webinar, how to comment and the materials for review are available at [DRAFT Stormwater Quality Manual and Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines](#). Feedback on the proposed updates is due by close of business on March 1, 2023.

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

NRCS staff are busy evaluating applications for the most current round of cost share assistance programs including the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance (AMA), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP).

NRCS is also reaching out to agriculture and forestry businesses regarding funding assistance for 39 Climate Smart practices they may be eligible for funding under Farm Bill Programs.

### **Project Oceanology**

Project O is the grant administrator for two green school yard projects in partnership with ECCD. Project Oceanology staff will be providing educational programming to complement the outdoor classrooms being installed by District staff. These projects are being funded by a NOAA [B-WET grant](#).

Project Oceanology has signed on with Save the Sound to adopt two new coastal monitoring locations under the Unified Water Study. These locations include Mumford Cove and the Poquonuck River in Groton.

Project Oceanology will also be starting a program to address "ghost gear" removal from Long Island Sound. Ghost gear refers to any fishing gear that has been abandoned, lost or otherwise

discarded, and is a very harmful form of marine debris. Project O is the only entity that is permitted to do this type of work in the eastern end of Long Island Sound.

### **Southeast Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG)**

For member towns, SCCOG staff is completing updates to the draft regional Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan. The primary purpose of a Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) is to identify natural hazards and risks, existing capabilities, and activities that can be undertaken by a community to prevent loss of life and reduce property damages associated with identified hazards. This effort is leveraging a parallel process by the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), called Resilient CT 2.0, to bring a climate focus to the plan.

SCCOG recently concluded a Municipal Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study in the Towns of Ledyard, Preston, Stonington, and Waterford. This was a CIRCA-funded study, which assessed the feasibility of establishing a stormwater authority—also called a stormwater utility—in each of the four municipalities.

SCCOG is in the initial stages of developing a regional open space plan. Some of the municipalities SCCOG serve have open space plans, others do not. A series of 3 meetings was scheduled in February to allow the public to participate in the planning process. For more information, contact Kyle Casiglio, Planner I at [kcasiglio@seccog.org](mailto:kcasiglio@seccog.org).

SCCOG will host two public hearings to receive public comment on SCCOG's Draft Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the region's long-range plan, which establishes transportation priorities from 2023 – 2050. The plan includes the Air Quality Conformity Determination authored by the CT Department of Transportation, the Draft Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2023-2050 (2023 MTP) and Ozone/PM2.5 Air Quality Conformity Determination, which are available for review at [www.seccog.org](http://www.seccog.org). Hearings will be held via Zoom (<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87205976084>) Thursday, February 16th, at 1:00 pm and again at 6:00 pm. For language/disability assistance, please contact SCCOG in advance. A survey regarding transportation needs and priorities is available at <https://forms.office.com/r/NWcX9vr9WJ>. Comments may also be submitted via mail/email to [office@seccog.org](mailto:office@seccog.org), 5 Connecticut Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360, by March 6.

### **UCONN Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) and Non-Point Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO)**

New staff at CLEAR and NEMO: Mary Looney is the Municipal Stormwater Educator for the Connecticut Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) program, in the Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR), working primarily with the towns regulated by the state's stormwater discharge permit. Mary requests stories and updates from municipalities or partnerships regarding their work in stormwater management. To share any stories and to be featured in one of its MS4 Newsletters, email her at [mary.looney@uconn.edu](mailto:mary.looney@uconn.edu). The Winter 2023 Newsletter will be released soon.

For CLEAR, on the stormwater side of things, they are continuing their focus on stormwater utilities with a new webinar coming soon: *Regional Stormwater Utilities Efficiencies and*



*Challenges* will be held on Wednesday, February 22nd at 1pm EST. You can register at <https://uconn-edu.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJElf-GorjspHNddx05KSKhcm4NRhJJqhCxT>.

Dr. Zbigniew J. Grabowski (Z or Zbig for short) is an Associate Extension Educator in Water Quality for UConn Extension and the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. Researchers at UConn's Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) are working on a Green Infrastructure Planning Tool for CT Municipalities. They are in the planning stages of reviewing literature and existing tools to identify how to best meet the diverse needs of CT towns and cities seeking to evaluate the net environmental and economic impacts of built development, ecological restoration, and conservation at the town and parcel level. The guiding idea is to be able to evaluate the net functions and benefits of development, restoration, and conservation scenarios as a starting point for informed dialogue around strategic planning and site design.

If members of TRBP have experience with economic or environmental planning tools feel free to share your experience with the tools with Zbig at [Zbigniew.grabowski@uconn.edu](mailto:Zbigniew.grabowski@uconn.edu).

CLEAR has developed the [Local Watershed Assessment Tool](#), an online tool that uses new high resolution (1 meter) land cover to estimate the health of local watersheds at a much finer scale than has ever been possible. The project was funded by Long Island Sound Study (LISS) and was conducted in partnership with Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) and Footprints in the Water, LLC.

### **Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area (CT RC&D)**

CT RC&D sponsored a "United in Healing" workshop presented by Healing by Growing Farms at Harkness State Park in Waterford. This first-time regional event was designed to educate and empower the agricultural community. Through workshops and presentations, farmer attendees learned how to better advocate for themselves, and service provider and community supporter attendees learned how to identify potential distress risks within the community.

CT RC&D also continues to host Connecticut Farm Energy workshops, including one held at the CT Audubon Society Center at Pomfret in early February.

### **Amos Lake Association(ALA)**

Amos Lake is a trophy bass and trout lake that is used for multiple fishing tournaments each year. An unintended consequence of the visiting boaters is the potential to introduce invasive aquatic plant species to new locations. ALA was awarded a CT Aquatic Invasive Species grant to treat Eurasian and Variable Milfoil that were first noted near the State boat launch and have been spreading around the lake. In addition to the herbicide treatment, ALA was able to hire a limnologist to draft a lake management plan. ALA received a draft of the plan in December and is reviewing it.

ALA is planning to host a second series of paddles on the lake in 2023. These paddles will be open to the public. Each paddle will include a clean boat demonstration. Watch for paddle announcements on the TRBP Facebook page.

### **Celebrating Agriculture!**

Celebrating Agriculture will be held this year on Saturday, September 23 at a new location. Look for the same great event at the Brooklyn Fair Grounds.

### **Thames Valley Trout Unlimited**

Along with Joshua's Trust, TVTU will be hosting a Family Day at the Gurleyville Grist Mill on May 27. They plan to have an information booth, fly casting lesson, fly tying, a macro-invertebrate sampling demo, a tour of a bank remediation project and more.

### **News from Municipalities**

#### **Town of Hampton**

After purchasing a 51-acre parcel of land on Harman Hill Road a few years back, the Town of Hampton is seeking funding to develop improved access to Little River, a native trout stream, and to improve access to a pond on the property for people with limited mobility by installing ADA compliant fishing access.

#### **Town of Groton**

The Groton Conservation Commission published stewardship plans for open space areas without a designated maintenance department assigned. The Conservation Commission is responsible for assuring that a long-term stewardship plan is in place and being executed for the protection of the property in the best interest of the Town of Groton.

#### **Town of Plainfield**

Plainfield has been awarded \$2.2 million in federal funding to make upgrades to the Quinebaug River Trail. The funds were allocated as part of the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act. The funding will enable the design, permitting and construction of a new multi-use 1.6 mile trail.

#### **Town of Thompson**

Thompson is currently in the process of rewriting its subdivision regulations with provisions for open space subdivisions.

Thompson is eagerly anticipating final signatures on contracts for two grants for local projects including an ECCD-led green infrastructure project in the French River watershed and a Department of Agriculture funded initiative to develop a demonstration food forest/permaculture project at Riverside Park.

### **Town of Willington**

The Willington Girl Scouts established three gardens for pollinators in Town in 2022 and developed a Pollinator Garden/Pathway information page for the Conservation Commission [website](#).

Willington received an \$81,250 DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant to assist with the purchase of a 16-acre forested parcel on Mason Road that is in the Fenton River watershed. It is adjacent to UConn's Moss Forest as well as 2 other Town open space parcels. The Town closed on the the property at the end of June and is planning to open a new trail in May 2023.

### **Town of Windham, Windham Water Works**

Windham Water Works hired Tyler Johnson as a Watershed/Environmental Technician. Tyler is in the process of developing a contact list of watershed stakeholders. He will also be responsible for reviewing watershed notifications for upstream activities that may impact water quality at the Willimantic Reservoir.

### **Town of Woodstock**

The Woodstock Conservation Commission, concerned about the environmental impacts of a tree removal project proposed by Eversource, has been reaching out to property owners in the targeted areas to inform them of the project and their right to refuse selectively or outright to participate. Portions of State Route 171 and National Scenic Byway Route 169, as well as Child Road, have been identified by Eversource metrics as having higher rates of tree-caused power outages. The proposal is to clear any trees that may fall on the powerlines now or in the future and replace some of the trees with smaller trees or shrubs that won't exceed 30 feet tall. The area of interest is greater than the normal 10-foot buffer around the powerlines and may impact mature trees as far as 80' from the transmission lines on either side of the roadway. The project, if completed as proposed, would remove the mature tree canopy over Route 169, and potentially clear cut the riparian area of streams that are close to or cross under the roadway.

### **Important news for our Municipal Partners - Long Island Sound Resilience Grant Writing Assistance Program**

With funding from US EPA through the Long Island Sound Study (LISS), New York Sea Grant (NYSG) and Connecticut Sea Grant (CTSG) announce a funding opportunity open to municipalities and community organizations to facilitate the hiring of grant preparation and writing support to assist with the development of grant applications for sustainable and resilience focused projects that will impact a community(ies) within or partially within the Long Island Sound Coastal boundary (within Westchester, Nassau, Suffolk counties, Western Connecticut, and Eastern Connecticut). See Sustainable and Resilient Communities webpage for regions. <https://longislandsoundstudy.net/our-vision-and-plan/sustainable-and-resilient-communities/>

The intent of the Long Island Sound Resilience Grant Writing Assistance Program is to reduce staffing and capacity barriers that municipalities and community organizations may face when applying for competitive funding opportunities, help communities develop successful sustainable and resilience focused project grant applications, and for municipalities and community organizations to develop capacity for navigating the funding landscape.

Funding is to be awarded in a range of \$5,000- \$9,950 per application directly to the applicant's selected grant writing support contractor on a cost reimbursable basis. Match will not be required.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until all available funding is allocated, which may be no later than September 30th, 2023.

## **Land Trust Updates**

[Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust](#) (JT) and UCONN's Natural Resources Conservation Academy (NRCA) have signed a work letter of agreement for a group of ten students to conduct research on one of the JT preserves. A final research topic for the students has not yet been selected.

JT and the Mansfield School system are developing plans for the students attending the new Mansfield Elementary School for a nature walk this spring at JT's Bradley Buchanan Preserve. More plans will evolve as JT's capacity grows while they settle into a new building.

JT has been working with the Tolland Conservation Commission and has applied for an In-lieu fee grant collaboration to purchase and conserve the Tolland Marsh and an upland area. The proposal was denied. JT is adjusting the application and will likely reapply.

Ashford Easements – JT is optimistic that, by the end of the summer, it will have easements on about 250 acres in Ashford. This acreage is part of the Knowlton brook area, and hosts the state's largest colony of endangered [Little Brown Bats](#).

An update on the Fenton River streambank stabilization project at the JT Gurleyville Mill in Mansfield - the first phase of the project was featured at a TRBP meeting by Trout Unlimited. Large trees were maneuvered in place and backfilled with stone. Christmas trees collected after Christmas are in place and ready for the next project phase. The branches of the trees will naturally collect sediment to further stabilize and restore the stream bank.

Upcoming programs hosted by JT can be found at this link <https://joshuastrust.org/events/>.

### [Avalonia Land Conservancy \(ALC\)](#)

ALC is currently focused on land acquisitions for an additional 1000 acres of land. Avalonia is close to closing on many of the acquisitions.

ALC is also focusing on improving access to their preserves. There are two ADA compliant access locations on the 224-acre Copp's Brook property in Stonington which ALC is hoping to expand with additional locations. An ADA compliant fishing platform is under development in North Stonington.

ALC is focused on building collaborations with First Nations people and is also in the process of updating its agricultural leases on its properties.

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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, TRBP meets quarterly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month.

The next meeting will be on April 18, 2023 at 9:30 AM Eastern Time, via Zoom.

If you are not already on the e-distribution list for this publication, sign on to the 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. Funding support for FY 22 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.