



# Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Spring 2023

Volume 65

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 spring's special presentation, then you missed a presentation summarizing the 2022 update of the Connecticut Stormwater Quality and Erosion and Sediment Control Manuals. The presentation featured Kathleen Knight, Karen Allen and Chris Stone of CT DEEP, as well as Denise Savageau, President of the Connecticut Association of Conservation Districts. These updated manuals will be available as e-documents only. They are available at this link <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water/Stormwater-Quality-Manual-and-Soil-Erosion-and-Sediment-Control-Guidelines>. The manuals provide comprehensive guidance and numerous links to many resources related to stormwater quality and erosion and sediment control strategies, including low impact development and stormwater retrofit guidance. In these manuals, the stormwater design storm for planning purposes for stormwater retention was increased from 1" to 1.3" of rainfall. The draft documents have gone through the public review stage and are being formatted into the final draft document. This presentation and Q&A session was recorded and available at this link <https://youtu.be/GqJk1Asf6rE>.

## TRBP Updates

The TRBP Floating Workshop is planned for June 9, 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 Sustainable and Resilient Communities. For more information, or for registration information, please contact 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.

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: there were 15 new applicants for Forest Management Plans in 2023. The Healthy Forest Reserve Program and the overall forestry RCPP project will be wrapped up in 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**

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

Jocelyn Lahey is the new Executive Director and Environmental Programs Manager for Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area. Jocelyn was hired to replace retiring Jeanne Davies. Thank you, Jeanne for the accomplishments of CT RC&D under your leadership, and welcome, Joycelyn!

CT RC&D was awarded a \$1 million Climate Smart Agriculture & Forestry Grant for its proposal to provide direct sub grants to Connecticut Farmers implementing climate smart practices and to allow for four conservation equipment sharing hubs around the state.

CT RC&D is in the process of coordinating an Environmental Review Team (ERT) assessment of a property in the town of Plainfield.

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

TLGV Spring Outdoors programs are underway through summer solstice. Use this [link](#) to find an outdoor adventure you want to participate in.

TLGV is again making funding available to non-profits and municipalities that wish to organize a cleanup event, pollinator planting or invasive species eradication event. Recipients working in the heritage corridor will be reimbursed up to \$500 for expenses such as publicity, cleanup supplies such as trash bags, work gloves, small gardening tools, native seeds and plantings, and food for your volunteers. TLGV will also help publicize your event and work with you to recruit more volunteers. This program is proudly sponsored by bankHometown. Contact [LyAnn](#) for more information.

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

Arrangements are in place to monitor the Yantic River this summer for an *E. coli* trackdown program. The Yantic River is a trout stream that also attracts white water paddling enthusiasts.

TLGV will be hosting a lake monitoring workshop in partnership with CT DEEP and the US EPA. The workshop will be held on May 11 at Roseland Park in Woodstock beginning at 10 AM. Contact Jean.Pillo@Comcast.net for more information.

The official results from the 2022 cyanobacteria monitoring samples sent to the EPA lab last summer have not been completed. Unofficial results for microcystin using a less accurate dip strip method showed that algal scum samples collected from West Thompson Lake in Thompson and Avery Pond in Preston contained concentrations of microcystin more than the recommended contact level of 8 ppm. Samples collected from Roseland Lake were under that threshold.

TLGV will be continuing to collect water temperature data in a search for cold water stream habitat using temperature data loggers. The final locations have not been determined yet. The loggers will be deployed in late May and retrieved in September.

### **Eastern Connecticut Conservation District**

ECCD has been working with CT DEEP to restore a historic alewife migration route from Long Island Sound to Amos Lake in Preston, CT. In 2013, a ten-year effort to install a fishway over the Hallville Dam was completed. In 2014, an obsolete dam further up was notched to allow for the fish to swim further upstream. Three years ago, CT DEEP stocked pre-spawn alewife in Amos Lake and Avery Pond so the young fish would imprint on these waterbodies as their breeding grounds before migrating out to the Atlantic Ocean. This spring, those young fish returned up the fishway into Hallville Pond in record numbers and have been documented as far upstream as the Shewville Dam. A design for a fishway at the Shewville Dam has been completed and funding is in place to begin building a new fishway over the Shewville Dam as soon as late summer/early fall 2023. The Shewville Dam is the last obstacle for alewife headed up to Amos Lake through Avery Pond.

Progress is continuing to be made on the LISFF funded green infrastructure installation at a condominium complex on Quana Duck Cove in Stonington, CT. ECCD is working with students and staff at Ella Grasso Technical School on the design and build of stormwater planters to be installed later this year. A major riparian buffer enhancement along the shoreline is planned for May 15 – 17. If you would like to volunteer to assist with this planting, contact [heather.palardy@conservect.org](mailto:heather.palardy@conservect.org).

Progress continues on drafting the Little River Watershed Based Plan update. This project is funded by a NRCS National Water Quality Initiative planning grant through the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation. Current water quality data has been acquired from multiple sources and reviewed to define areas of concern. Individual farm visits are next on the agenda. A draft document is in the works for July.

ECCD will be completing the *From Rain Gardens to Riparian Buffers: Pollinator Pathways for Healthy Water Project* by late summer with the installation of rain gardens and enhanced riparian buffers using native plants in the Town of Groton, City of Groton, Ledyard, Preston and Stonington. Multiple gardens are in the planning stages that will enhance pollinator habitat while improving water quality by intercepting and infiltrating storm water runoff.

This project is funded by a Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant. If you are interested in assisting with a garden installation, contact [Maura.Robie@comcast.net](mailto:Maura.Robie@comcast.net).

Several green school yards/outdoor classroom projects are progressing. At the Thomas Mahan Elementary School in Norwich, outdoor seating and a portable whiteboard were delivered that

will allow the students to hold classes outside. A pollinator friendly sensory garden is planned to be installed in May. This project is in partnership with Project Oceanology and funded through a NOAA B-wet Grant.

ECCD's collaboration with Project Oceanology continues at Catherine Kolnaski STEAM Elementary School in the Town of Groton, where an outdoor learning space is being created for seasonal use. A pergola kit has been ordered and shipped and should arrive by mid-May. We plan to construct the pergola by the end of the school year. Provision of a kiosk with a whiteboard is being planned as well, provided there is sufficient funding. Additionally, with funding from a different grant, ECCD will be assessing the site to determine if a rain garden can be installed.

Community Foundation of Eastern CT (CFEC) recently informed ECCD that it has provided a \$43,000 grant to develop a green schoolyard at Harbor Elementary School in New London. The grant from CFEC is called "Green Schoolyards V2.0". It will be combined with a \$12,000 grant from Long Island Sound Futures Fund and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The latter grant, "Urban Waters and Underserved Populations", is a statewide effort involving the other four conservation districts in the state. The project is in its preliminary stages of planning, but ECCD and school staff will engage students and the school community to develop an action plan to implement the project, then build it out over the next year.

### **CT DEEP Watersheds Program**

FEMA Flood Studies Update for greater Thames River watershed region:

**Quinebaug River watershed - New London County** - FEMA issued a letter of final determination for this mapping project on February 1, 2023. **New, revised flood maps and flood studies will become effective August 1, 2023.** Communities included in this project: Griswold, Lisbon, North Stonington, Norwich, Preston, Putnam, Voluntown.

**Quinebaug River watershed - Windham County** - FEMA issued a letter of final determination for this mapping project on March 7, 2023. **New revised flood maps and flood studies will become effective September 7, 2023.** Communities included in this project: Brooklyn, Danielson, Killingly, Plainfield, Pomfret, Putnam, Sterling, Thompson.

**Shetucket River and Thames River watersheds** - Work maps are scheduled to be released in spring/summer 2023. Communities included in these projects: Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Bozrah, Canterbury, Chaplin, Colchester, Columbia, Coventry, East Lyme, Eastford, Franklin, Groton (Town), Hampton, Hebron, Lebanon, Ledyard, Lisbon, Mansfield, Montville, New London, North Stonington, Norwich, Old Lyme, Preston, Salem, Scotland, Sprague, Stafford, Stonington (Town), Tolland, Union, Waterford, Willington, Windham, Woodstock.

### **CT DEEP Field facility projects in greater Thames River basin – Infrastructure status:**

The DEEP Engineering Unit provides internal monthly project updates. There is a Project Review Team and a Project Approval Committee that work hand and hand to forward the project planning and request process. In recent months that has produced an approved, funded list of

projects across eastern CT and statewide. TRBP members with interests or project planning status questions for DEEP facilities in your area are encouraged to contact [Eric.Thomas@ct.gov](mailto:Eric.Thomas@ct.gov) and he will look into the updates and make reach out to lead project contacts as necessary. Here are some relevant updates on project status and progress:

- The Quinebaug Recirculation System (RAS) project is a long-planned treatment plant at the **Quinebaug Fish Hatchery in Plainfield** that was discussed at last year's TRBP Floating Workshop. Concrete foundation and site work is largely complete, masonry and steel work is shaping the building structure above ground. Separate but related is the Quinebaug Emergency Generator and UST (underground storage tank) removal/replacement project - an award has been made and work is underway with the contractor and hatchery staff.
- Nearly completed construction and fabrication of new floating docks for the **Coventry Lake State Boat Launch**. The docks will be ready for Spring 2023.
- Engineering continues to assist State Parks in the conversion of the **Hopeville Pond SP Campground** bathhouse from CLIVUS to conventional plumbing and waste disposal.
- The long-standing **Hop River Trail/Bolton Notch Pond** drainage issue in Bolton is being addressed following review of the consultant's findings and recommendations. Implementation of the consensus recommendation will come next. This is a very popular multi-user recreational trail.
- The design of the **Airline Trail/Thompson Culvert** replacement is in its final stages. Permits have been issued by DEEP and USACE. DEEP Engineering is working on the coordination of construction prior to bidding. Funding has not been fully addressed.

#### **Norwich Public Utilities' Wastewater System Improvements:**

The system's sanitary sewer pipe lining, recently reported locally in grant news, will help free up collection system conveyance capacity. However, it will not result in a significant CSO (combined sewer overflow) reduction. This is a topical issue explored in past TRBP Floating Workshops. Pipe lining projects are more for rehabilitating old sewer pipes to reduce infiltration and inflow but these projects will not result in significant CSO reduction volumes. From DEEP's perspective, regardless it is definitely a step in the right direction. On related matter, the Norwich wastewater treatment facility update is out to bids. The existing facility has a design flow rate of 8.5 mgd and a peak hydraulic capacity of 17 mgd. The proposed modifications will meet current regulations for flood protection and a peak flow rate of 20 mgd. While the facility can currently accept up to 20 mgd, it does not perform well at this peak flow rate. For this reason, one of the general goals of the intended upgrade is to make the plant reliably perform at a peak flow of 20 mgd. Once DEEP's Municipal Facilities program staff finish with the bid process for the facility upgrades, DEEP will focus on the long-term control program for the combined sewer overflows. TRBP should continue to track this work. The DEEP Municipal Facilities program will also be funding another sewer rehabilitation project in the South Thames (below Norwich Harbor) area which will include pipe relining and replacement of old pipe sections.

**DEEP's CWA Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management grant round for FY2023** is closed; "319" applications have been under review with anticipated DEEP statewide application to EPA for the FY'23 funds later this Spring.

#### **Other DEEP updates**

Central Connecticut State University, in partnership with the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, is seeking input for the 2023-2028 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). All outdoor enthusiasts are invited to share your thoughts and experiences on outdoor recreation in Connecticut through a brief online survey. The survey provides the opportunity for individuals with various outdoor recreation interests to express their views and to help shape the future of outdoor recreation in our state. The survey takes less than 15 minutes to complete and is anonymous. Take the survey at: Avid Outdoor Enthusiast Survey [https://ccsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_1RBZFhAKDtyUQsu](https://ccsu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_1RBZFhAKDtyUQsu)

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

Machell Simmons is filling as the interim Connecticut State Conservationist for Tom Mogart while Tom is on temporary assignment in Washington, DC. Machell reported that the NRCS staff are all busy processing applications for funding assistance.

Information about additional funding for NRCS programs through the Inflation Reduction Act will be announced soon. The focus of this new NRCS funding will be on greenhouse gas reduction.

NRCS staff are adjusting their programs to address the needs from an increased presence of the organic farming community and an increased interest in urban farming,

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

SCCOG progressing on the development of a regional open space plan. A series of meetings were held. Currently they are focused on targeted outreach in the region. For more information, contact Kyle Casiglio at [kcasiglio@seccog.org](mailto:kcasiglio@seccog.org).

In 2022, Ledyard, Preston, Stonington, and Waterford voluntarily participated in a study, which assessed the feasibility of establishing stormwater utilities (also called “stormwater authorities”) in the four municipalities. Stormwater utilities may be established in any Connecticut municipality, pursuant to Section 22a-498 of the Connecticut General Statutes. A stormwater authority allows municipalities to levy stormwater user fees on owners of real property, and fund stormwater system improvements through an enterprise fund. Conventionally, stormwater system improvements are funded by property taxes, via the municipal general fund; this is often less equitable. The study was funded by the Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA). The final project report is available at this link. [http://www.seccog.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/SCCOG%20Final%20Report\\_Updated%20January%202023.pdf](http://www.seccog.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/SCCOG%20Final%20Report_Updated%20January%202023.pdf)

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

UConn CLEAR staff are in the planning stage furthering outreach regarding the Connecticut Storm Water Quality Manual. They will work with municipalities to assure local land use regulations are compliant, especially if the design storm for stormwater runoff is increased from 1” to 1.3”.

Researchers at the **University of Connecticut**, on behalf of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, seek to understand how valuable potential changes in water quality in rivers

and streams are to you, your household, your community, and the nation through your participation in an online survey. Participation in this survey will greatly help federal and state administrators of the U.S. Clean Water Act to choose the programs for quality of water in rivers and streams, by identifying the tradeoffs citizens prefer. Use this [link](#) to access the survey.

**Save the River, Save The Hills** is dedicated to preserving the health of the Niantic River Estuary, its watershed, and the natural beauty of the Oswegatchie Hills. On May 23, 2023, an event at Mago Point is planned for the launching of a new pump out boat purchased with DEEP funds matched with funds from local marinas and the Niantic River Towns.

Their 5<sup>th</sup> annual Earthfest CT is scheduled for May 13, 2023 in East Lyme. This child-friendly event will feature hands on activities for children. For more information, use this [link](#).

The 19<sup>th</sup> annual Kayak Regatta is scheduled for Saturday, August 12, 2023. For more details as they develop, use this [link](#).

Water quality testing in the Niantic River through the Save the Sound Unified Water Study will be continued for another year.

### **Celebrating Agriculture!**

Celebrating Agriculture will be held this year on Saturday, September 23 at the Brooklyn Fair Grounds.

### **News from Municipalities**

#### **Town of Griswold**

The Griswold land use regulations are under revision to incorporate the updated Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Map information.

#### **Town of Woodstock**

The Woodstock Inland Wetlands and Watercourse Agency is in the process of updating their fee schedule. They are also reviewing the Timber Harvest Review request form to assure that best silviculture practices are included.

The Woodstock Conservation Commission is continuing to promote the regional Pollinator Pathway Initiative. A presentation was given at the Quiet Corner Garden Club Garden Symposium in April.

### **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/>

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

**Connecticut Land Conservation Council** was awarded \$750,000 through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Climate Smart Agriculture and Forestry Grant program. CLCC applied for this grant on behalf of the Connecticut land trust community. Approximately two-thirds of CLCC's award - a half-million dollars - will be re-granted directly to member land trusts. Together, Connecticut's ~130 land trusts have conserved more than 204,000 acres of land, a critical piece of the natural climate solution. As the climate crisis worsens, land trusts have expressed significant interest in integrating climate resiliency and mitigation into their land stewardship programs.

### Wyndham Land Trust (WLT)

WLT was the recipient of a donation of 11.5 acres along Elliott Road in Brooklyn by Hadi and Cheryl Bozorgmanesh. The land is adjacent to their Sherman Preserve along Blackwell Brook. Otter, beaver, mink, muskrats, and bobcats are known to inhabit this area. Wood ducks, black ducks, and mallards have often been sighted along this section of the brook.

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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 July 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.