



Thames River Basin Partnership Annual Report for FY 2023

The Thames River Basin Partnership met four times this fiscal year using a Zoom platform for virtual meetings. This was decided by consensus by the core members of the Partnership.

The October Fall TRBP 2022 Meeting special presentation featured Linda Colangelo, Education and Communications Coordinator for the Northeast District Department of Health, and Coordinator for the HealthQuest Northeast CT health and wellness coalition. These community partners have been working together to reduce the risk of chronic illness by creating and improving places for physical activity. Work includes enhancing trails and greenways infrastructure, improving equitable access to trails and on trails, and increasing awareness of multi-use trails. HealthQuest is also working with Della M. Corcoran, MD, Kimberly Bradley at DEEP and Kristen Bellantuono with No Child Left Behind to further develop an Outdoor RX CT concept, a program that empowers physicians to start “social prescribing” – referring patients to local, non-clinical resources such as those found in nature - to benefit physical/mental health and overall wellbeing. This presentation focused in part on the health benefits of being outdoors in the natural resources our TRBP partners work so hard to conserve. This presentation, filled with important statistics for grant writers, was recorded and is available for view at this link <https://youtu.be/K4dRBrprFMo>.

The January Winter 2023 Meeting special presentation featured Eric McPhee, a Supervising Environmental Analyst from the CT Department of Public Health Drinking Water Division. He gave a live presentation featuring 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 the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service through the Connecticut Soil and Water Council. The tool, developed for this project by the staff at UCONN CLEAR, is still in the development phase. Users will be able to click on a parcel that has been scored in a way to provide a numerical value to large parcels and their relevant value in drinking water protection as an open space parcel. A final project rollout is expected in spring 2023.

The April Spring 2023 Meeting special presentation focused on 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>. They provide comprehensive guidance and numerous links to many resources related to stormwater quality and sediment and erosion 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 had gone through the public review stage and were in the process of being formatted into the final draft document. This presentation and Q&A session was recorded. <https://youtu.be/GqJk1Asf6rE>

The July Summer 2023 Meeting special presentation featured Dr. Justin Richardson, Assistant Professor in the Department of Earth, Geographic, and Climate Sciences at UMASS Amherst. He spent a good amount of time over the past few years digging holes, sampling sediments, and helping students collect water and soil samples from several watersheds in the Thames River, comparing the concentration of several toxic metals and phosphorus and he is prepared to give us a summary of his findings. The official title of his talk is “Understanding spatial and temporal transport of toxic metals and P in soils, sediments, and waters across the Thames River Watershed”. This presentation was recorded and available to view on the ECCD YouTube channel. <https://youtu.be/Gd9K6V-uPWw>.

After each quarterly meeting, a newsletter, the Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Report was compiled based on Partner reports at the meetings and other sources. These newsletters are available for download on the TRBP website. <https://thamesriverbasinpartnership.org/newsletters/>

The annual TRBP Floating Workshop was held on June 19, 2023. A discounted price was offered to participants that were from economically distressed or Environmental Justice communities. This was possible because of a workshop sponsorship from Chelsea Groton Bank.

A targeted outreach approach was implemented to invite leaders from qualified communities, which involved creating a database of names and contact information. The goal of the TRBP was to have at least 50% of the workshop participants to be from qualified communities. A total of 37 people were involved in the FW. This included presenters and workshop participants. Three were Project O staff. Of the 37 participants, 21 were first time participants. Seventeen of the participants were known to be from qualified communities. Not all participants identified what town they were from. Four of the participants were either college students or recent graduates who studied environmental science. All college students were from qualified communities. At least two of the presenters represented qualified communities, including Windham (#1 on the economically distressed communities list) and a representative from the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation.

After the workshop, an ESRI storymap was created that included workshop highlights. This StoryMap can be viewed at this link.

https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/512c7f5c5ff247a895cc1b8d34d1a873?fbclid=IwAR3rkbKKTh8jFMRf6jzRkdPIMHcEVQ8kUAnxLh_E6rCQBqqI_wlX_-KZ_n0

Agencies and Organization represented in one or more TRBP event include seventy-nine different individuals representing over forty different organizations. The conservation agencies included the Amos Lake Association, Avalonia Land Conservancy, Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA), City of Groton, Connecticut Land Conservation Council, Council on Soil and Water Conservation, CT Association of Conservation Districts, CT DEEP Office of Climate Planning, CT DEEP Water Planning Land Reuse, CT DEEP, Long Island Sound Study, CT DEEP, Stormwater Program, CT Forest and Parks Association, CT Non-Point Education for Municipal Officials MS4 Coordinator, CT National Estuary Research Reserve, CT Resource Conservation and Development Area, Eastern Connecticut Conservation

District, Footprints on the Water (environmental consultant), Garden Club of Windham, Gardner Lake Authority, Goodwin Forest Conservation Center, Griswold Town Planner, Groton Public Utilities, Joshua's Trust, Ledyard Conservation Commission, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Northeast District Department of Health, Niantic Watershed Committee, Preston Conservation Commission, Project Oceanology, Putnam Community Development Director, Putnam Economic Development Director, Putnam Town Administrator, Rick Canavan (environmental consultant), Save the River, Save the Hills, Southeast Connecticut Council of Governments, Thames Valley Trout Unlimited, The Last Green Valley, The New Roxbury Land Trust, The Nature Conservancy, Town of Coventry Wetlands Agent, Town of Groton Conservation Commission, Town of Thompson Conservation Agent, Town of Thompson Director of Planning & Development, Town of Tolland Wetlands Agency, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Windham Water Works, Woodstock Inland Wetlands Watercourses Agency.

Report compiled by Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator