



Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Spring 2024

Volume 69

The Thames River watershed includes the Five Mile, French, Moosup, Natchaug, Pachaug, Quinebaug, Shetucket, Willimantic, and Yantic Rivers and all their tributaries, plus the nearby southeast Connecticut coastal areas. 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](#) 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, you missed an update on Connecticut's Comprehensive Open Space Acquisition Plan (The Green Plan) given by Lindsay Suhr of DEEP's Land Acquisition and Management Office. The Green Plan is an important planning document that outlines the goals and strategies for land conservation efforts statewide and influences the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA). DEEP has started the update process for the next Green Plan by developing a definition of "open space" that will be used to base the current open space inventory. The next step will be to update the current statewide open space inventory with help from land trusts, municipalities, and other sources. CT DEEP will be outsourcing the plan development to a contractor. We encourage our partners to stay tuned for updates and take advantage of future opportunities for public comment as the next 5-year plan for open space acquisition is formulated. Contact Lindsay Suhr lindsay.suhr@ct.gov for more information.

TRBP Updates

The biggest TRBP update is that Jean Pillo, long time TRBP Coordinator, is retiring at the end of April 2024 after 18 years serving in this role. There is a succession plan. The Last Green Valley will hire a part time person to coordinate its water quality monitoring program and organize TRBP functions. There will be a lag between Jean's retirement and getting the new TRBP Coordinator hired and ready to take over. The current quarterly meeting structure may be reconfigured. For updates, check with Lois@TLGV.org.

The TRBP [Plan of Work](#) will expire in 2024. The TRBP Steering Committee met to discuss the update of the Plan of Work. A questionnaire and a rough Plan of Work outline was sent to regular quarterly meeting attendees prior to the April 2024 TRBP meeting. Partners were asked to consider the value of the Thames River Basin Partnership to their organization. If you haven't already replied, we request you take a few moments to reflect on these questions to evaluate the value of TRBP to you organization and to all the entities involved in natural resource conservation in eastern Connecticut.

- What is your organization's core mission, and how can you use TRBP to facilitate achievement of the goals of your organization?
- If you rely on grant funding to achieve your organization's goals, how can the TRBP plan of work be used to strengthen your grant application? Would the TRBP Coordinator, based on this plan of work, be able to use this document to write a letter of support for your grant application, or help prioritize internal funding from within your organization's budget?
- Does participation in TRBP meetings and workshops help with outreach for and/or branding of your organization?
- Does participation in TRBP meetings/workshops provide opportunities to collaborate with other organizations to form multi-partner collaborations?
- Does participation in TRBP meetings/workshops help to inform you on the best contacts for information from other partners?
- Do TRBP meetings/workshops provide information/data/inspiration to make your organization better equipped to meet your organizational goals?
- Does the TRBP Partners in Action Report newsletter help to promote your organization and educate the public about your organization's mission?
- Does your organization use the TRBP Partners in Action Report in house for any reason (ie. documentation of project outreach, or research on other organizations working on similar projects)?

If you would like to submit comments to these questions, please send your responses to Lois@TLGV.org.

New TRBP Plan of Work Outline

A new goal has been proposed and has been prioritized for the updated TRBP Plan of Work, and that is focused on recognizing the value and contributions of previously under-represented populations in our shared conservation efforts. While no specific action items have been suggested yet, we believe it to be an important focus for future projects.

The proposed updated TRBP goals are:

1. Increased educational and stewardship opportunities for all citizens and community leaders.
2. Accelerated and coordinated regional land conservation.
3. Communities prepared for changing climate conditions.
4. Improved water quality and quantity in impaired watersheds and anti-degradation measures for water quality in healthy watersheds.
5. Improved coastal-zone water and habitat quality.
6. Healthy ecosystems with abundant native biodiversity

7. Increased visibility and presence of TRBP through organizational efforts and improved regional partnerships.

If your organization is focused on any of the above-listed goals, you belong in Thames River Basin Partnership. Please let us know how, and in what ways, you think we can work synergistically for greater conservation outcomes. We suggest you review the action items from the current [Plan of Work](#) for ideas that may still be relevant. Send your goal/action items suggestions to Lois@TLGV.org.

The 2024 TRBP Floating Workshop update.

Due to the expected lag between designated TRBP Coordinators, we have decided to combine the TRBP Floating Workshop with a Wequetequock Cove Festival being organized by ECCD. Wequetequock is part of Stonington. ECCD, with funding from a Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund grant, is working with local stakeholders and multiple partners to facilitate the formation of a watershed committee, known as the Wequetequock Clean Water Coalition. One of the provisions of the grant is to hold a festival that includes outreach on conservation practices that will improve water quality in Wequetequock Cove. The festival is scheduled for July 14, 2024 from 10 AM – 2 PM on the grounds of The Hounds event center on Route 1 in Stonington. Attendance at the festival will be free of charge.

Concurrent with the festival, TRBP will hold an hour-long indoor workshop featuring a round table discussion on building successful watershed committees. Final TRBP workshop details have not been fully developed. Stay tuned for updates.

The floating part (optional) will launch from the Barn Island boat launch for those with their own paddle craft. The paddle will be from 3 – 5 PM. Those that need to rent a craft can do so at Stonington Marina. The boats will meet up near the railroad bridge that bisects the cove. Stops of the tour will feature a float over a working oyster farm, a discussion on potential tidal flow restrictions from the Amtrak bridge, a report on water quality by Clean Up Sound and Harbors (CUSH) whose monitoring data was used to score the cove a D- on the most recent LIS Report Card by Save the Sound, and a stop along Avalonia Land Conservancy owned open space to focus on the importance of coastal open space. We are in the process of making arrangements for a few powerboats to transport non-paddling participants. Heather Palardy Heather.Palardy@ConserveCT.org of ECCD will be finalizing the plans for the Wequetequock Cove Festival. You can contact her for more information.

Finally, it has been my pleasure to serve you as the TRBP Coordinator for the past 18 years. You have all inspired me. I have learned much from listening to the different strategies you use to achieve our common goals. I love bragging in this newsletter about all you have accomplished. I have also loved being a match maker facilitating more partnership projects. Mostly, I have loved planning the annual Floating Workshop. I encourage you all to stay involved with TRBP and continue to do the good work that you do.

Jean Pillo, TRBP Coordinator, signing off.

Partner Reports

The Last Green Valley (TLGV)

There has been an eagle population explosion in The Last Green Valley! TLGV volunteers have been monitoring known eagle nests for several years. This spring 4 new nests have been confirmed, bringing the total of KNOWN eagle nests from 15 to 19 active nests.

TLGV and ECCD will be ending their cooperative agreement for TLGV to fund the TRBP Coordinator and TLGV Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator roles designated to ECCD staff. Those programs will be organized in-house at TLGV as a combined part-time position. A job description is in development and will be released soon.

TLGV is planning to re-do its website, and within the website, it is planned to include a partitioned TRBP Website with its own URL to access the TRBP area. No date has been determined for this.

TLGV's Spring Outdoors is in full swing, with over 200 events planned, including hikes, paddles and bike rides. You can access a complete list of Spring Outdoors activities at <https://thelastgreenvalley.org/spring-outdoors-events/>.

If you would like to submit a Walktober event for inclusion in TLGV's color brochure, the deadline will be in June. Check the TLGV website for updates. <https://thelastgreenvalley.org/walktober>

TLGV has a full year of programming scheduled for adults and kids alike. A full listing of upcoming events can be found at <https://thelastgreenvalley.org/tlgv-events/>.

Once again, TLGV will be sponsoring Clean Up/Green Up projects. The 2024 flyer with details is available [here](#).

The Last Green Valley Water Quality Monitoring Program Update

The results from last summer's volunteer stream temperature monitoring program were tabulated by volunteer Gary Hoehne. Seven temperature loggers were placed in streams in northeast Connecticut. The purpose of the project was to document cold water stream habitat using specific summer metrics. Peckham Brook in Woodstock was the only stream of the seven that met the strict criteria in 2023.

Site	Town	Mean Summer Temp	July Mean Temp	Max Summer Daily Mean
Angel Brook	Pomfret	22.01	23.96	26.31
Conantville Brook	Mansfield	19.13	21.33	22.63
English Neighborhood Brook	Woodstock	20.65	22.90	24.75
Peckman Brook	Woodstock	16.18	18.13	20.27
Sawmill Brook	Mansfield	18.81	21.35	22.42
Tinkerville Brook	Ashford	18.60	21.40	23.17
Wheatons Brook	Putnam	21.30	23.28	25.62

Cold water streams maintain temperatures required for cold water fish species, including eastern brook trout and the spiny sculpin, through the hot summer season. These small streams may offer a summer refuge for these fish that may only tolerate the temperature in larger streams from fall through spring but are too warm in summer. This critical volunteer data obtained by TLGV

Water Quality Monitoring Volunteers is used by CT DEEP for updating its cold-water stream habitat map. More information at <https://portal.ct.gov/deep/water/inland-water-monitoring/cold-water-stream-habitat-map>

Eastern Connecticut Conservation District

Green Schoolyard v2.0 - ECCD staff are planning a green schoolyard at Jennings School in New London. The school will be installing raised bed gardens and planting them with pollinators and/or vegetables, which will be determined. ECCD will be purchasing a garden shed to store tools and supplies and will be planning a field experience for the students.

Urban Waters and Underserved Populations – to be implemented in tandem with Green Schoolyard v2.0 grant. ECCD staff attended an open house for Jennings School at which the Enviroscape was demonstrated. Funded by Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

From Rain Gardens to Riparian Buffers – work continues installing rain gardens and riparian buffers throughout southeastern CT along the coast from Groton to Stonington and along the tri-town trail from Groton to Preston. Rain gardens have been installed in Stonington, Groton and Ledyard. A riparian buffer is planned in Ledyard and riparian buffers have been installed in Groton and Stonington. Additional rain gardens are being planned for Groton and Pawcatuck. Educational brochures have been created in English and Spanish. Interpretive signs have been designed and have been ordered. Once received, the signs will be installed. Funded by Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

Project Oceanology B-WET Grant Partnership – in collaboration with Project O, ECCD will be constructing a pergola at Barnum Elementary School in Groton. ECCD will be collaborating with Project O to assist with planning pollinator gardens at Charles Barrows STEM Academy in Windham.

EB Mitigation Fund/Mohawk Northeast Mitigation Fund/ FY23 LIS/BIL Shewville Dam Fishway Construction in Ledyard, CT – ECCD selected a construction firm, Terry Contracting and Materials, to build the fishway. Construction is expected to begin this summer.

Free-stall barn/manure waste storage facility in Lebanon, CT – the producer is having the facility designed and is waiting for the site to dry out before starting site work. We anticipate site work will begin in late spring. Once the producer receives the designs, ECCD will put the project out to bid. Funded by Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

French River-N Grosvenordale BMPs – in collaboration with the Town of Thompson, ECCD is installing a rain garden at the newly reconfigured Blain Rd intersection. In October 2023, Thompson excavated the rain garden site. The planting plan has been developed. ECCD will be planting the plants in May. Additionally, pervious pavers will be installed at the Thompson Public Library. Conceptual site designs have been created and approved by the Town and Library. The project will be put out to bid this spring. Funded by CTDEEP with EPA CWA Section 319 funding.

Free-stall barn/manure waste storage facility in North Stonington, CT – ECCD received funding from Long Island Sound Futures Fund to construct a free-stall barn with agricultural waste management and storage facilities at Valley View Farm. The project was initiated in early April so planning is underway. Funded by Long Island Sound Futures Fund.

Birch Plain Creek Stormwater Improvement BMPs Project – ECCD is installing 5 storm drain filters, 6 rain gardens, 5 tree filters and 1 hydrodynamic separator at Groton Estates in Groton. The storm drain filters have been ordered. Birch Plain Creek is contiguous to Baker Cove so the project will improve water quality in both water bodies. ECCD is pursuing a flood plain certificate from CT DEEP and has created conceptual site plans for all the tree filters and the hydrodynamic separator. For the flood plain certificate, ECCD has delineated the wetland boundary and has conducted an A2 Survey. This project is funded by CTDEEP with EPA CWA Section 319 funding.

Hallville Fishway – CT DEEP Fisheries has reported that alewife herring have begun to pass at the Hallville Fishway in Preston. Last season the fishway passed approximately 6,800 alewife, so hopes are high that record numbers will pass this year. The Shewville Dam Fishway, mentioned above, is upstream of Hallville so once that fishway is constructed, alewife will have access to historic spawning habitat in Amos Lake and Avery Pond. If you want to check out it out, the Hallville Fish Cam can be accessed here: <http://hallville.ddns.net:8090>

Wequetequock Clean Water Coalition – funded by the Long Island Sound Stewardship Fund, ECCD has been working with partners including Save the Sound, Clean up Sounds and Harbor, Avalonia Land Conservancy, and others, along with local stakeholders in the Wequetequock area of Stonington. The focus of the project is to build a new watershed coalition to improve water quality in Wequetequock Cove. The coalition, with local leadership, has met 7 times since July 2023. The coalition developed 6 work streams to concentrate on key issues. ECCD’s primary objective of the project is to work with partners to implement *Anguilla Brook/Inner Wequetequock Cove Watershed Based Plan (2021)*.

Southeast Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG)

SCCOG has new staff. Amanda Kennedy is the new Executive Director for SCCOG. Emily Bigl has been hired as an Environmental Planner.

After last winter’s flooding of the Yantic River partially breached the Fitchville Pond Dam in Bozrah, threatening homes and businesses downstream in Norwich, SCCOG and UCONN Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation (CIRCA) will be working together on development of a Flood Mitigation Plan for the Yantic River from Yantic Falls to upstream areas. The goals for the plan will be to reconnect the flood plans to the river and to potentially purchase properties that are in the most vulnerable areas. A technical advisory board for this project is under development.

SCCOG will soon be publishing a regional open space plan based upon preparing a regional open space inventory. The plan will coordinate conservation efforts across the region and produce three primary outcomes:

- a Comprehensive Open Space Inventory that will provide an up-to-date accounting of all protected and publicly accessible lands in the region, making the information easy to access and easy to maintain,
- an Open Space Data Hub that will help stakeholders make informed decisions about lands to prioritize for protection,
- municipal action plans to align local priorities with regional and state goals for open space.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

USDA NRCS is committed to supporting a diverse range of farmers, ranchers, and private forest landowners through Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities. This effort will expand markets for America's climate-smart commodities, leverage the greenhouse gas benefits of climate-smart commodity production, and provide direct, meaningful benefits to production agriculture, including for small and underserved producers. As a result of this program funding, local NRCS staff have been processing approximately double the number of applications for conservation practices than usual. Most of the new applications are focused on soil health and other practices that help to sequester carbon. NRCS staff have processed requests and have forest management plans and agriculture energy saving technology projects lined up for the next couple of years.

USDS NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Payment for CSP projects has been increased to encourage more producers to participate in the program. The CSP funding is only available for agricultural producers that are already making progress towards meeting their conservation goals.

With the record amount of soil moisture this season, there has been an increase in requests for emergency watershed protection assistance. For more information on eligibility for this help, please visit this website. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs-initiatives/ewp-emergency-watershed-protection/connecticut/connecticuts-emergency>

NRCS has been developing an alternative funding arrangement to be able to use CT Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) funding for producers on federally recognized tribal land.

Amos Lake Association

ALA will be bringing Greg Bugbee and his team from the CT Agricultural Experiment Station Office of Aquatic Invasive Species to survey the lake for any remaining Hydrilla after it was discovered in Amos Lake last year. The newly introduced aquatic invasive species was spotted near the state boat launch and has been genetically linked to the Hydrilla plaguing the Connecticut River. The hope is that the hand pulling of the weed last summer was successful at removing it, but the ALA has permits ready to treat the invader if needed.

Amos Lake Association, in partnership with the Preston Conservation and Agricultural Commission, will once again be hosting a series of Paddles on Amos Lake. Boats will put in at the state boat launch.

Paddles on Amos Lake:

- o Saturday June 22nd 9-11am Theme: Spring Happenings
- o Friday August 16th 6:30 -8:30pm Theme: Sunset paddle
- o Tuesday September 17th 7 -9pm Theme: Full Moon paddle

Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed

[Alliance for the Mystic River Watershed](#) is a relatively new partnership founded to work together to keep life in Connecticut’s Mystic River watershed safe and flourishing. Its members have been volunteering to assist CT DEEP with Alewife counts in Whitford Brook, a headwater stream of the Mystic River. Efforts are underway to restore the migratory fish passage over Long Pond Dam. Save the Sound has preliminary design plans for a Nature-like fishway winding its way up Whitford Brook, starting just above Lantern Hill Road and ending through the Long Pond Dam.

The Alliance is also promoting education on the plight of river herring, including Alewife. They are encouraging people to participate in submitting testimony in support of river herring. Click this [link](#) for more information. April 29 is the final date to submit your testimony.

Lantern Hill Valley Association

Lantern Hill Valley Association owns the dams at Long Pond and Bush Pond (Ledyard and North Stonington). The Association has initiated steps to become a non-profit organization. Its volunteers have been involved with lake monitoring and plan to expand their monitoring efforts this summer.

The Friends of Avery Pond (Preston) have been active participants in TLGV’s water quality monitoring program. They are planning an Earth Day “Kayak Klean Up” in the pond to collect trash and cut down tangled fishline and lures. Anyone interested in joining them should meet at the Avery Pond State Boat Launch on Monday, April 22 from 2 – 4 PM.

The Connecticut Federation of Lakes will be holding its annual meeting on Saturday, April 27, 2024 from 9 AM – 2 PM at the Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut, 501 Wolcott Road, Bristol, CT. There is no charge to attend. Three informative sessions are planned. CT DEEP will provide training focused on the Lake Watch program, CT DEEP Boating Division will present new developments with the Aquatic Invasive Species Stamp and Greg Bugbee of the CAES Office of Invasive Species will give a presentation on the status of invasive aquatic plants in CT. Refreshments will be provided. Register at this [link](#).

The Nature Conservancy’s (TNC) CT chapter has secured a \$2.2 million federal grant to help advance efforts statewide in urban forestry. The goal is to launch the new Connecticut Urban Forest Network for Equity and Resilience, which aims to build the state’s urban forestry capacity, particularly in communities with very low tree canopy.

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), through its Watershed Planning Program, has announced the opportunity to provide public comment on the Draft Massachusetts Statewide Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Pathogen-Impaired Waterbodies (“[Draft Statewide Pathogen TMDL Report](#)”), including 28 watershed-specific Appendices.

Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act requires states to (1) identify waterbodies that are not expected to meet surface water quality standards after the implementation of technology-based controls and (2) prioritize and schedule TMDL development. TMDLs are water quality-based controls to reduce pollutant loads from both point and nonpoint sources, and MassDEP uses available data and models to develop TMDLs that restore impaired waters or maintain high quality waters. MassDEP develops TMDLs to establish the maximum amount of a pollutant that a waterbody may receive without violating applicable Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards (314 CMR 4.00).

MassDEP will conduct two public information sessions, one in-person and one virtual. Each session will include a presentation explaining the Draft Statewide Pathogen TMDL Report. After the presentation, MassDEP will open the floor for stakeholder input.

In-person meeting:

Date: May 8, 2024

Time: 1:00 – 3:00 pm

Location: MassDEP Central Regional Office (8 New Bond St., Worcester, MA 01606)

Virtual meeting:

Date: May 9, 2024

Time: 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Location: Zoom

To participate via Zoom you must register in advance of the meeting. Click [here](#) to register.

News from Municipalities

The Preston Conservation and Agriculture Commission was represented at the Spring 2024 TRBP meeting and is motivated to become more actively involved in TRBP going forward.

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) have funds available for municipalities and community organizations to facilitate the hiring of grant preparation and writing support staff 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). Find more information at this link:

<https://longislandsoundstudy.net/about/grants/grants-and-grant-writing-assistance-opportunities/long-island-sound-resilience-grant-writing-assistance-program/>

Land Trust Updates

Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC) proudly hosted its 40th annual Connecticut Land Conservation Conference at Wesleyan University on March 23, 2024. The landmark event, Connecticut's premier gathering for land conservation practitioners, attracted approximately 550 attendees from a broad spectrum of the state's land conservation community, including representatives from land trusts, conservation groups, municipal commissions, state and federal agencies, students, and others passionate about conserving Connecticut's natural landscapes.

Avalonia Land Conservancy, Inc. has purchased an important conservation property from the Glemboski-Ous family consisting of 159.42 acres in Bozrah and Montville. The property abuts the Nature Conservancy's 343-acre Milo Light Preserve in Montville, creating a nearly 500-acre unfragmented greenway wildlife habitat.

The Conservation Fund

Wyndham Land Trust will eventually be the recipient of 317 acres of land purchased by The Conservation Fund for preservation. The land is part of the 588-acre Little Dipper Farm in Brooklyn. The Conservation Fund will be the caretakers of the land until it is sold to Wyndham Land Trust.

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 a lightning round 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 3rd Tuesday of the month in January, April, July and October.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 16, 2024, at 9:30 AM Eastern Time, via Zoom. Stay tuned for updates.

If you are not already on the e-distribution list for this publication, sign on to the TRBP Distribution list <http://thamesriverbasinpartnership.org/subscribe>.

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 and southeast coastal areas. Funding support for FY 24 for TRBP Coordinator time has been provided by The Last Green Valley.