



Thames River Basin Partnership Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Spring 2016

Volume 38

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 Workplan](#) 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

Lois Bruinooge, Executive Director of [The Last Green Valley](#), Inc. gave a program focused on Accelerating the Pace of Conservation by Participating in the Development of a Regional Conservation Strategy. The TRBP has been identified as a Regional Conservation Partnership ([www.RCPnetwork.org](#)). Local land trusts, working together with private land owners and each other, can facilitate conservation work on a larger scale. Currently the Long Island Sound Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) is available to supply funds for forestry easements throughout the LIS watershed but primarily in the CT River watershed. Land trusts, working with their abutting property owners, may be eligible to protect larger forest blocks using the federal Forest Reserve Program. TLGV is developing a Forestry RCP program focused on the Southern New England Heritage Forest, which includes much of the Thames River watershed. Forest owners would be required to produce a forest management plan, but the cost of that plan would be covered by the grant, if funded. Land trusts interested in supporting this project were encouraged to provide a letter of support to TLGV to include with the grant application.

TRBP Updates

The TRBP website is still static. The website is available, but the TRBP Coordinator has been unable to update the TRBP website since August 2015. Microsoft ended their support of

FrontPage, the software used to develop the website. Please be patient while we continue to look for funding to create a new website.

TRBP has an active Facebook page. The number of followers are increasing, but slowly. The TRBP coordinator finds this outreach tool easier to provide upcoming event announcements than the previous web calendar linked to the TRBP website. If you use Facebook, please “like” the TRBP page and it will show up in your feed.

The TRBP 16th Annual Floating Workshop was held on June 17. The main presentation of this year’s workshop was the Thames River Heritage Park. An indoor workshop was presented by Chris Cox and Penny Parsekian at Fort Trumbull. From Fort Trumbull, workshop participants boarded boats to visit two other Thames River Heritage Sites. At the first stop at City Pier in New London, we were given a tour of the New London waterfront district on route to the Custom House Maritime Museum, where Tracy McKenzie gave a short talk about the US Navy Environmental Stewardship Initiatives. Across the Thames River, some of our workshop participants chose to hike up to Fort Griswold, while others were give an informative tour of the Groton Wastewater Treatment Facility on Thames Street. Our original plan was to utilize the new Thames River Water Taxi Service to travel between heritage sites, but the operators of the service experienced a delay in their planned launch date. TRPB is fortunate to have Partners including the US Fish and Wildlife Service and Project Oceanology who provided boats for our workshop on short notice. Approximately 40 people were involved with this year’s workshop.

Partner Reports

Margaret Miner, Executive Director of Rivers Alliance of CT and CTLCV board member, was awarded the EPA's Lifetime Merit Award. Margaret is widely recognized for her steadfast advocacy and expertise on all matters involving the protection and management of Connecticut's waters. She has devoted countless hours on behalf of our state’s most precious natural resource.

Margaret Miner has been the Executive Director of the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut since 1999. The mission of Rivers Alliance is to protect all Connecticut's waters by helping those around the state who share this goal, and by working to enact good environmental laws and regulations. As Executive Director of Rivers Alliance, Margaret worked to pass state laws to protect streamflow in all water courses; to ban the water contaminant MTBE in gasoline; and to restore and protect state funding for USGS streamflow and drinking water programs.

Margaret is Co-chair of the Connecticut Water Planning Council's Advisory Group and a member of the Council's Steering Committee for statewide water planning. She is on the Board of the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters and is a member of the Connecticut Review Board for Open Space Acquisitions and Protection. Prior to coming to Rivers Alliance, she was Executive Director of the Roxbury Land Trust, and before that worked as a news reporter and as a book editor and writer. For more information about Margaret Miner’s work and the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, visit www.riversalliance.org.

[Joshua’s Trust](#) hosted the spring Thames River Basin Partnership meeting at their Atwood Farm Preserve in Mansfield, CT. Joshua’s Trust is Connecticut’s largest land trust and they are

celebrating their 50th year. They are one of three land trusts in Connecticut that have earned a National Excellence Award. They are currently focused on several administrative issues, including the renewal of their land trust accreditation and upgrading their land stewardship processes. They are also organizing a generous donation of antique farm implements into an onsite museum on their Atwood Farm Preserve.

The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV) is pleased to announce a major expansion of nationally-acclaimed water trails in the region. U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and National Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis announced on June 3 that the 20-mile Shetucket River Water Trail has been designated as one of 3 new National Recreation Water Trails in the country. This designation was made possible due to the hard work of many partners and volunteers, including the Rivers and Trails Program of the National Park Service, Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP), Towns of Windham, Sprague, and Norwich, Norwich Public Utilities, Wheelabrator Technologies, Friends of Shetucket River Valley, Willimantic Whitewater Partnership, Willimantic River Alliance, teachers and students from Harvard Ellis Technical High School, and volunteers from TLGV's Water Trails Committee. TLGV is working on informational kiosks and a paddle guide for the Shetucket River that will be released later this summer.

The Willimantic Riverfest was held in mid-May. In conjunction with the annual Willimantic Riverfest, the event celebrated the newly constructed connection between Connecticut's Air Line and Hop River State Park Trails with the re-decking of the Air Line State Park Trail Bridge over the Willimantic River and a trail extension to connect to the Hop River State Park Trail. In addition, there was a ribbon cutting for a newly added section of the Willimantic River's National Recreation Trail, which now extends the Willimantic River Water Trail into Willimantic.

The Last Green Valley initiated a new outdoor adventure program called Spring Outdoors. Spring Outdoors is modelled after the very popular Walktober programs but will only use an online schedule for walk events. For the initial year of this program, land trusts and municipal conservation commissions were asked to host events. [The New Roxbury Land Trust](#) answered the call to host a hike in coordination with this initiative.

TLGV Water Quality Monitoring Program Update:

April 2016 marked the ten year anniversary of the TLGV WQM Program. This milestone was celebrated at the annual volunteer appreciation event. As part of the event, the volunteers were inspired by a workshop that focused on bald eagles, including a live bald eagle demonstration.

2016 TLGV water quality monitoring projects were approved at the February Water Advisory Committee meeting.

- Webster Lake Monitoring
- French River Connection (Mass)
- Charlton Lakes and Ponds
- Amos Lake
- Bacteria monitoring program (Connecticut)
 - Year 2 Quinebaug River

- Broad Brook
- Cold water habitat assessments – volunteer monitoring with HOBOS and RBV will be coordinated to complement upper Natchaug Healthy Watershed initiative. The focus will be on previously unmonitored sites with higher probability of being cold water habitat. Existing TLGV equipment will be used.
- TLGV – RCPP edge-of-field monitoring project – delayed because of equipment backorder.

TLGV was invited to prepare a full application to the Massachusetts Environmental Trust requesting funds to unify the types of water quality monitoring in CT and MA and document cold water habitat streams using HOBOS temperature data loggers and the Riffle Bioassessment for Volunteers (RBV) monitoring method. If the project is selected, it will begin in July and continue for 2 years.

Northeast Connecticut Council of Governments (NECCOG) has been coordinating the development of an update of the Connecticut Route 169 Management Plan. Route 169 is a National Scenic Byway. The plan provides advisory guidance for land use issues along the byway. The Updated Corridor Management Plan will:

- Consider the option of extending the length of the designated Scenic Byway portion of Route 169 south, toward Norwich, or north, into Massachusetts.
- Rely on input from the general public and diverse stakeholders.
- Identify scenic, historic, cultural, recreational, natural, and archaeological resources in the Route 169 corridor, and establish goals and objectives for their proper management.
- Establish guidelines for branding and marketing, safety improvements, land use, tourism, and signage and wayfinding.

A Regional Plan of Conservation and Development with natural resource conservation component is in development for northeastern Connecticut.

NECCOG applied for two grants through the TIGER program of the US DOT. They expect to hear back on both of those grant applications in early fall; however, the program is extremely competitive: it is nation-wide and approximately 2% of projects are awarded.

- Grant application 1: a \$1.2 million grant to build two bridges for the Airline Trail, including one across Route 169 and the second across Needles Eye Road in Pomfret.
- Grant application 2: a grant to build a Regional Visitor Center on Interstate 395 at the former exit 100 along the northbound side of the highway. The center will be designed to resemble a barn with an observation tower disguised as a silo. This proposed \$6 million project will be a joint center for Connecticut and Massachusetts.

NECCOG is also involved in the process of developing a regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Several informational meetings were held in late winter.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District is continuing their mission of soil and water conservation.

Roseland Lake Nutrient Loads Modeling Project (Woodstock)

- Resumed lake monitoring, Spring – Midsummer lake monthly monitoring, plus stormwater event-based tributary monitoring. Early data review seems to indicate the in-lake legacy phosphorus is a significant source supplying nutrients fueling algae blooms. Lake sediment sampling will take place this summer to understand the load available in the sediment.
- Lake Workshop was held on April 6, 2016 attracting about 50 people. Keynote speaker was Dr. Ken Wagner.
- Dr. Peter Siver of Connecticut College is also involved in a separate study of the algae in Roseland Lake and its response to Copper sulfate treatments. This overlap of data gathering will be an asset to the project.

French River Watershed Based Plan (Thompson)

- Bacteria track down study results submitted to DEEP.
- Additional data being gathered in Backwater Brook in coordination with TLGV water quality monitoring program.
- An implementation project in Thompson, CT is in development stages.

Mashamoquet Septic System Upgrades – (Pomfret, Brooklyn)

- Local residents were surveyed to evaluate their information level and attitudes regarding septic system maintenance.
- A Septic System Care and Maintenance Workshop was held on April 12 – attended by 40 people
- File folders for septic system maintenance records printed with educational information have been designed, printed and distributed.

A dairy mortality composting system project in Woodstock proceeding on schedule. This facility will be powered by solar panels. Bids sent out for solar power system. Expected completion date for the project will be by end of July.

Lower Natchaug River implementation projects –

The Colonial Town House apartment complex was selected as a site for several stormwater retrofit projects involving rain gardens and tree filters.

- MOUs signed with project partners.
- The installation of rain gardens and tree filters is planned for this summer.

The Ekonk Brook WBP (Plainfield and Sterling) is in the draft stage.

- Several rain gardens to absorb and naturally treat stormwater pollutants in runoff from six dumpster pads located at Moosup Gardens apartment complex were installed.

In partnership with TLGV's Regional Conservation Partnership Project (RCPP)

- ECCD is assisting 6 farms apply for EQIP funding
- The project has been presented to many Conservation and Ag Commissions in eastern CT.

- Edge-of-Field Monitoring equipment has been purchased and the protocols for installation and water quality monitoring have been drafted.

ECCD Conservation Innovation Grant –

- This project will compare traditional formal Edge-of-Field monitoring to a modified Edge-of-Field monitoring protocol designed by ECCD.
- The project experienced a delay because of an equipment backorder, but all the monitoring equipment is in place now.
- The required Quality Assurance Project Plan and Monitoring Plan have been drafted and are currently under review.

ECCD will be a significant partner in a second RCPP project organized by Jack Clausen of UCONN

- This project involves bacteria monitoring combining event based monitoring for *E. coli* bacteria with an added analysis of bacteria for protein markers linking the source to the species of origin.
- The proposal was selected, but is in the final stage of review by NRCS.

Two-zone Tree Filter Project - Niantic

- Phase 1 Tree Filters are installed in East Lyme.
- CT DEEP has granted ECCD a special use license to install the tree filters at a DEEP parking lot at Mago Point in Waterford.

ECCD, under a Cooperative Agreement with NRCS for the Soil Health Initiative, is resuming June nitrate sampling of soil and later in the season and will be collecting corn stalks to get data on fertilizer rates and corn growth.

ECCD has several grant funded projects that have been approved but the contracts have not been executed:

- Upper Natchaug Healthy Watershed Initiative
- Broad Brook Trackdown and WBP
- Baker Cove Goose Control.

In the most recent EPA NPS § 319 grant round in CT, ECCD submitted two applications to assure we will be able to continue our mission of soil and water conservation in eastern Connecticut.

The comment period is now closed for the Proposed [Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge](#). This proposed refuge will include areas in six New England states and focus on preserving early successional habitat. A major Connecticut focus area is in the southeastern corner of the state.

The Groton Open Space Association is continuing with their New England Cottontail habitat restoration project.

CT DEEP is continuing their focus on [Identifying Watersheds for Restoration and Protection Action Plans with Connecticut Integrated Water Resource Management Efforts](#). The draft plan is available. The comment period for this document closed on June 30, 2016.

The 2016 Biannual Water Quality Assessment Report is being completed. Water quality data contributed by The Last Green Valley Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program is being used in this year's assessment. The draft plan is scheduled to be released for review in the fall of this year.

CT DEEP was the host of this year's New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission Non-Point Source Conference on April 20 and 21 at the Hartford Hilton. The archived presentations from this year's conference are available [here](#).

The UCONN Center for Land Use Education and Research (CLEAR) hosted an LID webinar in early April. The concept of low impact development (LID) has been around for quite some time now. So...is Connecticut buying into it? If so, how much? If not, why not? New research by CLEAR's NEMO Program provides some answers to these questions. This webinar will review the results of their extensive internet research covering 85 towns, and accompanying phone interviews with 78 people in those towns involved in the land use process. What are the top 5 drivers that help bring LID to a community? The top 5 barriers that keep it out? What do town planners think needs to be done? Click [here](#) to watch the 53 minute webinar.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) hosted a Soil Health Workshop in early April attended by 54 people. A second Soil Health Workshop was held in early June, which was also well attended.

The Atlantic States Rural Water and Wastewater Association is working with the town of Brooklyn to implement the Aquifer Protection Plan recently adopted by the town. They expect to be working with the Town of Woodstock on a similar project in fiscal year 16/17.

The Connecticut Federation of Lakes (CFL) hopes you will consider buying a few LAKES plates for your fleet of cars, trucks and trailers. Dressing up your vehicles with a LAKES image raises the public's awareness of and the need to care for Connecticut's precious ponds and lakes, the glistening gems of our landscape.

The CFL [website](#) provides excellent lake stewardship information, best practices, newsletters and dates of upcoming lakes conferences. The LAKES plates also show your family's love of lakes and lake living. Each tax deductible \$50 donation to the Connecticut Federation of Lakes, Inc., a no membership dues 501(c)(3) volunteer organization, helps support the public education costs of this important lake protection advocacy organization. Since 1995, the CFL has made and continues to make a difference at the town, state and national levels.

The State DMV requires the CFL have 400 paid applications collected in hand before the DMV will manufacture the first run of LAKES plates. They request you help them to reach the minimum order number of 400 plates as soon as possible. If you have any questions contact cflakesmart@gmail.com.

News from the Municipalities

The Woodstock Conservation Commission is contracting with a forester to develop a forest management plan on a 100+ acre parcel of land in the southwestern part of town and is planning to develop a forest management plan on a second parcel of town-owned land using students from the Yale School of Forestry. They also hosted a Spring Outdoors event on town-owned land in southeast Woodstock.

The Town of Hampton land use officials will be reviewing an application from a private developer for the construction and operation of a 10-megawatt solar photovoltaic energy generating facility on the south side of Route 6 and west of Fisk Road. The proposed application uses 39.7 acres of a 100 acre parcel for installation of the solar array.

Several Earth Day Cleanups took place on April 23, with funding support from The Last Green Valley:

- Town of Brooklyn,
- Town of Sprague,
- Maples Farm Park and the Town of Bozrah held a cleanup event at Maples Farm Park and trails,
- Friends of Sturbridge Trails were busy tidying up the trails in Sturbridge.
- The Groton Open Space Association organized an annual cleanup of Haley Farm State Park,
- The Canterbury Lions Club organized a town-wide cleanup in Canterbury.

Other news

A \$3.25 million program aimed at paying landowners to conserve and restore their wooded land for biodiversity and water protection is now accepting applications. The funding will come from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Healthy Forests Reserve Program; applications will be screened by the Long Island Sound Watershed Regional Conservation Partnership Program (LISW-RCPP). LISW-RCPP was formed in 2015 with a \$10 million grant from the NRCS as a multi-state, multi-agency effort to reduce nitrogen pollution from runoff within the Long Island Sound watershed.

“The LISW-RCPP is a one-of-a-kind opportunity to address nutrient inputs to Long Island Sound from the entire watershed, by focusing on working lands — agriculture, private forest owners, and restoration of vulnerable floodplains,” said Denise Savageau of the CT Council on Soil and Water Conservation. “Traditional and non-traditional partners from all sectors are coming together to implement innovative practices. This is a win-win for the watershed, and the Sound.” Applications will be accepted through August 1, 2016; information about eligibility, ranking criteria, and how to apply is available [online](#).

The "2015 Highlights of Progress: Responses to Climate Change by the EPA National Water Program" provides a summary of the major climate change-related accomplishments of EPA's national and regional water programs during 2015. In addition, major research projects

addressing climate change and water that were completed in 2015 by the EPA Office of Research and Development are described. The report reflects annual implementation of "EPA's National Water Program 2012 Strategy: Response to Climate Change." Click [here](#) to access the report.

EPA is pleased to announce the release of the National Wetland Condition Assessment (NWCA) 2011 report. This report is the culmination of a significant partnership between EPA, the states, tribes, and other partners under the National Aquatic Resource Surveys program. The NWCA report is posted at <http://www.epa.gov/national-aquatic-resource-surveys/nwca> along with data used in the assessment.

Key findings from the report include the following:

- Less than half of wetland areas (48%) are in good condition; 32% are in poor condition and the remaining 20% are in fair condition.
- Physical disturbances to wetlands and their surrounding habitat such as compacted soil, ditching, and removal or loss of vegetation, are the most widespread problems across the country. Wetlands with high levels of compacted soil are about twice as likely to have poor plant communities.
- Nonnative plants are a problem across the country, particularly in the interior plains and west. 46% of wetland areas in the interior plains and 72% of wetland areas in the west have high or very high levels of stress from nonnative plants.

If you have any questions, please direct them to Gregg Serenbetz (Serenbetz.gregg@epa.gov or call 202-566-1253).

A new USGS Online interactive mapping tool that provides summaries of decadal-scale changes in groundwater quality across the nation is now available for use by the public, water-resource managers and policymakers. About 140 million people—almost one-half of the nation's population—rely on groundwater for drinking water. To visit this new mapping tool, click [here](#).

The mapping tool shows how concentrations of 24 contaminants, such as nutrients, pesticides, metals, and volatile organic compounds, are changing over decadal periods in 67 groundwater networks across the nation. Each network consists of about 20 to 30 wells selected to represent water-quality conditions in a given geographical area, aquifer, and in some cases, a specific land use.

If you would like your organization's efforts included in the next edition of the TRBP Partners in Action Report, consider attending one of our quarterly meetings. It includes a [TRBP Plan of Work](#) activity reporting session, which is an informal "round the table" discussion of Partner activities. It is a great time to network with like-focused organizations. All meetings begin at 9:30 AM. Generally, the TRBP meets quarterly on the 3rd Tuesday of the month.

The next TRBP meeting will be on July 19, 2016. The meeting will be held at Project Oceanology in Groton, CT. The guest presenter meeting will be USDA NRCS Soil Scientist Jason Isleib, speaking on Coastal Zone Soil Surveys in Connecticut.

Contact [Jean Pillo](#) at (860) 928-4948 for more information or to be added to the TRBP distribution list.

If you are not already on the e-distribution list for this publication, contact [Jean Pillo](#) by email and request to be added, or you can download the past versions of this quarterly publication from the [TRBP website](#).

The Thames River Basin Partnership is a voluntary, cooperative effort to share resources, and strives to develop a regional approach to resource protection. The Partnership is made up of a variety of agencies, organizations, municipalities, educational institutions, companies, and individuals interested in the environmental health of the greater Thames River basin. Partial funding support for FY 16 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.