



Thames River Basin Partnership

Partners in Action Quarterly Report

Fall 2017

Volume 44

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

If you missed the fall 2017 TRBP meeting, you missed a co-presentation by Erik Bedan of the DEEP Water Planning and Management Division and Eric Thomas, Watershed Manager in the DEEP Watershed/Nonpoint Source Management Program. The presentation was entitled, "Natchaug River Watershed: Overview of a Protection Plan and Healthy Watershed". The Natchaug River is eastern Connecticut's benchmark stream for water quality. In January 2016, the Eastern Connecticut Conservation District received an award for a healthy watershed initiative grant from the DEEP to develop an anti-degradation plan for the river system. This is the first such project in Connecticut. DEEP has been carefully deciding what the structure of a healthy watershed plan should include in order for the final plan to have the greatest success.

The plan should include the following:

- an assessment of the current health of the Natchaug River system,
- an assessment of the vulnerabilities and threats to the river system,
- an assessment and prioritization of watershed protection needs,
- the development of a healthy watershed plan in collaboration with DEEP, including Action Plans and anti-degradation policies and select local Plans of Conservation and Development strategies,
- a schedule and milestones to guide implementation, and
- defined plan ownership and endorsed Partner Roles

Once a contract with CT DEEP has been executed, ECCD will refine the process and continue progress where the Natchaug River Conservation Action Planning Process ended in 2009.

TRBP Updates

Project Oceanology has reached out to TRBP with an offer to host the 2018 TRBP Floating Workshop on their Envirolab research vessel. The workshop has been scheduled for the afternoon of Friday, June 15, 2018 with a theme of River Continuity.

A small grant for Thames River Basin Partnership Floating Workshop scholarship funds has been awarded to ECCD on behalf of the TRBP. This \$500 award from the Chelsea Groton Foundation will be used to fund 20 Floating Workshop scholarships for municipal officials to encourage their participation in the event.

The TRBP website is still static. TRBP continues to apply for grant funding, with the goal of developing an updated and ADA compliant website. TRBP is listed as an active partner in the 3 Regional Conservation Partnership Projects with an outreach role. The website is a critical tool for providing outreach on these regionally important projects.

Have you signed on as a follower of the [Thames River Basin Partnership Facebook Page](#) yet? This is the fastest means to receive updates from our partners. And if you are a TRBP partner looking for help reaching out with your conservation project updates, you can send those updates in ready to copy and paste format to TRBP@Comcast.net. Photos and graphics are encouraged.

Avalonia will be celebrating a big anniversary (50) year next year and is looking for “gifts” of events to celebrate this milestone. ECCD/TRBP will host a paddle on Poquetanuck Cove on Trails Weekend in early June. Details are still under development.

The current [TRBP Plan of Work](#) will expire in April 2018. Partners are asked to review the current plan of work and decide what the updated focus of our organization should be. We hope to have a draft prepared by late January to go into effect in April. New partners are always welcome. Contact Jean at TRBP@comcast.net for more information.

A benefit of participating in the Thames River Basin Partnership includes the opportunity to collaborate with other conservation organizations in order to achieve greater success of our shared conservation goals. In recent years, this has been evidenced by interagency cooperation through opportunities for programs funded through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service [Regional Conservation Partnership Program](#) (RCPP). The RCPP encourages partners to join in efforts with agricultural producers to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on regional or watershed scales through locally-led initiatives.

- The Last Green Valley (TLGV) [Improving Soil Health and Water Quality in the Thames River Watershed](#). The long-term objective of this project is to implement soil health conservation practices through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program on 500

acres of cropland and show a measurable improvement of edge-of-field and in-stream water quality, including a decrease in nutrient and turbidity levels.

- The University of Connecticut's (UCONN) *PATH to Reduce Pathogens in CT Agricultural Runoff* project has completed its first year of water sampling in ten streams known to have high bacteria levels, downstream of agricultural activity. Samples were sent to a specialty lab in Florida
- The Last Green Valley (TLCV) [Accelerating the Pace of Conservation in the Southern New England Heritage Forest](#). This project is now active. More information to follow.

The next TRBP quarterly meeting will be on January 16, 2018, snow date January 17, 2018 (location TBD). Our special presentation will feature staff at CT Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) providing an update on CT Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) regulation implementations and an introduction to an online MS-4 toolkit they developed.

Partner Reports

The Last Green Valley Forestry RCPP contract with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service was executed in September and an official project rollout is being planned for Spring 2018. This \$6.1 million project includes \$1.5 million special EQIP funding for forest management planning with a focus on bird habitat. \$4.6 is included to buy Healthy Forest Reserve Easements from private landowners. The project will support landowners interested in preserving their woods, including surveys, transaction costs and funding for bird habitat assessments. Landowners within the 110 acre tri-state MASS-CONN Forest area are eligible to participate in this program. Contact [Lois](#) at The Last Green Valley for more information.

TLGV Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program Coordinator's Report 2017 water quality monitoring program has wrapped up for the season.

- The 9 TLGV HOBO temperature data loggers have been retrieved and the data downloaded. Due to equipment issues, the loggers will not overwinter at their sites this year.
- Shetucket River was sampled in 7 locations for E. coli bacteria this season. For a second season, four stations in Lebanon were also monitored for E. coli.
- TLGV volunteers assisted with the UCONN PATH RCPP project. Ten monitoring sites were carefully selected in known impaired streams downstream of agriculture activity. ECCD's Michael Soares managed this project. The Ten Mile River in Lebanon, one of the sampling stations, is overlapping with the UCONN RCPP PATH project.
- The French River Connection, Charlton Lakes and Ponds group and Webster Lake Association continued their involvement in monitoring in Massachusetts.
- Amos Lake Association conducted lake sampling in August.
- EPA Region 1 gave a half day training workshop for lake groups interested in monitoring for cyanobacteria. This looks like a promising new program for TLGV to explore.

- Two RBV training sessions took place and teams were involved in collecting samples for determining high-quality water using this protocol through November 30. A total of 15 samples were submitted to CT DEEP this season.
- The TLGV Water Advisory Committee met on November 14. Judy Rondeau of ECCD gave a presentation on the French River Watershed Based Plan.

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) negotiated with the CT DEEP to expand the project area for their Mashamoquet Brook Septic System upgrades to include priority lots in the Wappaquia Brook watershed after a sample contaminated with *E. coli* collected in a PATH project water sample tested positive for human biomarkers. Additional project outreach took place at Positively Pomfret Day on September 23, 2017.

ECCD's Roseland Lake Nutrient Modeling Project is progressing. A presentation on how nutrients cycle into and out of Roseland Lake will be presented to DEEP by project consultant, Rick Canavan, in December. Once the model is complete, the Roseland Lake Management Plan will be completed. Priorities in the plan will be determined based on the outcome of the nutrient cycling model. A full presentation to the public will be presented in January.

ECCD completed the French River Watershed Based Plan and implementation project in Thompson, CT. The 300+ page plan follows the EPA required 9 element outline and includes steps needed to restore water quality in the French River watershed based on the recommendations in the plan. As part of the EPA Clean Water Act §319 grant through the CT DEEP, ECCD staff installed a suite of stormwater treatment retrofit techniques at the Thompson Public Library to restore water quality in Backwater Brook. This small stream is piped under the road and parking lot of the library and daylighted just upstream of its confluence with the French River. The storm drains on the library campus flow into the stream unfiltered. Two different styles of rain gardens were installed on the library grounds. One is planted with perennials. The other is a grass rain garden. Also installed at the library is a stormwater planter that intercepts the roof runoff and drains it into a custom made planter near the library entrance. The planter will use natural processes to treat airborne pollution and bird droppings from the roof before draining into the French River. Several mid-parking lot storm drains were fitted with custom-sized storm drain filter inserts. The Thompson Public Library is located at 934 Riverside Drive in North Grosvenordale, CT. Additionally, a tree filter was installed at the Mary R Fisher Elementary School and an Enviroscape was purchased for the school. The Enviroscape, along with the BMPs installed at the library and tree filter installed at the school, will serve to educate students about nonpoint source pollution and methods to reduce it.

Another ECCD EPA CWA § 319 grant through the CT DEEP funded the installation of a woodchip bioreactor at Valleyside Farm in Woodstock. A woodchip bioreactor is a simple means to intercept underground tile drainage and pass it through woodchips as a water treatment system. Tile drainage systems are installed on farm fields to help extend the growing season, but a side effect is that the drainage water often contains high levels of nutrients. Using woodchips as a carbon source, the nutrients in the drainage water will interact with natural microbes to compost the woodchips, using up the available nutrients in the process. Water quality monitoring to demonstrate the effectiveness of this technology is planned to begin in spring 2018.

ECCD is also making progress on another 319 project at Fairvue Farm in Woodstock. The silage storage bunker floors have been replaced and subsurface drainage installed to direct clean subsurface water away from the silage storage area. Also, a high/low flow separator was installed to direct silage leachate to two concrete storage tanks, which are currently being constructed.

A short distance outside of the Thames River watershed, ECCD staff is developing a stakeholder group to focus on resident Canada geese in the Baker Cove area. Resident Canada geese are non-migratory. Their waste was determined to be contributing to the closing of the shellfish beds in Baker Cove. The geese are also a hazard to navigation at the Groton-New London airport. The project is in the coalition-building stage. Various strategies will be explored to determine what the best options will be for goose management.

ECCD has received funding from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund to conduct workshops, install 100 rain gardens and 100 rain barrels in eastern Connecticut. To implement the project, ECCD is partnering with the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts of America, various service organizations at UConn, the Coca-Cola Bottling Company, the Thames River Basin Partnership, the Niantic River Watershed Committee and The Last Green Valley. ECCD anticipates starting the project in early 2018, planning throughout the winter months, then conducting workshops and installing the rain gardens and rain barrels throughout the spring, summer and fall. This grant program combines funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA), and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). If you are interested in attending a rain garden or rain barrel workshop, or installing a rain garden or rain barrel at your home, school, church or business, please contact Dan.Mullins@comcast.net, or call 860-319-8808, for more information.

The CT Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) completed a website to assist CT municipalities with MS4 regulations. MS4 is an abbreviation for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems. New regulations were implemented by DEEP in 2017. This website was designed to assist existing and new MS4 communities to comply with the updated regulations. Click here for more information on NEMO's [Connecticut MS4 Guide](#).

The Connecticut Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition (OSWA) Grant Program provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to acquire land for open space and to water companies to acquire land to be classified as Class I or Class II water supply property. Although funding for the next round is not assured, DEEP is currently accepting applications through February 1, 2018. More information [here](#). The Department will be awarding grants to projects that offer the highest conservation and recreational value - and that leverage the greatest percentage of private and municipal funding.

Are you a shutterbug? The Connecticut Land Conservation Council (CLCC), in partnership with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), is sponsoring its 2nd annual amateur digital photo contest featuring properties protected under DEEP's Open Space & Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (OSWA). All entries must be received by Monday, February 5, 2018 at 11:59pm. More information can be found [here](#).

In a continuation of a river restoration project in the Moosup River, the Brunswick Dam #1 was removed in September 2017 as part of the CT DEEP Moosup River Fish Passage and Restoration Project, funded in part by Millennium Power Partner's Quinebaug River mitigation project. This brings the total of dam removals in the Moosup River up to four. Downstream barrier removals to date also include an abandoned exposed water/sewer pipe at the Water Street crossing (2010), the Moosup River Dam #1, aka Hale Dam (2014), and the Griswold Rubber dam (2015) - making the Brunswick Dam #1 the fourth barrier removed from the Moosup River system.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) has announced that its draft [2017-2022 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) (SCORP) is available for public review and comment. The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is a planning document that identifies outdoor recreation issues of statewide significance and evaluates the supply of and the demand for outdoor recreation resources and facilities in Connecticut. The SCORP provides unified guidance to state and municipal officials as they develop and expand outdoor recreation opportunities for their respective constituents. Your comments matter! And please feel free to share this information with others.

[The Blue Plan](#), a new initiative to guide future uses of Long Island Sound so that both traditional uses and the Sound's resources and ecosystems are protected, is being developed by DEEP with the help of a number of partners. Comment on Blue Plan Documents, stop by an Advisory Committee meeting to see how stakeholders are involved, or just let us know your thoughts. More info at www.ct.gov/deep/LISBluePlan.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in partnership with the Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area, hosted another workshop in its Healthy Soils = Healthy Foods workshop series. The main speaker at this event was Ray Archuleta, a Certified Professional Soil Scientist with the Soil Science Society of America with over 30 years' experience as a Soil Conservationist, Water Quality Specialist, and Conservation Agronomist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). During his tenure with the NRCS, Ray served in New Mexico, Missouri, Oregon, and North Carolina. After his retirement from NRCS in 2017, Ray founded the Soil Health Academy, teaching Biomimicry strategies and Agroecology principles for improving soil function on a national scale.

Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development Area (CT RC&D), through a USDA NRCS CIG Grant (Conservation Innovation Grant), is creating a no-till and cover crop equipment exchange pilot program. The purpose of the project is to introduce no-till equipment to aid the implementation of soil health principles such as organic cover crop and no-till planting on Connecticut farms. The program will foster collaborative education and use of the no-till equipment to crop producers in two geographically diverse areas of Connecticut.

In late October, the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut sponsored a conversation about balancing economic growth and environmental preservation and what that means for vibrant communities. Parks and Parking Lots was one in a series of facilitated conversations the Foundation has sponsored. Over 50 people gathered at the Connecticut Audubon Society Grassland Birds Conservation Center in Pomfret to take part in this conversation.

The Community Foundation will be offering mini-grants of \$500 to nonprofits and affiliated student groups which want to continue the conversation, in the hope that the knowledge gained and the bonds formed will energize us all and lead to great things for Eastern Connecticut and beyond. For more information, contact Jennifer O'Brien at 860.442.3572 or JennOB@cfect.org.

The Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut <http://www.cfect.org> is preparing for two new environmental grant rounds in 2018. TRBP will post the announcements concerning these new grants on its [Thames River Basin Partnership Facebook](#) page as soon as the information becomes available.

The stream continuity project in Hamant Brook located in Sturbridge, MA was discussed during TRBP Floating Workshop XV. [Here](#) is an update on that project.

Upcoming Workshops and Conferences

TLGV will be cohosting a workshop “Protecting Family Farms and Forests on January 24, 2018 from 7 – 9 PM at Knowlton Memorial Hall, Route 44 in Ashford, CT. TLGV is partnering with CT DEEP, Connecticut Farmland Trust, MassConn and the Ashford and Willington Conservation Commissions to conduct this event. The snow date, if necessary, is January 29, 2018.

News from the Municipalities

The Woodstock Conservation Commission met with the Chairperson of the town’s Planning and Zoning Commission to discuss the next steps needed for proposing the creation of an aquifer protection zone over a significant sand and gravel aquifer in the southeastern part of town. The Conservation Commission worked with the Atlantic Rural States Water and Wastewater Association on this effort.

Land Trust Updates

Congratulations Groton Open Space Association (GOSA) which won the National Land Trust Excellence Award from the National Land Trust Alliance at their 30th anniversary rally in Denver! Click [here](#) to see the video about GOSA’s efforts.

The Dutka family of Griswold has donated seven waterfront lots on Pachaug Pond to Avalonia Land Conservancy (ALC). In addition, the family has agreed to offer a bargain sale on another 61.5 acre parcel near Pachaug State Forest to the conservancy. In addition to the seven lots, Mary Dutka has donated another two parcels to Avalonia. The total transaction of 68 acres is one of the most environmentally significant woodland properties remaining on Pachaug Pond with pine forests, wetlands and native shrubs full of wildlife. Pachaug Pond is the largest public lake east of the Connecticut River and its shoreline is becoming increasingly developed. It is known for excellent fishing including largemouth, smallmouth and calico bass, yellow perch and northern pike. In addition to passive recreation, the site will eventually provide a public launching point for kayaks and canoes. Paddlers can visit Avalonia’s Scola Preserve on Barton Island, less than 1,000 feet away and only accessible by water. The acquisition of the Dutka property will add to existing Avalonia and State of Connecticut preserved properties on the pond, while providing

community value in the form of public access for recreation and stewardship of areas of refuge for wildlife.

Avalonia Land Conservancy has also received a gift of land in Stonington. The 28-acre gift is a portion of a much bigger forest. Small back roads surround the entire property and separate it from other forested areas and 375 acres of land surrounding the Deans Mill Reservoir owned by the Aquarion Water Company. The property features unique rock outcrops and glacial erratics. On both the east and west sides, the land descends into significant wetland areas. The eastern wetlands drain generally south and ultimately make their way to Stonington Harbor; the western wetland drains directly into the reservoir. More information can be found [here](#).

The Wyndham Land Trust recently received a donation of 81 acres of forested land in East Killingly from Anna May Scanlon of Smithfield, RI. The property will be known as the Edward R. Laby Preserve in honor of her late son, who hunted on the land. The land has been in Anna May's family since her father acquired it in the 1950s. The Wyndham Land Trust now owns a total of 2951 acres across ten towns in northeast Connecticut.

In August 2017, Northern Connecticut Land Trust closed on a 79.81 acre parcel in Stafford. The Nipmuck Woods Preserve is located in southeast Stafford, adjacent to Nipmuck State Forest, which further connects to White Farm, a 173± acre property preserved by Conservation Easement by Northern CT Land Trust. There are two existing parking areas on Route 190, and the land trust will add new signage and trail markings along existing logging trails and add a new trail which will cross Roaring Brook and extend to White Farm. This acquisition provides forest, wildlife and watershed protection of Roaring Brook, one of 15 enhanced wild trout management streams in Connecticut. It will provide additional opportunities for passive recreation and wildlife observation adding to a large unfragmented forest block protected by Nipmuck State Forest. For more information and a map of this property, click [here](#).

Other News

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of the Army (the agencies) are proposing to amend the effective date of the 2015 rule defining “waters of the United States.” The agencies are proposing that the 2015 rule would not go into effect until two years after today’s action is finalized and published in the Federal Register. This amendment would give the agencies the time needed to reconsider the definition of “waters of the United States.” The 2015 rule, which redefined the scope of where the Clean Water Act applies, had an effective date of August 28, 2015. Implementation of the 2015 rule is currently on hold as a result of the Sixth Circuit’s nationwide stay of the rule, but that stay may be affected by a pending Supreme Court case. The 2015 rule is also stayed in 13 states due to a North Dakota district court ruling. EPA and the Army are taking this action to provide certainty and consistency to the regulated community.

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.

Next meeting will be on January 16, 2018 (snow date January 17, 2018). The meeting location has not been finalized at this time.

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 previous versions of this quarterly publication from the [TRBP website](#) (Summer 2006 – Spring 2015) or more current editions from more recent editions at <http://thelastgreenvalley.org/learn-protect/watershed-protection/thames-river-basin-partnership>.

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 17 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.