



Willimantic River Review

Fall 2008

UConn Launches Willi River Study

The University of Connecticut has hired Milone & MacBroom to study “how water withdrawals from its Willimantic River wellfield affect the aquatic habitat of the river.” Questions to be addressed: How do the amount and timing of water withdrawals by the four wells affect the river’s flow? What is the relationship between the amount of the river’s flow and the quality of fish habitats? How can water withdrawals be managed for the most efficient use of well water and the least impact on aquatic habitats? To answer these questions, M and M is conducting an instream flow study along the river and also an analysis of groundwater available to the wells. This study is slated to be completed in 2009.

The Alliance is represented on the study’s Technical Advisory Group by Meg Reich, who recently joined several experts for a two-mile “wade” down the river’s instream study area that extends from the wellfield downstream to Lynch Landing, which is just above River Park. Various fish habitats were identified for monitoring. During a public presentation of the study’s scope, she recommended using existing records of groundwater levels and stream flow data for historical comparisons to the study’s results. She also requested that M & M identify conditions that might require additional water supplies from an additional water source.

The Willimantic River Study is similar to the Fenton River Study, which has already established a minimum flow rate (3 cubic feet per second) for the Fenton River before the wells next to it would be have to be shut down. This shutdown occurred during a drought in the last half of 2007, when the Willimantic wellfield became the only source of water for the campus and Storrs area for six months. The Alliance is anticipating that a minimum flow rate will be established for the Willimantic River and can envision circumstances when both the Willimantic and Fenton well fields might need to be shut down in a severe drought. State agencies are also concerned about this possible scenario, and the University appears to be

taking a more active interest in identifying additional water sources, as the Alliance has advocated for some time. The Alliance will continue to follow the Willimantic River Study closely and recommend actions to protect the river and its aquatic inhabitants.

River Park Celebration

Jennifer Kaufman, Mansfield Parks Coordinator, invites the public to the dedication of Mansfield’s new River Park on Plains Road on Saturday, September 13. From 2 to 4 p.m. there will be free kayak trials and guided walks to Lynch Landing. At 4:00 there will be a brief ceremony with comments from Mayor Betsy Paterson, Representative Denise Merrill and others. After this event, the kayaks will be available for rental to the general public for \$5.00 per day at the Mansfield Community Center. This rental program is made possible through a grant from Eastern Highlands Health District through the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) program sponsored by the Ct. Department of Public Health.

River Park offers a handicapped-accessible canoe/kayak ramp for launching into a quiet bay. This is an easy flatwater section of the river during normal conditions because Eagleville dam slows the river’s flow there. The Willimantic River Greenway Midriver Trail begins at the parking lot, and crosses the 3-acre recreational field before entering the woods. This easy trail connects to Lynch Landing on the Quinn family’s property, then continues along Depot Road to Mansfield Depot. From there the trail follows the east bank of river for two miles through Spring Manor Farm and Merrow Meadow Park before crossing the river to Coventry’s Riverview Trail Park on the west bank. Plans to extend the trail into Tolland are almost complete. For details about the trail and these parks, visit the Parks and Trails Guide at the Alliance’s website.

The Greenway Grows

A CT DEP 2008 Greenways Grant of \$5,000 was awarded to the **Willimantic Whitewater Partnership** to continue development of a riverside park in Willimantic. Their project includes signs, an informational kiosk at their Bridge Street property, an educational brochure, and an update to their website www.willimanticwhitewater.org.

Lynch Landing in Mansfield Depot is open to the public. There is a new parking lot on Depot Road (between Rt. 44 and Rt. 32). The trail is along an old farm road that offers an easy walk (two-tenths of a mile) down to the riverbank, which is a pleasant place to fish or just relax by large riverside maples. The Quinn family has generously offered public access to their land to the public as part of the Greenway. Because this is private property, please stay on the trail. Public access is only along the trail and at the riverbank. The Willimantic River Greenway Midriver Trail passes through, connecting to River Park just south of the Landing. For information about the trail going north, visit the Parks and Trails Guide on the Alliance's website. If you are paddling down the river, you can pull up to the Landing to take a rest. The river is too far from the road to serve as a launch site. The River Park launch just downstream on Plains Road is a better place to put in.

Calendar

Saturday, September 13

River Park Celebration Join the fun from 2 to 5 at Mansfield's new park on the Willimantic River. Free use of kayaks at the boat launch from 2 to 4 and guided walks to Lynch Landing. Dedication ceremony at 4. Sponsored by Mansfield Parks and Recreation. Directions: From Route 44 in Mansfield: travel south on Route 32 for three-tenths mile to a right turn onto Plains Road. Park entrance is on right by the bridge. Information: 429-3015 x204.

Saturday, September 13

Water Quality Monitoring Training The Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor Water Quality Monitoring Program is offering free training

and use of equipment to "citizen scientists" who are willing to collect data to help us learn more about the current condition of their local streams. The "RBV" method locates pollution-sensitive insects to determine water quality. Training session from 9:00 a.m. to noon at Ashford Town Hall. Call Jean at the 860-928-4948 to reserve a space.

Tuesday, September 23

Wells Workshop for Homeowners If you own a well, you may be wondering where your well water comes from and how to have the best water quality and quantity. These questions and others will be answered in a workshop at 7:30 p.m. at the Buchanan Center in Mansfield Center. John Hankins, hydrogeologist at Fuss and O'Neill, will explain how private wells work and discuss typical well problems. Robert Miller, Director of Health at Eastern Highlands Health District, will describe the District's resources for well owners. Directions: Buchanan Center is next to Mansfield Library on Route 89 at a half-mile from the junction with Route 195. Sponsored by the Alliance and the Eastern Highlands Health District. For information, call 429-7174 or 429-3325.

Saturday, October 11

Visit the H.E.E.P.! A 2-mile walk in Storrs at the University of Connecticut's new Hillside Environmental Education Park (HEEP), featuring scenic lookouts and a boardwalk loop trail around several created and restored wetlands. Tour will be followed by an optional one-mile walk in Shelter Falls Park. Meet at 10:00 a.m. Directions: From jct. with Rt. 44, go south on Rt. 195 for one and a half miles. At stoplight, turn right onto N. Eagleville Rd. and go a half-mile to second stoplight. Turn right onto N. Hillside Rd. In four-tenths mile, turn left and go up access drive to the new North Hillside parking lot. This "Walktober" event is sponsored by the Alliance, Mansfield Parks and Recreation, and UConn's Office of Environmental Policy. For information call 486-1031 or 429-7174. For a trail map, visit www.ecohusky.uconn.edu

Willimantic River Alliance – Membership Form

Name _____
 Address _____
 Town _____ State _____ Zip _____
 E-Mail _____ Phone _____

Contact me about volunteer opportunities for the WRA

Mail completed form and check to:

WRA at P.O. Box 9193, Bolton CT 06043-9193

Memberships	Annual Dues
Senior/Student	\$ 5.00
Individual	\$10.00
Family	\$15.00
River Steward	\$ 50.00
Patron	\$ 250.00
	(Lifetime Member)

Thank you for joining the Alliance! Your membership dues are tax deductible.

Willimantic River Alliance

Founded in 1996, the Alliance has a mission “to protect and preserve the Willimantic River through cooperative and educational activities that promote regional awareness, stewardship, and enjoyment of the river and its watershed.” As a coalition of citizens, officials and local agencies, the Alliance sponsors events such as regional forums and outings and publications, including a newsletter and website www.willimanticriver.org. Our email address is info@willimanticriver.org.

Willimantic River Alliance, Inc. is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt corporation. The Alliance promotes development of the Willimantic River Greenway, an official state greenway along the river’s 25 miles from Stafford Springs to Willimantic. This regional project aims to connect recreational, historical and natural resource features along the river. These connections are being created by the nine riverside towns through natural resource preservation and recreation projects, such as linking trails and improving access to the river.

The river’s watershed includes seventeen towns: (in Ct.) Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, Ellington, Hebron, Lebanon, Mansfield, Stafford, Union, Tolland, Vernon, Willington, Windham, and (in Mass.) Monson, Wales.

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