



Willimantic River Review

Newsletter of the Willimantic River Alliance

Spring 2015

www.willimanticriver.org

Fanwort Invades Eagleville Lake

In the fall of 2012, the CT Agricultural Experimental Station performed an inspection and identified very high levels of fanwort in Eagleville Lake. Fanwort is a highly invasive aquatic plant which degrades fish & wildlife habitat, adversely affects water quality and displaces beneficial, native vegetation. The dense growth of fanwort can also impede safe recreational use of the water body. The towns of Coventry and Mansfield have partnered to work together to tackle this problem, since the river and lake form the boundary between the two towns. They secured a grant from the CT DEEP, will share in the required match for the grant, work together to educate the public on the problem and create a plan to address it. They plan to proceed with an herbicide treatment program to control the non-native fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) in Eagleville Lake this summer.

A public information session was held at the Eagleville Firehouse, 879 Stafford Road (RT 32), Mansfield, CT, on June 10th at 7:00 PM. Representatives from the Towns and the contractor that will be conducting the herbicide treatments were available to answer questions. The following is a formal treatment notice required by the CT DEEP.

NOTIFICATION OF AQUATIC TREATMENT - EAGLEVILLE LAKE – MANSFIELD/COVENTRY

In accordance with the Connecticut DEEP, Pesticide Division notification requirements, Eagleville Lake in Mansfield/Coventry will be chemically treated with the USEPA/CT DEEP registered herbicide Clipper to control nuisance aquatic vegetation tentatively on Tuesday, June 23rd. Following treatment on June 23rd, the lake will be closed to all uses, including swimming and boating until June 4th. Additionally, use of the lake water for irrigation, domestic purposes or livestock watering will be restricted for 5 days or until June 29th. Prior to treatment, the shoreline will be posted with signs in accordance with DEEP requirements.

Due to heavy rainfall, the treatment has been postponed to Tuesday, July 7.

There will be a follow-up treatment on Tuesday, July 21, 2105.

These dates may be changed if the weather is not favorable.

The work is being performed for the Towns of Coventry and Mansfield pursuant to a permit issued by the CT DEEP. Information on the application may be obtained from the person named below. The treatment is being performed by the state licensed firm Aquatic Control Technology LLC. of Sutton, MA. Contact: Dominic Meringolo (508) 865-1000.

Please contact Eric M. Trott (Coventry) at 860-742-4062 or etrott@coventryct.org or

Jennifer Kaufman (Mansfield) at 860-429-3015 x6204 or kaufmanjs@mansfieldct.org if you have any questions.

UConn 2015 bioblitz July 24th & 25th

The University of Connecticut will be hosting a **bioblitz** at locations on and around the Storrs campus, including sites along the Willimantic River and in the river's watershed over two days in late July.

What is a bioblitz? It is a coordinated effort to try and survey all of the species that can be found in a particular area over a predefined period of time, usually 24 hours.

The area boundaries are: North/RT 44; East/Fenton River; South/Browns Rd; West/Willimantic River. The collection period will be from 4 pm to midnight on Friday, July 24th and from 8 am to 4 pm on Saturday, July 25th. Collection sites on the river include: Eagleville Dam and River Park/Plains

Rd in Mansfield. In the Willimantic River watershed sites include: Swan Lake and HEEP area on the UCONN campus; Depot campus; Bone Mill Rd, Shelter Falls, Owen's Mere, Dunham Woods & Dunhamtown Forest; as well as sites in the Fenton River watershed. Expert taxonomists will identify specimens collected. There will also be nature walks, facility tours, workshops & activities. The grand finale and total species count will be held Saturday, July 25th at 4 pm. Please spread the word, volunteer and/or participate! Kids and adults wanted! For more details and to sign up, go to the website: bioblitz2015.eeb.uconn.edu/

Also follow on facebook (**UConn Bioblitz 2015**) and twitter (**@uconnbioblitz**)

East Coast



Greenway

A section of the East Coast Greenway now under construction in Willimantic.

A new 1.4 mile section of asphalt paved trail will meander along the banks of the Willimantic River by next spring, allowing local and long distance hikers and bikers to walk and pedal on a safe off road ten foot wide path. Construction of the Airline & Hop River Trail Extension Project started in May at the Columbia/Windham town line at the RT 66 highway bridge over the Willimantic River and will continue along the riverbank to Bridge Street (RT 32) in the Willimantic section of the town of Windham. This small but important trail will link the existing Hop River Greenway Trail that currently ends on the Columbia side of the river, with the Air Line State Park Trail-North via Riverside Drive and the Veteran's Memorial Greenway Trail that starts on Union St. near the corner of Jackson St, not far from the famous Frog Bridge.

With this new small section of trail, those so inclined can get from Bolton Notch to Putnam with only a few road crossings. The new trail will also allow a connection to the Air Line State Park Trail-South (via the trestle bridge across the Willimantic River at the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum off of Bridge St.) as far as East Hampton, CT.

These trail connections through Willimantic are critical in the evolving state and East Coast Greenway (ECG) trail systems. The ECG is a developing 2,900 mile long trail system, linking many of the major cities of the Eastern Seaboard from Calais, Maine to Key West, Florida. Nearly 30 percent of the route is already on traffic-free greenways, creating safe, accessible routes for people of all ages and abilities. The ECG fosters healthy lifestyles, empowers sustainable transportation, and promotes tourism on shared use trail systems.

The town of Windham received grants for this \$2.4 M project and selected the Trademark Construction Company of Bristol, CT to build the new trail. Years of effort have gone into planning this important project just now coming to fruition.

RT 275 Bridge in Eagleville to be replaced this summer

The one lane bridge over the Willimantic River just downstream from the dam in Eagleville is scheduled to be replaced with a new two lane bridge due to the poor condition of the current structure, originally built in 1900 and later reconstructed in 1973.

At a public information meeting held this past winter, the Connecticut Department of Transportation engineers reported that the poor condition of the structure and rails means an emergency declaration was advanced to act quickly, so a pre-cast concrete box beam bridge, with two spans on the existing stone piers, can be put into place this summer, over a five month construction period. State statutes require bridges be a minimum of two lanes, so the current 14 foot wide one lane bridge will be upgraded with a new 32 foot wide structure, having two eleven foot wide travel lanes and two five foot wide shoulders. The project is estimated to cost \$2.9 M and the state will fund the entire cost. The parks on each side of the bridge will remain open during construction, but the bridge will be closed to all traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, for two months. Traffic will be re-routed via RT's 31 & 32, a detour of seven miles.



The Alliance made comments at the meeting and submitted written comments, in particular requesting pedestrian crossing pavement markings and signs to accommodate paddlers crossing from the dam to Eagleville Preserve.

Dates of the construction are not yet available, but information about the project can be found at this website:

http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dpublicmeetingsminutes/project_32-148_public_info_meeting.pdf

Contact: Ms. Lesgie Ruiz at CONNDOT 860-594-3351 or Mr. Michael Woods at Close, Jensen & Miller at 860-563-9375



New KIOSKS at Boat Launches

Our National Recreation Trail has been enhanced with information kiosks at six riverside locations along the Willimantic River Water Trail. Last fall wooden structures were constructed & installed by Ellis Technical School students and their instructor, overseen by Bill Reid, Chief Ranger with The Last Green Valley, a National Heritage Corridor. Bill also stained the wood. Lois Bruinooge, Director of TLGV excerpted text from the water trail guide and had weather & graffiti resistant panels made for each location. The colorful panels have maps, photos and info unique to each location.

The panels were installed this spring. The back side of the kiosks have space where flyers, maps or other info can be posted. **The kiosks are located at the boat launch and landing areas at: Heron Cove Park in Tolland; Merrow Meadow Park, River Park & Eagleville Dam in Mansfield; Eagleville Dam in Coventry; RT 66 Rest Area/Hop River Trail in Columbia.** The kiosks were funded with a grant from CT DEEP to TLGV.

Many thanks to Bill, Lois and Willimantic River Alliance members who worked on this project.

The past two years have been very busy for the Willimantic River Alliance. While there have not been the usual number of board meetings or public events, the officers and board members have participated in a huge number of meetings about issues affecting the river and its watershed. The major topics covered are highlighted below. Many thanks to all! x Meg Reich, President May'15

Sewer and water at Four Corners, Mansfield Voters approved a referendum in November to fund the sewer project there and an EIE is underway; a draft should be available by the end of this summer, with a public hearing by fall. In late May the water diversion permit application for the Connecticut Water Company to provide additional potable water to the UCONN campus, the Four Corners area and the Storrs section of Mansfield was recommended to be approved by CT DEEP.

Water to the university and the entire Storrs area currently served by UCONN's piped water supply, comes mostly from UCONN's four wells drilled into the aquifer adjacent to the Willimantic River at Spring Manor Farm. Those wells and the ones along the Fenton River aquifer are close to their capacity in the summer months, so the Connecticut Water Company will be providing supplemental water to the Storrs area, as it is needed, from its Shenipsit Reservoir in Vernon, Ellington & Tolland via a **regional pipeline through Tolland and Storrs**.

This multi-year **water supply planning process** for Storrs involved public meetings and document reviews which called attention to the need to import water from outside the area. When the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) offered to pipe water from its reservoirs in northwestern Connecticut to Storrs, environmental and economic concerns were raised. Alliance members were among the first to comment on such issues and to remind policy makers that the state has no statewide water supply plan. It was the fall of 2011 when this issue became one of concern to many in the state; the legislature became involved and updated laws requiring a statewide water supply plan in 2013/14. Alliance members Pat Bresnahan and Bruce Rich are active members of state committees working to craft the first ever **statewide water supply plan**.

Meg Reich has been the Alliance's representative to the town's **Four Corners Sewer & Water Advisory committee** since March 2010. For many years the need for additional water for the University has been studied. The need for sewers for the Four Corners area was apparent as early as 1968, but it was not until 2009 that the desire for a piped water supply for that area became known. A **new Water System Advisory Committee** was requested by the town to advise it on development issues, and Reich has volunteered to sit on that group, which meets quarterly, and had its first meeting in the summer of 2014. It meets next on June 24, 2015.

The existing UCONN water pollution control facility (sewage treatment plant) will be accepting the new sewage waste from Four Corners; the treated effluent from that facility discharges into the Willimantic River just downstream of Eagleville Dam. The Willimantic River, like others of sufficient flow in the state, is an officially designated waste receiving stream.

Other projects in which the Alliance has been involved have included:

The update of the town of **Mansfield's Plan of Conservation and Development**, called **Mansfield Tomorrow** and the new **UCONN campus master plan**. Alliance members Wetherell, Bresnahan and Reich have been active on committees and in meetings for both projects. Storm water runoff control measures for new campus development are important to restore the health of Eagleville Brook, which runs through the campus, parallel to North Eagleville Road and empties into the Willimantic River at Eagleville Lake, just upstream from Eagleville Dam. Sand and silt from roads and parking lots at UCONN have been deposited in a sandy delta where the brook meets the river. The flora and fauna of the brook have been severely impacted over the decades. The CT DEEP was the first agency in the country to propose a TMDL (total maximum daily load) of contaminants carried by storm water based on impervious cover from urban development at UCONN for Eagleville Brook, back in 2007. Since that time UCONN has installed rain gardens, pervious pavement and other physical improvements to reduce storm water runoff into Eagleville Brook. The measures seem to be working, from the water quality samples being taken, but each and every new building or renovation needs to have appropriate measures designed and installed, as Alliance President Reich implored at public hearings and in written comments last summer on two new STEM buildings, a residence hall and science building, currently under construction.

Bresnahan and Reich were asked to sit on a university committee that met in 2013 & 2014, on siting a new location for the **MAA or main accumulation area** for short term storage of biological, radioactive and hazardous waste awaiting transport to approved disposal facilities. The current MAA is on the agricultural campus within the watershed of the Willimantic Reservoir public water supply. The site recommended by the committee for a new MAA is close to the planned new Innovations Partnership building, the first building in the university's hi-tech research and development park. The new MAA facility is currently being designed.

The new campus road serving the park, referred to as the **North Hillside Road extension**, is currently under construction. It will connect the existing dead end road segment from North Eagleville Road to RT 44, aligning with the intersection to Mansfield Professional Park. This new R & D park and road have been planned for almost three decades. The Alliance has commented in the past on the park, the road, and the MAA, all of which are within the watershed of the Willimantic River.

A new boat launch and landing area in Willimantic is needed to access the planned Whitewater Park at Bridge St. WRA is working with the Whitewater Partnership, the Connecticut Eastern Railroad Museum, TLGV and the town of Windham to coordinate this new point of access to the river and to possibly request an extension of the Willimantic River National Recreation Trail.

For more news and events go to the Willimantic River Alliance facebook page. Thanks to Pat Bresnahan & Bruce Rich for postings!