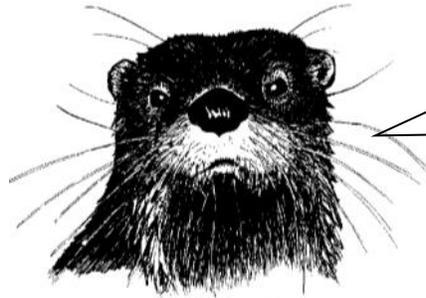




Farmington River News



Look inside for ways to help me and my friends on the river!
Want FRWA's enews?
Text FRWAENEWS to 22828.

Issues and Activities in the Farmington River Watershed.

Salmon Spawn Hope by Returning to River

Last fall, CT DEEP fisheries biologist Steve Gephard and his colleagues got a surprise, but not the one you might think. It started when a few Atlantic salmon nests, a.k.a. redds, were spotted in the Farmington River (locations undisclosed). That wasn't the surprise. After all, for years salmon had been arriving at the Rainbow Dam fish ladder on the lower Farmington River, en route to upstream breeding areas. And for years, biologists had been intercepting them and sending them to hatcheries where their eggs and fry could be raised in safety. The fry were then stocked in the rivers, as part of a long-term strategy to boost the survival of young salmon until so many wild adults were returning to CT that they could once again risk breeding naturally out in the river.

But after more than 20 years of nurturing the young, the numbers of returning adult salmon were still frustratingly low. In the last 5 years, the number of adults arriving at Rainbow Dam averaged 5 a year. In 2013 the US Fish and Wildlife Service (US FWS) finally dropped its effort to re-establish Atlantic salmon in the Connecticut watershed (including the Farmington River). CT DEEP has soldiered on with a "legacy" salmon program, hatching and stocking a modest number of fry each year. But wild adults returning to Rainbow Dam fish ladder are now allowed to head upriver and try breeding on their own. When word got out that some of those adults were indeed nesting in the river, it was no more than biologists expected. But they rate the chances of a population recovery from so few redds to be very, very slim.

What really surprised Steve and his fellow fisheries biologists was the excitement of everyone else! It turns out that glum predictions just can't quell the incredible satisfaction of seeing wild salmon laying eggs in a river where they were once abundant. Everyone is rooting for their success in the face of the odds.

We're joining in the cheering. Welcome back, salmon, and good luck!

P.S. Those of you who help stock the hatchery salmon fry in April and May should contact Bruce Williams at DEEP for info on locations and schedule.



DEEP staff stocking salmon fry in the Farmington river. A legacy program continues.



The Farmington River Watershed Association

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The Farmington River Watershed Association is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the Farmington River and its Watershed through research, education and advocacy.

www.frwa.org



A Toast to Spring, Wine for the Watershed

Silent Auction & Wine Tasting
April 7, 7:00 – 9:00 pm
Farmington Community Center
321 New Britain Avenue, Farmington, CT

Details:
Live music, hors d'oeuvres
Wine tasting and Auction 7-9 pm
\$30 per person

860.658-4442 ext 201 and www.frwa.org.
All proceeds to benefit FRWA

Save the Date!

**Jamie McEwan Whitewater Triple Crown
Tariffville Gorge, July 22—24, 2016**

Permits are being applied for and planning is underway but the dates are SET: the Jamie McEwan Whitewater Triple Crown challenge is July 22 through the 24th! FRWA is proud to be the sponsoring organization for our second year. Please check back to our website for important updates on the races and any spectator or participant news!

Want to try your hand at racing? Participants can register for three races: Wild water racing, slalom and freestyle. Wild water racing is about speed and the fastest boat down the river wins. Slalom requires precision; the paddlers must negotiate a series of gates for the fastest time. Penalties are assessed for touching the gate poles or missing a gate entirely. Each boat gets two runs with the better run as their result. Freestyle is an acrobatic contest of spins, cartwheels and flips in whitewater. Incredible balance and reflexes prevail as paddlers are judged for their tricks. The competitions include Men's, Women's, and Junior classes, as well as classes for kayak and one and two-paddler canoes.



Triple Crown Kayak Race Participant. Photo: Tom Cameron



Progress on Your State Water Plan

Supporters of the Farmington River, give yourselves credit for re-energizing state water planning! When water from Barkhamsted Reservoir was proposed for supplying UConn, you spoke out. The result was the 2014 Act Concerning the Responsibilities of the Water Planning Council (WPC). Ever since, planning has been in progress. Since water is essential, used by all living things, managed by multiple agencies and businesses, located without regard to human convenience, and not always predictable, water planning is complex in every way. In addition to the Water Planning Council, there is a WPC Advisory Group (with subgroups) and a Steering Committee (with subcommittees). Each group has different but overlapping responsibilities. There is a simultaneous effort underway to develop three Water Utility Coordinating Committees across the state that will establish the exclusive service areas of water utilities.

FRWA is tracking the state water planning in general, and serving on the Science and Technical Subcommittee in particular. As noted in our comments on the Bloomfield/Niagara bottling issue (see page 4) water planning is one step and one tool for ensuring that our state's water—including the high-quality drinking water from the Farmington Watershed—is managed in a way that serves natural systems and future needs as well as immediate commercial gain.

We can't cover the whole process here, but much more information is available at the state's water planning site, <http://www.ct.gov/water/site/default.asp>, and at Rivers Alliance of CT, http://www.riversalliance.org/Topics/Water_Planning.cfm. You may also be interested in the panel discussing "How a Water Plan Will Change Connecticut's Future," a video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvpVwzEn78s&feature=youtu.be>.

In Memory - Curtiss Bronson Hickcox, III

Curtiss Bronson Hickcox, III, 40, was a builder of things and relationships, Curt focused on creating quality in every aspect of his life. Be it friendships of decades or projects, he strove to build things meant to last. If he set his mind to something, you could be certain it would be double-buttressed and of the finest craftsmanship. A graduate of The Watkinson School and Curry College, Curt most recently brought his craftsman's eye and ingenuity to work as a senior field technician for Trinity ERD, where he kept on the cutting edge of construction testing having just successfully completed a test lab which recently received the only UL rating for certain building forensic testing in the world.

His personality bred camaraderie, such that even those who were barely acquainted with him lit up when he entered the room. He lived life with love, laughter, loyalty, and integrity.

Curt renewed himself in places near the water; his family's cabin on the shore of Moosehead Lake in Maine, a master fly fisherman standing waist-deep in the Farmington River or as an accomplished sailor. Water, whether at the river, lake or the ocean fed his soul. The sustainability of our waterways was very important to him.

Curt's great aunt Jessie Louise "Pat" Covert, longtime Simsbury teacher and resident was one of the charter members of The Farmington River Watershed Association. He proudly followed the family tradition with his sincere interest and love of our environment.

Curt leaves his wife: Abigail M. Daniels of West Hartford.





Plans for the Pequabuck

Finding Opportunities for Our Biggest Tributary

This month marks the public debut of FRWA's project to produce an "EPA-approved watershed-based plan" for the Pequabuck River. The plan's purpose is to address one very specific problem: pollution from multiple ("non-point") sources that enters the river via rainstorms and snowmelt. Non-point-source (NPS) pollution in stormwater runoff is the primary form of pollution in our region's rivers. It includes sediment, petrochemicals, pesticides, bacteria from animal waste, and a host of other substances. It's a major problem in paved areas, where contaminated stormwater spills straight into waterways without being filtered and detoxified by plants or soil. A plan for the Pequabuck is a first step toward reducing its stormwater pollution.



More "green" banks could be part of the Pequabuck River plan.

The first public talk about the plan, to report progress and invite input from local residents, was given at Bristol Public Library on March 9 by Eileen Fielding. She explained the work to date done by Princeton Hydro Engineering. Since September, our Princeton Hydro Engineering consultant Michael Martin has gathered information that helps locate trouble spots and places where remedies could be applied. He has met with town representatives from the Pequabuck valley (Harwinton, Plymouth, Burlington, Bristol, Plainville, and Farmington) as well as other agencies and organizations. This spring's public programs are to bring local people into the loop so they are aware of the project and can share their knowledge of the river.

If you are interested in this project, you can contact FRWA with questions or for information about any upcoming presentations. (860-658-4442 x205, or efielding@frwa.org)

All of you who gave to the December 2014 fundraiser that made this project possible, we THANK YOU once more for helping us tackle a big task! Additional funding for the project came from a Clean Water Act Section 319 grant from the EPA.

Where is Coppermine Brook?

Coppermine Brook in Bristol flows into the Pequabuck River, which then flows into the Farmington. This past fall, some of the brook was reported missing (see photo). In December, FRWA and a posse of partners went looking for the cause. Unusually dry weather, as in late 2015, can cause a stream section to naturally sink below ground level, but we wanted to know



Coppermine Brook in Bristol, December 2015

whether withdrawals from nearby water utility wells were a contributing factor. The

New Britain Water Company and Bristol Water Department were helpful in troubleshooting, and our inquiries turned up no unusual groundwater removals. Dry weather and a porous gravel bed under the stream (installed some years ago for a pipeline) may have been the major causes. The incident pointed up the need for good historic records on stream flows! P.S. The brook is now flowing above ground again.



John DiVenere, Alisa Phillips-Griggs, Doug Jann, Carole Noble, Jason Morrocco, and Alicea Charamut locate water above and below the dry section of brook.



Citizens Oppose a "Done" Water Deal

There's a story about a cabbie who was paid a fare - with no tip. The customer asked if the payment was correct. The cabbie said, "Yeah, it's correct. But it ain't *right*."

That's how a lot of people seem to feel about the town of Bloomfield welcoming Niagara Bottling with a big tax break, so it can open a plant to bottle and re-sell water from the MDC. They feel the same about the MDC's decision to provide water and sewer service to Niagara Water at reduced rates. Faced with community ire, the Town says it was all legal and they did it for the sake of economic development. The MDC says they are obligated to sell to any customer in their service area, and they have abundant water. All correct. So why are so many people saying "It ain't right"?

Appearance of secrecy. Bloomfield town officials apparently assisted in keeping Niagara's identity quiet during negotiations and reviews by town commissions. Many Bloomfield citizens were completely surprised to see Niagara Bottling as the recipient of a tax abatement voted by the Town Council on December 14th. Likewise, the announcement of the MDC's December 14th meeting of commissioners did not explicitly mention voting reduced rates for a water bottling company. Some voters and ratepayers are left with the feeling that a deal was done behind their backs.

The message about water use. The MDC is in the business of providing water to all comers in its service area. That's expected. But the MDC also has a stated intent to *maximize* its water sales, now even offering a volume discount for a big user. That's confusing, even angering, for those who conscientiously conserve MDC-supplied water to save the resource, and their money.

Unpopular industry. It doesn't help that the water bottling industry as a whole has earned a reputation for exploiting community water resources, touting the superior qualities of bottled water (not always true), and promoting a consumer habit that strews millions of plastic bottles into our lands and waters.

Ad hoc planning. This raises questions that beg to be addressed in the state water plan that's currently under construction. There is water to supply the bottling plant, the deal could head off further rate hikes for other users, and it might be an economic boon for Bloomfield—at this time. But state planning is supposed to weigh short-term gain against long-term prospects. Isn't the water coming from the single biggest and best surface supply of drinking water in the state? With climate change, will water-rich Connecticut have an influx of new users from water-stressed regions? Might we come to regret that a single user drawing 1.8 million gallons a day of drinking water for resale can't be throttled back or switched to a non-potable source? Should there be outside review or oversight for an agreement involving this much drinking water, a public trust?

These are not easy questions to address, and we can't expect a single water utility or town to answer them. For that, we need the statewide water planners and our legislators, and they need to hear from the public they serve. Stay tuned and please stay involved.

FRWA's other comments on this issue can be found on FRWA's Action Alert Page: www.frwa.org/?p=1608

Facts about the Niagara Bottling Plant in Bloomfield

Niagara Bottling plans to build a 443,000-square-foot facility on Woodland Avenue.

The projections are that the plant will cost \$73 million and start with one bottling line using up to 450,000 gallons per day (GPD).

They can expand to 4 lines for a total of 1.8 million GPD

The Metropolitan District Commission is offering reduced rates for water and/or sewer service.

The town will receive \$440,000 in building permit fees and will collect taxes on the 42 acre parcel and real property in the building.

A tax abatement package has been agreed to between the town and Niagara which includes 100% abatement on taxes for the first 3 years, 85% the next 2, and 50% the final 2 years.



Want a Greener Lawn? Attend a Natural Lawn Care Workshop

Want to get your lawn off drugs (ahem, synthetic pesticides and fertilizers)? Do those little yellow signs in your neighborhood that warn you to keep your children and dogs off a treated lawn spook you out? Attend one of FRWA's Natural Lawn Care Workshops and learn about how to manage your own lawn without using the chemicals you are supposed to keep away from kids and pets.

We will outline tips for mowing, seeding, watering and ways to manage common weeds and pests that can complicate natural lawn care.

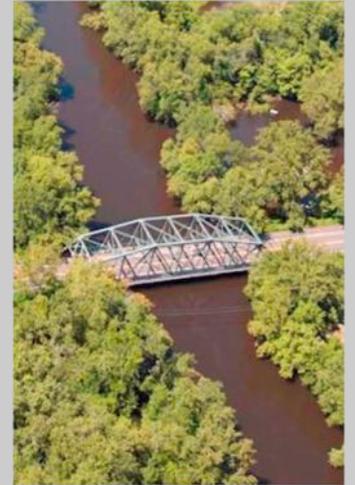
All are free and open to the public.

- April 30, 9:00-10:30 am, Nature's Porch, Winding Trails, Farmington.
- May 18th, 6-8 pm, Barnes Nature Center, Bristol.
- June 29th, 6-9 pm, Suffield Town Hall at 83 Mountain Road, Suffield.

Drone Video Project Taking Flight

Every spring, migrating birds and fish travel up the Farmington River valley on their way to breeding areas. This spring, they'll be joined by a flying video camera that traces their route and shows the features they pass on their journey. Drone videographer Christian Robison will pilot the camera as it reveals our river as a wildlife highway. We'll keep you posted on the video's debut!

Our heartfelt thanks to all who stepped up last fall to support this flight: Leading donor **Rona Gollub of Simsbury**, Sarah Hincks, Joan and Charles Leach, Debbie Leonard, Joe Springman, Corinne Rebillard, Ellen Ciccarillo-Clarke, Jonathan Cotton, Joyce Kennedy Raymes, and three anonymous donors.



Spring Lawn Care Tips

Spring is just around the corner, remember these tips when it comes time to start working outside.

Inspect your lawnmower:

Get the blade sharpened at your local nursery or garden center. Your mower will cut your grass more efficiently. A unsharpened blade rips the grass blades and invites disease.

Protect your soil: Prevent compaction of your soil by delaying walking on your turf until after the soil is dry. Do spring debris clean up on dry days only.

Prevent crabgrass: Mowing high and leaving the grass blades at 4 inches prevents the crabgrass seeds from germinating. Continue to keep your grass blades at 4 inches until after the forsythia bloom. Early spring is a great time to overseed bare spots.

Get a soil test: Testing your soil is an easy way to get customized recommendations from soil experts. Google "UConn Soil Test" to find the soil test application and instructions.



Mow your grass high (~4 inches) during the forsythia bloom to prevent crab grass and other weed seeds from germinating.

Wanted: Ambitious Interns

Are you an undergrad or recent grad looking for solid experience in water quality monitoring, river recreation, habitat restoration, or environmental protection? Then we are looking for you! For paid summer internships, please see our announcement on frwa.org.

We also consider unpaid internships for qualified students seeking experience or college credit, either in the summer or academic year. Many of our interns have gone on to career positions. If interested in working with FRWA, feel free to send inquiries to efielding@frwa.org.





New Members: Won't You Join Us?

If you are not a member of FRWA and are reading this now, think about this: **What does the Farmington River Mean to You?** Does it make you think about heading out for some hiking, fishing or kayaking? Or do you drink the water coming from your tap that had its origins in the Barkhamsted Reservoir?



Membership with FRWA has lots of benefits, including protecting this area's local treasure. See below for great member benefits. *[If you don't see your favorite retailer listed here, consider asking them if they will provide our members benefits. Call to give us the contact details or have them call us.]*

- Discounts on FRWA events & 20% discount on FRWA merchandise
- **NEW!** Third night free when you stay two nights, Maplewood Lodging, Otis, MA 413.269.7351 www.maplewoodlodging.com
- EMS in West Hartford & Avon - 10% discount excluding bikes & boats 860.651.8031
- 10% off any service at Tunxis Medical Massage, LLC 860.761.4081
- 10% discount on in-stock accessories at Collinsville Canoe & Kayak Store 860.693.6977
- \$5 off canoe rentals at Huck Finn Adventures, Canton 860.693.0385
- 10% off purchases over \$50 at Vincent Sports Shop, Inc., Simsbury 860.658.5419
- 10% off framing of FRWA posters - Artful Framers, Avon 860.678.1321
- 10% discount at Blue Sky Foods, excluding catering 860.379.0000
- 10% discount at Joe's Bait & Tackle, Windsor Locks 860.623.7980

Our canoe trips are discounted for members. Won't you join us for one?

Please cut out the form below and mail it back to us, or go online to www.frwa.org & click on "Donate Now!"

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Check one: **I want to donate now:**
 \$40 **\$60** **\$120** **\$150** **\$250** **\$_____ other amount**

____ I have enclosed my check payable to FRWA, or please charge my ____ MasterCard or ____ Visa.

Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____ Amount \$ _____

Name on Card: _____ Signature _____

Please send to: Farmington River Watershed Association, 749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

Credit card donations may be submitted online at www.frwa.org via our secure online contributions server or phoned in to Aimee Petras at (860) 658-4442 x 201.

FRWA 2016 Events

April 7: A Toast to Spring, Wine for the Watershed,

April 30: Natural Lawn Care Workshop, 9-10:30 am, Nature's Porch, Winding Trails, Farmington.

May 18: Natural Lawn Care Workshop, 6 - 8 pm, Barnes Nature Center, Bristol.

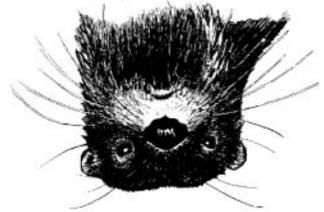
June 29: Natural Lawn Care Workshop, 6 - 8 pm, Suffield Town Hall, Suffield

Please visit FRWA.org or read more inside about specific events and registration requirements.



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