The Merits of Flushing Flow

In May, the Metropolitan District Commission published an article in the Hartford Courant titled “Sell Water to UConn? Or Flush It Away?” (http://www.courant.com/news/opinion/hc-op-curtis-mdc-water-to-uconn-makes-sense-0505-20130503,0,6940527.story) The article was also mailed to MDC’s customers. This action inspires us to comment about the best use of the MDC’s water supply for the greater good of Connecticut. Since the MDC maintains that FRWA is legally bound not to oppose water sales from the Barkhamsted and Nepaug Reservoirs so long as those reservoirs contain surplus salable water, we will state instead what FRWA supports about exporting water from MDC’s Farmington Watershed reservoirs.

If the MDC was ever to supply water for UConn’s expansion, we support locating UConn’s tech park closer to the center of MDC’s service area, perhaps a community in greater Hartford that would benefit from economic revitalization and would welcome re-development of existing facilities. Water use has in fact decreased over the years—leaving more “salable” water in MDC reservoirs right now than the MDC once mistakenly projected. This provides an opportunity for Hartford to undergo economic expansion and community revitalization, using the MDC system that was specifically designed to supply the capital region within the Connecticut Valley. We support the long-standing use of the reservoirs’ water in Hartford itself, the original focus of the MDC.

The amount of water proposed for export to the UConn area is small compared to the flow of the lower Farmington River (though we note, as a purely academic point, that the lower river’s flow has been shorted by tens of millions of gallons a day on average, ever since the reservoirs were built). It’s not the main river, it’s the waterways just below Nepaug and Barkhamsted reservoirs that are the most water-starved and could use a sip of the 12 million gallon/day (mdg) surplus behind the dams. Take 5 mgd of additional drinking water-- IF it can be justified by responsible planning, not just by immediate economic stress. But since no one’s buying the rest (or any) of that surplus water right now, we support releasing some of it into the tributaries below the reservoirs.

Water released to a river isn’t wasted. It provides dilution for pollutants, recreation for people, and habitat for fish and wildlife. And in river management lingo, “flushing” flow is a necessity for river health. So the question “Sell water, or flush it away?” is real. It deserves serious discussion. For this reason and many others, we support a renewed-- and this time effective-- effort by the State of Connecticut to develop a statewide water supply plan, one that recognizes the multiple public goods provided by rivers.
FRWA Earns Environmental Champion Award

Members and friends, you were honored! On June 8, FRWA was named a 2013 Environmental Champion (Non-Profit category) by the Aquarion Water Company. The award, which comes with a $2,500 prize, was presented on June 8, at Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport, by CT DEEP Commissioner Dan Esty. Also present to recognize the awardees were Aquarion’s President, Chuck Firlotte, Senator Richard Blumenthal, and Representative Elizabeth Esty.

FRWA won out over other strong non-profit candidates because of our sustained team effort to remove Spoonville Dam. It was described as a success story that illustrates perfectly how FRWA works: by coordinating the support of many, to bring about river restoration that benefits all. We thank you, and all the partners and supporters who helped FRWA earn this prominent recognition!

Volunteer Snapshots

Kevin Farmer (at right) spent 8 busy weeks at FRWA this spring as a Fellow from the Encore!Hartford program. An experienced consulting engineer, Kevin was already expert in water quality and other areas of concern to FRWA. He reached out to FRWA’s past, present, and potential partners in watershed towns and businesses, sparking discussions on pertinent water issues and laying groundwork for future collaborations. Kevin aims to transition into the non-profit sector soon. We wish him success and thank him very much for sharing his expertise!

Matt Livingston worked many hours at FRWA in recent months, during an interval between work and graduate school. He heroically tackled office organizing tasks that seldom make it to the top of anyone’s urgent “to-do” list, and got them done, a great boon to everyone’s sanity, morale, and ability to find things around here. We also let him get out and play a bit by helping us with the Squadron Line River Fest at Salmon Brook Park and recording water velocity at Spoonville Dam. Thanks Matt, and good luck on your next adventure!
Celebrating Sixty Years of Change and Challenge

You cannot step in the same river twice.
Heraclitus

It’s always something.
Gilda Radner

This year marks FRWA’s 60th anniversary. After all these years, FRWA is still the ONLY advocate for the health of the entire Farmington River Watershed and the one locally-based organization working to protect the quality of life on the river for future generations. Here’s a sampling of what we’ve done.

1950’s. This stinks! Farmington Valley citizens, led by John Leonard and John Ellsworth, formed FRWA in 1953 to address the sad state of the river. It was contaminated with raw sewage and more than 3.4 million gallons a day of untreated industrial waste. And that wasn’t all. After the devastating flood of 1955, major flood control measures were called for. FRWA spoke up quickly to ensure that flood control structures (a.k.a. dams) allowed for a viable river that still supported fish and wildlife.

1960’s. Giving fish a chance. FRWA insisted that the treatment of industrial wastewater must keep pace with ongoing improvements in sewage treatment. As DDT and other pesticides emerged as a major water quality concern, FRWA also advocated reduced spraying. FRWA also called for a fishway at Rainbow Dam to help shad return to the river.

1970’s. The “clean water decade.” New water quality legislation was enacted, but needed explanation in order to be applied locally. FRWA published a model flood plain zoning ordinance that was used by many towns and agencies and educated towns about the new Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act. FRWA also published the first “Farmington River Guide.”

1980’s. Keep water in the river! To protect the river’s quantity as well as quality, FRWA joined battle over a proposal to divert water from West Branch Reservoir. Ultimately the proposal was voted down by member towns of the MDC (the water utility), and the state passed the first Diversion Act to regulate water diversions statewide. FRWA launched public education on water conservation and helped alter the state’s plumbing code to include conservation measures.

1990’s. Wild and Scenic victory. FRWA had a lead role in achieving federal Wild & Scenic River designation for a 14-mile stretch of the Farmington West Branch, and securing federal funding for river stewardship. FRWA also served as an advisor to the state on river management, and held annual river cleanups and festivals.

2000’s. Millennial Challenges. Despite great progress in water treatment, pollution continues to pour into the river from storm drains that carry “non-point source” contaminants from all over our towns. Watershed habitats are at risk from development and invasive species. FRWA has its own water quality monitoring program, does public education about stormwater runoff, conducts research to identify critical habitats, and coordinates river restoration projects such as buffer plantings, culvert improvements, and dam removals.

Right now, we are looking forward to Wild & Scenic designation for another 37 miles of the Farmington River and 26 miles of Salmon Brook. And after that? There will always be something.
Canoe Trips 2013

To participate in any of these events pre-registration is required. Space is limited and trips sell out quickly so please contact FRWA at (860) 658-4442, or email: river@frwa.org to register.

Canoe trips take from 2-4 hours and paddlers must be able to handle a canoe in flat water. Canoes courtesy of Huck Finn Adventures, Collinsville, CT.

Cost per person: Members: Need a boat: $20; Have a boat: $15; Non-members: Need a boat: $25; Have a boat: $20

Saturday July 13, 5:45 pm, Twilight on the River with Jay Kaplan: Paddle the River in the cool of evening in the company of great blue herons, muskrats, beavers, and other crepuscular wildlife. Enjoy a little night music orchestrated by native songbirds and singing insects. Jay Kaplan, Naturalist and Director of Roaring Brook Nature Center in Canton, will share his vast knowledge of local plants and animals visible and/or audible along the River at sunset. (Trip lands after nightfall.)

Saturday July 20, 9:00am, Farmington River Archeology with Ken Feder: Paddle along our own ancient Native American canoe trail as we explore the fascinating culture of the people who inhabited the Farmington River Valley thousands of years ago. Learn about the latest archeological discoveries from Ken Feder (at top right), Professor of Anthropology, Central Connecticut State University, and founder of the Farmington River Archeology Project.

Thursday August 1, 9:00am, Mid-week Morning Paddle with FRWA: Skip out for a cool weekday morning paddle. Come play on the river with us and learn about what FRWA is up to. We're all coming out for this one.

HOBOs Housed in the River

FRWA used a portion of a generous grant from the Richard P. Garmany fund to purchase eight Onset HOBO Water Temperature Pro v2 Data Loggers. With the help of volunteers we built housing for the hobos and secured them underwater in eight watershed locations. The hobos are programmed to capture water temperature data hourly and are out during the generally low flow, high stress, warmer summer months, May through October. FRWA temperature data is used to monitor ambient in-stream temperatures, evaluate biological communities and identify cold water fish habitat, study temperature relationships of the Farmington River didymo infestation and to assess long term trends.

Water temperature is an important water quality parameter that greatly influences aquatic life. Fish, insects, and other aquatic organisms all have temperature range limits and are especially sensitive to temperature rise. Biological and chemical activity generally increase in warmer water, yet warm water holds less oxygen than cool water, and some compounds become more toxic to aquatic life at higher temperatures.

Stream temperature varies seasonally and is influenced by many natural factors. For example a mountain stream that originates in cold springs and courses steeply downhill through a dense forest on a north-facing hillside won’t get much sun exposure and will remain relatively cold throughout the summer. Conversely a wide, shallow, slow moving river flowing through an open, flat, sparsely vegetated floodplain will absorb lots of summer heat from sunlight and the ground. Human activities such as damming, stormwater discharges, and clearing of vegetation for development have a profound impact on water temperature.
Two More Buffers in the ‘Shed

This spring, FRWA installed two riverside gardens (aka Riparian Buffers) in Windsor and Winsted.

First Church of Windsor Riverside Garden

The First Church in Windsor is one of the oldest Congregational churches in America (4th oldest according to their website) and happens to be located on the banks of the Farmington River. FRWA teamed up with the First Church in Windsor to create a landscaping plan that will help reconnect the Church to the adjacent river bank and to historical Windsor. FRWA, along with our partners at the North Central Conservation District, collaborated with the Church Committees to design a river friendly landscaping concept for the entire campus. In the end, we had nearly 100 volunteers help with various aspects of the project. We improved some gardens alongside the church that get deluged with roof drainage, we removed invasive plants such as barberry, honeysuckle and bittersweet from the riparian buffer and planted a riverside garden. Thanks to the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving for supporting this and other riverside enhancements.

Northwest Connecticut Community College Riverside Gardens

FRWA teamed up with Professor Tara Jo Holmberg and her botany students to plant two different areas of the NCCC (Northeast Connecticut Community College) Campus alongside the Still River. Behind the Arts & Sciences Building we planted a second teardrop-shaped rain garden. The second planting was installed along the steep riverbank adjacent to Founders Hall. The botany students were involved in every step of the process and had an opportunity to examine site characteristics, learn about soils, select plants, and design the landscaping plan. The project was planted in April during several class sessions. Support for this project came from Rivers Alliance and their Watershed Assistance Small Grants Program.

Both of these projects were tremendously satisfying. We had an opportunity to connect with communities that are known for working together for the greater good. In addition, we improved the riverbanks by removing invasive plants and adding native ones, reduced stormwater quantity and improved stormwater quality while making new friends. All and all, it was a great spring!
**Goodbye Dam, Hello Wild River!**

The high waters of spring and early summer have roared through the site where Spoonville Dam was removed last summer, and it’s now possible to see the full benefits of the dam’s removal. The big flows cleared out years of sediment and revealed a whole new stretch of whitewater play features where the dam and its impounded water used to be. The potential area for holding whitewater paddling events in the gorge is now extended hundreds of feet further downstream.

In early June, paddler and Whitewater Triple Crown organizer Andy Kuhlberg stood onshore at the old dam site and commented on this, between bouts of riding the new rapids. He pointed upstream to a frothing cauldron on river right cautiously remarked that “at high flows, there’s a big, new, sticky hole” in the river, followed by a dynamic stretch of curly, swirly current, and ending in a great set of play features at the bedrock ledge that used to support the dam. “Running the gap in the dam was fun to do, but it lasted about a second,” he added. With its eddy access on the left, the new features create a great new surf feature for paddlers.

In addition, American Shad now have a better chance at navigating past this spot. The first on-site estimates of the river’s velocity this spring indicated that shad would be able to make their way upstream because the current is slower and the bottom rougher than before. At this writing, it’s impossible to spot fish in the turbid water, but we know shad are arriving at the Rainbow Dam fish ladder downstream. We’re watching for any that reach the Gorge! (If you spot shad in Tariffville Gorge, please notify us.)

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**Keeping the “Scenic” in Wild & Scenic**

The Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC) is leading a public outreach campaign on the Wild & Scenic West Branch of the Farmington this summer to encourage responsible recreation. The message “Please Tell Your Friends, No Glass, No Trash,” will be posted at many access points and venues to remind people to pick up after themselves and keep the Wild & Scenic River beautiful for all who visit.

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**GIVE AT THE OFFICE!**

Take advantage of one of the easiest and most convenient ways to support FRWA! You can make a gift to FRWA by payroll contribution through EarthShare New England’s workplace giving program at numerous private companies, in the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) by selecting FRWA’s CFC #86475 on your pledge form, and in Connecticut State Employee Campaign (CSEC) by selecting FRWA’s code #8622. Contributions to EarthShare New England support a broad range of charities committed to protecting public health and our air, land, water and wildlife.

Your workplace doesn’t offer workplace giving? To find out more about how you and your workplace can support FRWA through an EarthShare New England charitable giving campaign, please call Jessica Wozniak at info@earthsharenewengland.org. You can also visit EarthShare New England's web site at: www.earthsharenewengland.org.
Thanks to Our Supporters
This year marks FRWA’s 60th anniversary. After six decades, FRWA is still the only advocate for the health of the entire Farmington River Watershed. Our support still comes from you, the residents of the Farmington Valley who want this river preserved for future generations. FRWA’s supporters make a huge difference to this region: you’ve enabled thought-provoking educational programs, quality research, informed advocacy, and active stewardship. You’ve risen to each challenge - whether it’s taking a dam out, analyzing water samples, funding a clean-up, or just getting kids to jump in and explore a stream.

Not an FRWA Member? Then join us! For 60 years, FRWA has fought for the Farmington River. Won’t you add your voice? Together we will start another season of preserving, protecting, and restoring the river - for everyone and forever. Becoming a member certainly has its benefits such as joining a network of people that are passionate about the Farmington River and its vitality. We also offer membership benefits that are listed below. Won’t you join us?

- Discounts on FRWA events & 20% discount on FRWA merchandise
- 3rd night free with 2 night stay, Maplewood Lodging, Otis, MA 413.269.7351
- 10% off any service at Tunxis Medical Massage, LLC 761-4081
- EMS (Avon & West Hrtrfd) 10% discount excluding bikes & boats 651-8031
- 15% off in-stock accessories at Collinsville Canoe & Kayak Store 693-6977
- $5 off canoe rentals at Huck Finn Adventures 693-0385
- 10% off purchases over $50 at Vincent Sports Shop, Inc. 658-5419
- 10% off framing of FRWA posters—Artful Framer, Avon 678-1321
- 10% discount at Blue Sky Foods, excluding catering 379-0000
- 10% discount at Joe’s Bait & Tackle, Windsor Locks 623-7980
### FRWA 2013 Calendar of Events

<table>
<thead>
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Please RSVP to (860) 658-4442 ext. “0” to ensure we have adequate food and supplies for all events.

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