



Farmington River News



The Farmington River is important habitat for me and my aquatic critter friends!

Issues and Activities in the Farmington River Watershed

Greetings from FRWA's New Executive Director



As I settle into my new role as Executive Director at the Farmington River Watershed Association, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to each of you for making it possible for FRWA to do such important work -- protecting our amazing Wild and Scenic Farmington River and the precious land that sustains it. Everything FRWA achieves all flows back to you, our dedicated and passionate supporters. Thank you.

An early joy for me has been hearing from several of you with your thoughts on what I should focus on and where FRWA should go next. Please always feel free to reach out to me in this way! My door, phone, and email are always open to you. Your feedback and perspective is invaluable to our work, which must continually evolve and adapt to new opportunities and challenges to remain successful. Most of all, the Farmington River never stops needing your help. **Let's keep making strong progress together.**

For the River – Bill Dornbos

Another Wild and Scenic Victory!

With the signing on March 12th of the federal John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, 62 new river miles within the Farmington River Watershed joined the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System.

This means the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook are now officially designated by law as Wild and Scenic – with all of the important protections that entails. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the Upper Farmington River's original designation of 14 miles. Thanks to all who worked tirelessly for years to make this happen for the entire river!

Stay tuned for more from FRWA on what this important, historic development means for the Farmington River and its future.



Above: © Tom Cameron Photograph - tomcameronphoto.com



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FRWA 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.

Rain Garden Installations in Bristol

The Problem: The Pequabuck River in Bristol, a tributary of the Farmington River, provides a habitat for wildlife and many aesthetic and recreational opportunities. However, it faces environmental challenges from polluted **stormwater runoff and is listed as impaired waters by CT DEEP's 2016 Integrated Water Quality Report.** Polluted runoff is caused by rain and other precipitation that does not directly infiltrate into the soil. With increased artificial impervious surfaces, such as roadways, parking lots, and rooftops, stormwater runoff increases, carrying toxic pollutants with it. These include oil and antifreeze from vehicles, pesticides and fertilizers from lawns, trash, bacteria from pet waste, hazardous waste, and more.

The Solution: One of the best ways to help address the problem of non-point source pollution is to use green infrastructure. Green infrastructure projects address the water-related challenges unique to urban areas through implementation of inexpensive and simple landscape modifications that provide an environmentally sound solution to stormwater runoff. By encouraging the use of stormwater as a resource to enhance landscape features such as lawns and rain gardens, stormwater can be diverted away from homes and buildings, thus potentially reducing basement flooding and water pooling while improving the water quality in streams and the Pequabuck River. Rain gardens are planted depressions that collect and infiltrate rainwater runoff from impervious areas allowing for the runoff to be absorbed and thus prevent it from being carried into a nearby waterway. The plantings are of native plant species and provide food and shelter for bees, butterflies, and song birds. Rain gardens enhance the local environment, provide green space, are sustainable, cost-effective and beautiful. **Our rain garden designs for Bristol's Page Park are finalized, the plants are ordered, and we are ready to install a large rain garden at Page Park on May 8th, 9th, and 10th!**

And there's more! Right across the road from Page Park we are supporting a rain garden installation at Bristol Eastern High School in partnership with friends at the Pequabuck River Watershed Association! Not only is this an excellent learning opportunity for the high school students, but it augments stormwater pollution reduction in the Pequabuck, and ultimately the Farmington River.

Volunteers Needed! Rain Garden Planting Page Park, Bristol, CT: May 8, 9 & 10, 2019

We are thrilled to continue with more installations this year thanks to grant funding and support from the City of Bristol. But we need volunteers to help complete the final step of the rain garden process!

Please call FRWA at 860-658-4442 or email Aimee at apetras@frwa.org to register.



Conceptual drawing of Page Park by Ruth Miller, North Central Conservation District



April Events & Workshops



Downspout Disconnect/Rain Garden Workshop
Bristol Public Library, 5 High Street, Bristol, CT 06010
Thursday, April 18, 6 PM—7:30 PM

Aimee Petras, Outreach and Education Coordinator for the Farmington River Watershed Association, will outline why installations of bioswales, rain gardens and river buffers are important for the river, showing some local examples. She will explore ways to reduce stormwater and improve water quality in our community. Free downspout disconnect kit for Bristol residents! There will be a demonstration of how to disconnect a downspout (gutter) and downspout disconnect kits will be given to community members living in Bristol and attending the program (a value of \$20). Fee: No charge is associated with this informational workshop hosted by the City of Bristol Public Works.



Organic Lawn Care Workshop
Winding Trails, 50 Winding Trails Drive, Farmington, CT 06032
Saturday, April 27, 1:30 PM—3:00 PM

FRWA and Winding Trails are teaming up for this timely workshop. Aimee Petras will present this program that covers how to manage your lawn without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. We will outline the steps you need to take including getting a soil test through mowing techniques to managing weeds. **Additionally, we'll delve into** common lawn problems such as grubs and thatch. Registration required at the

Winding Trails website: windingtrails.org/register/?id=960



6th Annual Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival
Peoples State Forest, 79 E River Rd, Riverton, CT 06065
Sunday, April 28, 12:30 PM—5:00 PM

Join FRWA at the Festival at Matthies Grove Pavilion. Activities include: Falconry & Birds of Prey Show presented by *Christine's Critters* (4-5 PM); kids build your own bat box or carve a hiking stick; collect river insects; learn about the birds the bees and bears! Talk to experts on native plants that attract birds, Monarch butterflies, beekeeping, bears and other wild animals, salamanders, turtles, snakes and load of other natural things. Listen to experts on fish in the Farmington River, moose, backpacking and trees. Free hot dogs, baked goods, and music by *Travelin' Trout*.

Alisa Phillips-Griggs, Water Quality and Projects Coordinator, will be leading a macroinvertebrate workshop for youth and adults alike! Learn more about how aquatic insects and bugs can be indicators of water quality.



Farmington River Quilt
East Granby Library, 24 Center St, East Granby, CT 06026
April 1 through April 30

The Farmington River Quilt portrays 25 locations on the Upper Wild & Scenic section from Goodwin Dam in Colebrook to the Rainbow City Pool in Canton. It is a fine work of art, 50 feet long, and supported by the Farmington River Coordinating Committee. See farmingtonriver.org for more details.

To left: Ovation Pool by Katherine Wadsworth, Farmington, CT Quilt Section 20



FRWA Wins MassDEP Grant

We are excited to announce that FRWA has been awarded a *Watershed Monitoring Grant* from the *Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection*. This generous funding will allow us to develop a monitoring plan and initiate monitoring for *E. coli* bacteria in the Farmington River and tributary streams in Massachusetts. Thank you, MassDEP!

Water Monitoring Volunteers Needed

If you would like to volunteer to help sample MA streams this summer, please contact us at 860-658-4442 or email river@frwa.org

Approximately 100,000 acres of the Farmington River watershed lies within Massachusetts, with the remaining 285,000 acres in Connecticut. Headwaters for both main branches of the River (East Branch and West Branch) originate in southwestern Massachusetts. The watershed in Massachusetts is approximately 85% forested and hosts a plethora of wildlife including the peregrine falcon, a recovering endangered species, as well as numerous fish species, including Atlantic salmon.

Nonpoint source runoff is the primary water quality concern in the Massachusetts section of the Farmington River Watershed. Bacteria can be a good indicator of nonpoint source pollution, and therefore monitoring *E.coli* is a logical first step for our

Massachusetts monitoring program. Our beautiful Massachusetts headwaters and pristine lakes and ponds are actively used for recreation and much of this relatively remote area is under-monitored.

Mentoring the Future

FRWA mentored two Avon High School students interested in pursuing a career in environmental science through the UCONN Conservation Ambassadors Program. CAP students engage in an exciting summer field experience and design an individual community conservation project to provide real solutions for their communities.

With guidance from water quality specialist, Alisa Phillips-Griggs, Arianna Kehoe-Ortiz conducted a research project titled, *Introduction to Macroinvertebrates at Avon High School*. Aimee Petras, Outreach and Education Coordinator, gave guidance to Haley Bertsch, who conducted a project on *Water Conservation Habits: Teens and Adults*. They presented their findings at the Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources at UCONN in March.

Top right: Arianna discussing her project. *Bottom right:* Aimee (left), Haley (right) at Connecticut Conference on Natural Resources at UCONN



The Farmington River Coordinating Committee Scholarship Opportunity



The Pat Keener Scholarship and the Nancy Johnson Scholarship are \$1,000 awards given to high school graduates or current undergraduates from the five riverfront towns of the Upper Wild & Scenic segment of the Farmington River who will be/are attending college to major in environmental science or a related field. The five riverfront towns are: Barkhamsted, Canton, Colebrook, Hartland, and New Hartford.

Visit www.farmingtonriver.org for more information on eligibility requirements and to access the application.

Gabriel Ortiz (*left*) and Timothy Strzepa (*right*), 2018 Scholarship Recipients shown in photograph on left.



Spring Lawn Care Tips

After a long and icy winter, our lawns are still muddy and messy, but some folks are likely thinking of playing outside and getting their lawns and patios back in shape and ready for summer parties and play. Right now is the best time to be thinking about ways to restore your lawn.

Tips to get your lawn back in shape:

1. Get a soil test. If you haven't done a soil test, it would be a good idea to get a baseline idea of what nutrients exist in your soil. Order one from the U-Conn Soil Testing Lab. The test results include fertilizer and amendment recommendations. www.soiltest.uconn.edu/sampling.php
2. Mow high and keep your grass high until after the forsythia bloom. Crab grass seeds germinate in **early spring and by keeping your grass blades at 4" you can prevent the seeds from germinating.**
3. Overseed in bare spots and choose a seed blend that will work for your lawn based upon your soil test (see tip 1). Most lawns in the Northeast need lime to get the soil pH to an optimal level for growing turf grasses. Turf grasses need a pH of between 5.6 and 7.5.
4. Need advice? Call our own Natural Lawn Care Whisperer, Aimee Petras at (860) 658-4442 x201 or apetras@frwa.org with any questions.



Keeping your grass cut high during the forsythia bloom can prevent crabgrass and other weed seeds from germinating.

Downspout Disconnect—Why Does It Matter?



Many homeowners want to direct precipitation collected in their gutters away from their foundations for good reason. No one wants a wet basement to deal with on top of all of the other issues homeowners confront. When trying to solve a rain flow problem, it is a good idea to try to direct the water toward a recharge area like a garden or depression in your yard.

Why? When water is directed toward a compacted area, such as a driveway or sidewalk, it usually will rush into the street, sweeping with it pollutants from the driveway and road surfaces into the storm drains. Those drains usually head directly into a local watercourse (yes, your neighborhood river or stream). We call this stormwater.



FRWA is always working to reduce stormwater through our many different programs. Rain gardens, riverside buffer plantings, and organic lawn care workshops all address ways to enhance our natural areas and create pathways for stormwater to be directed to absorbent areas to reduce pollutants. You can read about our efforts to reduce **stormwater in Bristol's Page Park** (*page 2*) and attend our workshops on Organic Lawn Care and Downspout Disconnect/Rain Gardens (*page 3*). **If the dates for those workshops don't work for you, call us or send us an email and we will try to host one in your community.**

And if you would like to disconnect your downspout, give us a call and let us help you. We might have some supplies for you!



Watershed Wildlife Spotlight: Bobcats

Bobcat sighting in our watershed! Our work preserving and protecting the Farmington River Watershed is critical for wildlife populations. These photos were taken in Barkhamsted by FRWA board member, Ginny Apple, right in her backyard! Bobcats (*Lynx rufus*) are known to inhabit forested areas. They prefer brushy lowlands and swamps. In this region, bobcat territories can range 8 to 20 square miles. February to March is the breeding season, and kittens are born in April. Females normally give birth



to two kittens, but a litter can be up to four.

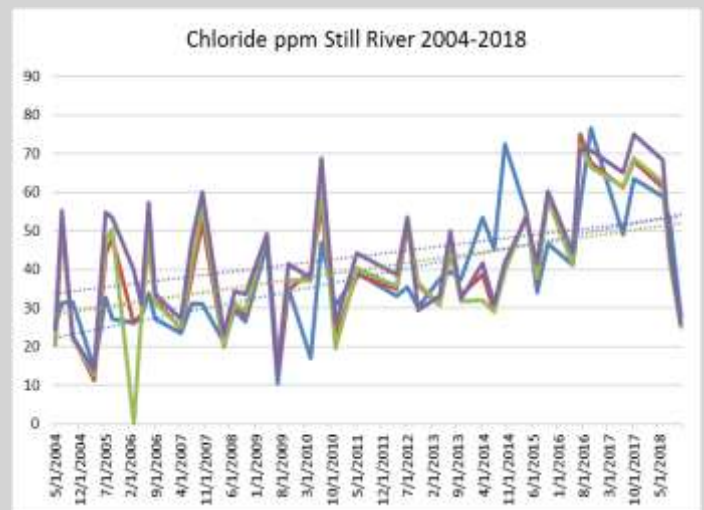
Visit CT **DEEP's** Bobcats in Connecticut webpage to learn how to help and report observations to the Wildlife Division's ongoing bobcat study.

Slip on Ice, or Slipping Water Quality? Spring is the Time to Rain-Scape

Spring has sprung and April showers are rinsing away the last remnant piles of salt left behind on sidewalks and parking lots from winter's deicing. **Where does all that salt go? Nearly all of that salt ends up in our local streams, rivers and groundwater!** FRWA has concerns about deicing salts slowing increasing in our waters. Although currently below water quality criteria, we have observed a steady rise in chloride concentration since we initiated monitoring in the upper Wild & Scenic section of the Farmington River and tributaries (*see graph of the FRWA's Still River data below*). **And we aren't testing after winter storms when salt levels can spike!**

Sodium and chloride ions alter the water chemistry of streams, and high salt levels can be toxic to aquatic life. The Stroud Water Research Center has been testing water quality impacts on aquatic insect larvae and has found that high salt levels can be devastating to mayfly populations. Studies on the effects of salinity on rainbow trout show that, although adult fish are quite resilient, high salt levels may slow growth rates in juveniles.

What can you do to limit freshwater salinization in our watershed? Spring is the perfect time to rain-scape your yard! Think about where water pooled and created slippery spots during the winter. Grade your yard so water flows away and can soak into the ground. Plant vegetation to slow stormwater. Build a rain garden.





In Memory of Long-Time FRWA Supporters

Two outstanding members of the Farmington River Watershed Association gave a final gift by asking for donations to be made in memory of their lives. We are saddened by these losses and also humbled by their generous actions.

William Irving Atwood (1926-2018)



William Irving Atwood "enjoyed a long, dedicated career as a middle and high school teacher in Hartford, West Hartford and Coventry, where he touched many lives with his love of literature, art, architecture, music, travel, the environment and theater. He loved gardening and attending theater in New York City, and devoted many hours to his work with the Hartford Stage Company, the Auerbach Library of the Wadsworth Atheneum, and the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington. "

Photo above Mr. Atwood 1967
- The Hartford Courant Oct. 23, 2018

Richard Howard Martindale (1931-2019)



Dr. Richard Howard Martindale "led family activities such as gardening, skiing, sailing, tennis, canoeing camping and instilled in his children a love and respect for the world in which we live, including our natural surroundings, and a deep appreciation for the wonderful people in their lives.[...] His love of our environment was also evident in the organizations in which he served, such as the Farmington River Watershed Association, [and] the Salmon Brook Watershed Association..."

Photo above Dr. Martindale
- Carmen Community Funeral Home

Family and friends of William Atwood and Richard Martindale donated approximately \$2,500 to FRWA. Thank you for your support and for honoring their unyielding commitment to the natural world.

If you would like to donate in memory or in dedication of a loved one, please visit frwa.org/how-you-help/join-or-donate/

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Check one: I want to donate now:
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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 2019 Spring Events

Thursday April 18: Downspout Disconnect/Rain Garden Workshop, Bristol Public Library

Friday, April 26: Jackson Lab Earth Day, Farmington

Saturday, April 27: Indian Rock Earth Day Open House, Bristol

Saturday, April 27: Organic Lawn Care Workshop, Winding Trails Farmington

Sunday, April 28: Green Trails Market Earth Day, Farmington

Sunday, April 28: **Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival, Matthies Grove at People's State Forest**

Visit FRWA.org for the entire list of events and registration requirements or check our Facebook page

Follow us on social media!



@frwa_org

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