FARMINGTON RIVER NEWS

SUMMER 2026

SUMMER IN THE WATERSHED

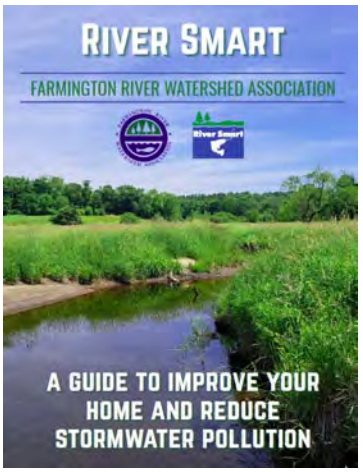
NEW BUFFER PLANTINGS, RESEARCH, PROJECTS, AND SUMMER INTERNS!

FRWA is kicking off the summer by starting the development of a Watershed Based Plan for the Mad and Still Rivers, with funding from the CT DEEP Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant Program. This has been a goal of FRWA's for many years, and we are happy to be working with our partners on this initiative. Through this process, locations for Best Management Practices (nature-based solutions to stormwater runoff like rain gardens) will be identified with the overall goal of improving water quality.

Our year-round monitoring continued with downloading our loggers and monitoring chloride. We welcomed our summer interns *(see page 2)* and jumped into our seasonal monitoring for bacteria. We also purchased nutrient monitoring equipment, thanks to funding provided by the Wild & Scenic Committees and you - our members and supporters!

Interns Keara (left) and Christiana (right)

FRWA has been actively working on our River Smart grant, with project support provided by the Long Island Sound Futures Fund. Our River Smart program is all about reducing polluted stormwater runoff from entering our waterways - locally, and for the larger Long Island Sound watershed. Our River Smart actions include all our rain gardens, bioswales, and riparian buffer installations with just over 2,000 native plants just this spring *(see page 5)*. It allows us the opportunity to work with educators at Bristol Eastern High School and Environmental Learning Centers of CT (both in Bristol) and provide educational field trips on the Farmington River and to Long Island Sound for youth to learn about storm drains, pollution, and water quality *(see page 2)*. We also encourage our members and supporters to help us improve water quality and wildlife habitats by installing their own small rain gardens, diverting downspouts, and other river-friendly actions. Check out our new River Smart guide for homeowners by scanning the QR code on page 5! Let's be River Smart together - every action makes a difference in our watershed and beyond.



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MEET OUR 2026 WATER QUALITY INTERNS

FRWA hired two water quality interns for the summer to monitor *E.coli* bacteria at 37 sites, in both MA and CT, from June-August in relation to recreation and pollution monitoring. All samples are processed by them with our equipment at the Simsbury Water Pollution Control facility. They will also work on chloride, nutrient, and flow monitoring, water chestnut pulls, invasive management on the Frey Property, and sharing River Smart information with the public.

- Christiana Walsh is from New Jersey and graduated in May 2026 with her Bachelor's degree in Marine Biology from the University of New Haven. She will continue there for her Masters in Environmental Science with a concentration in Health and Management. Christiana enjoys finding little critters in any body of water, spending time with her cat, going to concerts and crocheting (when she finds the time!).

- Keara Bernetich is a rising senior at Central Connecticut State University majoring in Environmental Earth Science. She enjoys being outside, working out, reading, and playing with her dogs. Keara is super excited to learn more and spend the summer with FRWA!

2026 Interns Christiana Walsh (left) and Keara Bernetich (right)

FRWA strives to provide our interns with a well-rounded experience, start to finish. From taking a sample and analyzing it to educating the public on how to reduce stormwater runoff to improve water quality. We also make sure to provide the opportunity to love the environment they're working in by looking for aquatic animals while sampling to paddling trips on the river.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION IN THE WATERSHED

Our River Smart Program provides learning opportunities for youth in our watershed. Hear from Bristol Eastern High School Science Teacher Elizabeth DiLernia on how Project Oceanology fieldtrips have benefited her students:

"Each year, the FRWA offers Oceanography, Environmental Science, and Biology students two fully funded trips to Project Oceanography in Groton, CT. There, they venture out on Long Island Sound to explore biodiversity and study water quality, once in the fall, and again in the spring. This level of hands-on learning through field work is something students in Bristol don't often get too often and since it is fully funded, ALL my students, regardless of economic situation can attend. This opportunity has increased access to enriching experiences and equity.

Over the years, I have come to rely on this program in connecting it to my curriculum. Thanks to the trip, my students are able to connect human activity and water quality locally in Bristol, all the way through the CT river watershed, down to Long Island Sound. They are able to connect through actual experience that what happens in Bristol impacts marine water systems and biodiversity far away. They believe it, because they were part of the research!"

Bristol Eastern High School students drag a fishing net to look at aquatic life

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EVENTS IN THE WATERSHED

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

39th Annual Farmington River Cleanup

Saturday, September 19th, 10am-12pm

Collinsville Canoe & Kayak, Canton, CT
& Windsor Boat Ramp, Windsor, CT

Join us for our annual Farmington River cleanup, held in partnership with the Connecticut River Conservancy's *Source to Sea Cleanup*.

Connecticut River Conservancy's Source to Sea CLEANUP

Registration opens in early August. Visit frwa.org/news-events for registration details!

Invasive Water Chestnut Pulls

Fridays, August 7 & 21, 10am-12pm

Barber Pond, 107 Old Windsor Road, Bloomfield, CT

Help us with our continued effort to remove invasive water chestnuts from Mill Brook before the Barber Pond Dam comes down! Dress to get wet and muddy; boats, gloves, and floatation devices will be supplied.

Scan to volunteer for FRWA water chestnut pulls

Visit the *Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Quilt Display*

July 1-August 4, 2026 | East Granby Public Library
24 Center Street, East Granby, CT

The Lower Farmington River & Salmon Brook Quilt portrays 20 locations along the Farmington River and 7 locations along Salmon Brook, which are connected to show the flow!

FRWA 2026 SPECIAL RESEARCH PROJECTS

Beyond our annual monitoring of bacteria, chloride, and temperature, FRWA has secured grants for special research projects including a Watershed Based Plan for the Mad and Still Rivers (funded by the CT DEEP Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grant), watershed nutrient monitoring (we purchased a spectrophotometer to run our own nutrient and metal samples, thanks to funding from FRCC and LFSWS), and water level monitoring of Rainbow Reservoir (funded by LFSWS).

Although separate projects, all of these align with one goal - improving water quality. Developing a Watershed Based Plan for the Mad and Still Rivers will provide a blueprint for future work to restore water quality in these rivers, and therefore downstream in the Farmington River.

Our watershed nutrient monitoring goes hand in hand with our water level monitoring at Rainbow Reservoir as it provides nutrient loads at several different sites throughout the watershed, nutrient inputs into the Farmington River, and ultimately how much nutrients are going to Rainbow Reservoir, where reoccurring cyanobacteria blooms are happening. Water level monitoring for Rainbow Reservoir includes upstream of the reservoir, in the reservoir, and downstream of the reservoir, allowing us to track inputs and releases and predict if a cyanobacteria bloom will occur. We also have trail cameras at these sites and all our photos are uploaded to the USGS Flow Photo Explorer (FPE) and transformed into a timelapse with corresponding water level data.

Visit FRWA.org/resources → Research Reports to view our prior years reports.

Still River, Winsted, CT

Watershed Nutrient Monitoring

New Spectrophotometer

Water Level Station

Deploying Water Level Station Sondes

USGS Flow Photo Explorer

usgs.gov/apps/ecosheds/fpe/#/explorer

NONPROFIT SPOTLIGHT: Healing by Growing Farms

One farm, many branches: trauma recovery through experiential farming

Healing By Growing Farms is a BIPOC owned urban farm that provides no cost support for brain injury & trauma survivors worldwide. Part of their work includes the Healing Gardens Alliance Partnership Program, which coaches and empowers organizations to transform unused spaces into healing gardens, memorials, and food production plots. This program welcomes partnerships on all levels, from private properties to organizations and schools to individuals seeking to build dedicated spaces for survivors. Visit healingbygrowing.com to learn more about Healing By Growing Farms and how you can get involved today!

Scan to learn more!

More services from Healing By Growing Farms include:

- Consulting and training to empower farms and organizations to build inclusive spaces
- Experiential farm training, therapy sessions and Farm to Home baskets for brain injury & trauma survivors
- A virtual support group for farmers and nature enthusiasts who experience brain injury, trauma, or disability
- An annual conference to promote the intersection of agriculture, conservation, & trauma recovery
- An online shop offering farm goods, merchandise, baked goods, wellness products, and more

FRWA STEWARDSHIP 2026

This spring, FRWA planted **2,052** native plants, shrubs, and trees throughout the watershed at several different gardens to help improve water quality, reduce erosion, and provide native wildlife habitat:

- We worked with the City of **Bristol**, CT, to install the first part of a 13,500-square-foot buffer project along Veterans Memorial Boulevard! The buffer spans the stream and pond, which flow into the Pequabuck River, and was designed to deter geese from inhabiting the area without spoiling the view or blocking fishing access to the ponds.
- We worked with the Farmington Land Trust to design and install a riparian buffer at the restored fishing pier site along the Rails-to-Trails in **Unionville**.
- We planted along the rip-rapped areas of the newly redone section of the **Burlington** Rails-to-Trails.
- We maintained and enhanced our bioswales at Edgewood School in **Bristol** along the Farmington River in **Canton** and at the boat launch on Highland Lake in **Winchester**.
- We expanded and maintained our gardens and buffers around Shaw Pond in **Becket**, MA.

Veterans Memorial Boulevard buffer

Farmington Land Trust fishing pier planting

Thank you all for helping us with the Veterans Memorial Blvd project! We're so glad we had rain after we planted. FRWA funded 1,528 plants, totaling $12,495 just for this project. Thanks to Bristol Parks and Recreation staff, the Bristol Arts & Innovation Magnet School students, volunteers, and FRWA staff for all their hard work! **Project support provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Long Island Sound Futures Fund and FRWA**.

FRWA staff have applied for funding in 2027 and 2028 for our River Smart program to continue this project and other rain garden and buffer sites.

Rain garden at Shaw Pond, Becktet, MA

While we were sore and some trowels were broken in the process of all these plantings, we didn't stop there in regards to stewardship. We also kick started our 2026 invasive water chestnut pulls at Barber Pond in Bloomfield, CT (more dates to come in August, see page 3.), and held terrestrial invasive plant removal workdays throughout our watershed with Farmington Valley land trusts and partner organizations.

Want to stay current on our news and events? Join the FRWA email list or check the Stewardship Calendar!

Volunteers at Barber Pond for water chestnut pulls

FRWA EMAIL LIST

mailchi.mp/frwa/sign-up

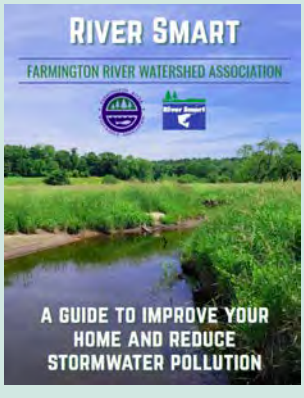
LAND TRUST STEWARDSHIP CALENDAR

frwa.org/stewardship

FRWA RIVER SMART MAGAZINE

frwa.org/resources → Educational Materials

The River Smart magazine is here! It includes tips and tricks to reduce stormwater runoff at home AND plenty of lawn care information to keep your yard happy and healthy all while staying as natural as possible. Take the pledge and be River Smart today!



DOUBLE FEATURE: INVADERS IN THE NORTHEAST

TREE OF HEAVEN, *Ailanthus altissima*

Tree of Heaven is a fast growing, deciduous tree native to East Asia, first introduced in North America during the late 1700s. This problematic invasive can grow 3 to 10 feet per year, reaching heights of 80 feet, and spreading through both its seeds and extensive root system. It thrives almost anywhere, including in disturbed areas, roadsides, vacant lots, and even sidewalk cracks. Once established, it can be difficult to remove because cutting the trunk can stimulate its roots, producing new sprouts and root suckers, resulting in new trees up to 50 feet away. For best management practice, small trees less than 2 inches in diameter can be cut or mowed, while larger trees should be left uncut and treated with herbicide over the course of several growing seasons.

Tree of Heaven
Ailanthus altissima

Learn to identify Tree of Heaven

Leaves are pinnately compound with 11-41 leaflets, alternating, and large (1-3 feet long)
Leaflet base is uneven and toothed

Note large 'bumps' on leaflet teeth. These are the scent glands that give tree-of-heaven its odor

NOT TREE-OF-HEAVEN

Sumac (*Rhus sp.*) displays serrated leaflets, no scent glands, and panicle cone-shaped flowers

Scan or visit cipwg.uconn.edu/elimination-tree-of-heaven *to learn more about Tree of Heaven identification and management*

Spotted Lanternfly
Lycorma delicatula

CREATURE FEATURE
SPOTTED LANTERNFLY, *Lycorma delicatula*

Coming soon to a tree near you...spotted lanternfly (SLF) was first spotted in the US in 2014, and in Connecticut in 2020. It has now since spread to multiple counties in CT and MA.

SLF feed on sap, which poses a threat to agricultural crops such as apples and grapes, and are a mild threat to native hardwood trees. In Connecticut, they have killed sapling trees, sumacs, grapevines, and tree-of-heaven, and have slowed other species growth rates. The invasive tree of heaven is a preferred host for SLF, which can sound like a nightmare, but it is also an opportunity to help control SLF populations with tree-mounted circle traps.

Ways to help stop the spread of Spotted Lanternfly:

- Do not move any wood or other potentially infested material as to stop the spread to other locations.
- Report potential sightings to the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) or the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) using the reporting forms linked to the right.
- Check your vehicles, trailers, and other items for SLF adults and egg masses when traveling through areas with known or suspected SLF populations. These insects are known to hitchhike on vehicles and clothing.

CAES SLF Reporting Form

MDAR SLF Reporting Form

Spotted Lanternfly life cycle

ADVOCACY CORNER

CLEAN WATER ACTION FOR CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS

THIRD ACT: ADVOCACY

Third Act is a community of Americans over sixty determined to change the world for the better. Older Americans are the fastest-growing part of the population: 10,000 people a day pass the 60-year mark. Third Act harnesses an unparalleled generational power to safeguard our climate and democracy through campaigns, events, lectures, and working groups.

JOIN YOUR LOCAL WORKING GROUP

CT

thirdact.org/connecticut/

MA

thirdact.org/massachusetts/

SUPPORT FRWA TODAY!

Join our email list

mailchi.mp/frwa/sign-up

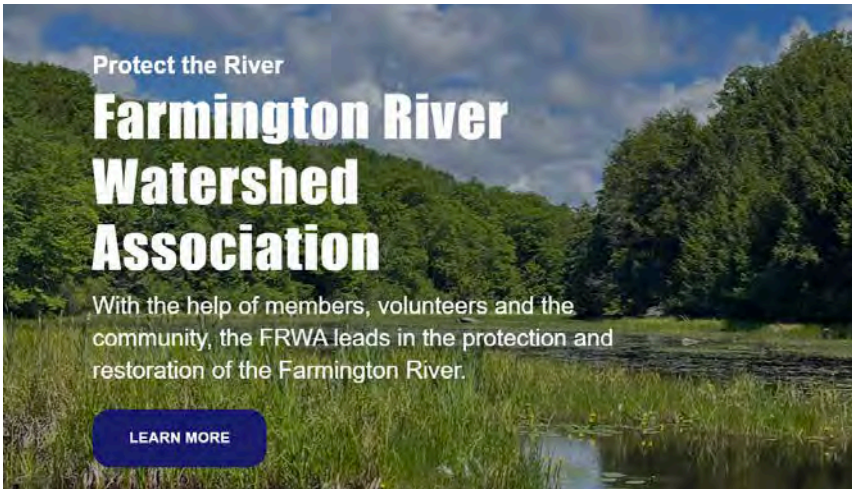
Donate to our programs

frwa.org donations page

NEW WEBSITE

CHECK IT OUT!

We recently had our new website go live. With this new platform, information will be easier to find and view on both your computer and phone.
Check it out at **FRWA.org**



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The Farmington River Watershed Association
749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

Protecting the Farmington River - For You, For All, Forever

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, stewardship, and advocacy

39th Annual Farmington River Cleanup

Saturday, September 19th, 10am-12pm

Collinsville Canoe & Kayak, Canton, CT

& Windsor Boat Ramp, Windsor, CT

Look inside for details about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and more!

Registration opens in early August. Visit frwa.org/news-events for registration details!

FOLLOW US @frwa_org Farmington River Watershed Association

If you would like to go paperless and receive our newsletter by email only, send a message to hgeist@frwa.org

Learn more about our work and upcoming events on frwa.org.

No generative AI was used in the writing of this newsletter.