

District Makes Progress on Conservation and Assessment Projects

Coginchaug River Watershed Work Proceeds

District staff continue to work with a local stakeholder committee to address Coginchaug River watershed water quality concerns. Recent efforts include a water quality improvement project at Half Mile Acres Farm in North Guilford in the watershed's headwaters; ongoing water quality monitoring to identify sources of high bacteria in the river; and our annual river cleanup in Middletown.

The planned stormwater management project at Half Mile Acres Farm is now completed. Three catch basins and underground pipes were installed to redirect stormwater runoff from the road, addressing severe erosion of the pasture and manure runoff into the stream. All of the work was conducted by the farm owners. This project is part of a larger nutrient and agricultural waste management effort being completed with assistance and funding from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Funded in part by a US EPA Clean Water Act Section 319 grant administered by CT DEEP

2013 Coginchaug watershed monitoring activities included two bacteria studies: a water sampling survey in the upper watershed (N. Guilford, Durham, Middlefield) conducted with Connecticut River Watch Program volunteers; and an intensive survey conducted by staff along a stream where chronically high bacteria levels have been measured. Water samples were analyzed for *E. coli* bacteria levels at the State Public Health Lab. The broad survey included eleven sites, sampled weekly from July to September: major tributaries where high bacteria levels were measured in 2012; new tributary sites to bracket suspected sources; streams where management practices are being implemented to monitor water quality improvements; and main stem sites. Only two of these sites met the criteria in CT's water quality standards for *E. coli*. The intensive stream survey included eight sites, sampled once in wet conditions, and twice in dry conditions. Elevated bacteria levels were measured at all of these sites; some in wet weather, some in dry, and some in both. Possible sources to all streams with high bacteria levels will need to be investigated further. A more detailed summary of results is available on our website.



Our 5th annual Coginchaug River cleanup was held in Middletown at Veteran's Park on October 5. As in the past, the District coordinated the cleanup with Middletown Regional Agricultural Science

& Technology Center as part of the CT River Watershed Council Source to Sea watershed-wide cleanup. Many thanks to teacher Stephanie Russell for recruiting students; the Middletown Parks Dept. for providing a staff person, supplies and a dump truck; St. Pius Peer Ministry Team for joining forces with us; and the many student, parent and community volunteers who helped clean the river!

On-Farm Assessments Assist Horse Owners

You may recall that in 2012 our District, along with the Southwest and Eastern CT Districts, was awarded a Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant to improve horse farm manure management with the goal of protecting water quality in our rivers and Long Island Sound. Over the past two years we have conducted outreach and held a workshop on best management practices and technical and financial resources available to help with planning and implementation of improvements; and completed on-farm assessments to evaluate natural resource impacts and recommend management changes.

Interested horse owners contacted the District to conduct assessments of their farms in Clinton, East Haddam, Old Lyme, Portland, and Salem. Management recommendations addressed concerns about uncovered manure piles, erosion, stormwater, horse access to streams, waterside vegetation, and pasture health and forage quality. Follow up for one of the farms included development of a Certified Nutrient Management Plan by our staff with separate funding from a Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) grant, which will enable the facility to obtain NRCS cost-share assistance for structural improvements. A small pot of funds is also available to implement management practices for farms not eligible for NRCS assistance. Anyone who would like to benefit from a farm assessment—*at no cost*—should contact the District office as soon as possible!

Miner Brook Stormwater Retrofits Completed

The District collaborated with the Middletown Public Works Department to complete two stormwater retrofit projects to address sediment accumulation in Miner Brook in the Westlake condo area. Miner Brook, a tributary of the Mattabesset River, is on the CT List of Waterbodies Not Meeting Water Quality Standards. Concerns include high bacteria levels, in addition to excessive sediment. Sediment (e.g. road sand) is a major pollutant carried into streams with rainfall and snowmelt, which can also transport attached bacteria with it. The brook was the subject of a past District study to track down sources of water quality problems, and stormwater outfalls in the Westlake Drive area were identified as priorities for improvements.

Retrofits to address sediment concerns in two areas were incorporated into plans for upgrading the Westlake Drive culvert. The add-ons will help protect and restore the quality of Miner Brook and prevent downstream impacts to the Mattabesset River by capturing sediment before it gets to the stream. A hydrodynamic separator that screens, separates and traps sediment, debris, oil and grease was installed just upstream of the bridge. Further upstream, a catch basin was retrofitted with a deep sump to trap sediment from Grandview Drive, and a riprap plunge pool and grass swale were constructed to slow stormwater runoff.

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66th Annual Meeting Celebrates State Park Centennial at Devil's Hopyard



In celebration of the 100th anniversary of CT's State Parks, the Conservation District's 66th annual meeting was held at Devil's Hopyard State Park on Saturday, October 26, 2013. It was a bright chilly day, but there was plenty of hot chocolate and mulled cider to keep everyone warm! The program featured an outdoor adventure at the park, complete with mysterious legends of unusual geologic formations. Friends and partners joined staff and board to hear about this past year's conservation highlights; honor our 2013 Conservation Award winners; and enjoy a talk and guided walk led by Alison Guinness, District board member, birder, naturalist, historian and friend of Connecticut state parks.

One of the earlier properties to become part of our state park system, Devil's Hopyard was acquired by the former State Park and Forest Commission in 1919. The park features the dramatic Chapman

Falls—where the Eightmile River drops more than 60 feet over a series of steps—and its unusual pothole formations, thought by some to be the work of the devil. Alison's fun and information-packed presentation covered the park's history, geology, flora and fauna, and the lore behind its name. She even included a few spooky tales to usher in the Halloween season. Our sincere thanks to Alison for "hosting" our meeting, and to our partners, friends and family members who helped celebrate with us!



Congratulations 2013 Conservation Award Winners!

Environmental Professionals

Steve Gephard, Fisheries Biologist,
Connecticut Department of Energy
& Environmental Protection
(on right, with Tom ODell)

Cooperator

Urban Oaks Organic Farm,
New Britain, Mike Kandefer

Special Merit

Jenifer Nadeau, Equine Extension
Specialist, University of Connecticut

Kathy Connolly, Landscape and Garden
Designer, Speaking of Landscapes, LLC



Certificates of Appreciation

David Richards, Clinton Nurseries

Mark & Mindy Yuknat,
CT River Expeditions

Gary Crump & Gloria Priam,
Priam Vineyards

Mary Kay Brown, Organic Vintages

Matthew Rubin, Old Saybrook
Shopping Center

Pierre Bennerup, Sunny Border Nurseries

Rob Merritt, R2 Graphics

Thomas D. Comer, CPA,
Comer & Company, LLC

Urban Oaks Organic Farm—An Urban Agricultural Oasis

Most people don't automatically think of New Britain when considering where to buy their local organic veggies...but they clearly should! Urban Oaks Organic Farm, a nonprofit certified organic farm, is the first urban farm of its kind in the nation, now one of only two in CT. The farm began in 1999 with a vision to restore a blighted area and create an inner-city organic farm to help save a neighborhood. Urban Oaks, an urban oasis in a densely developed area, grows top-quality produce, year-round, for restaurants, caterers, schools and the local community, including at the farm's market and through CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) shares. The 3.5 acre farm grows an impressive variety of heirloom and specialty vegetables, greens, herbs, and fruit, including its award winning salad greens.

The farm has enhanced the local urban environment by demonstrating use of sustainable, non-polluting farming practices and soil amendments, and natural predators for pest control; and by providing greenspace. Urban Oaks also teaches local residents and school groups about organic gardening methods, composting, and other environmentally-friendly practices. Neighborhood children, viewed by Urban Oaks as the future of urban farming, are provided a connection to the land through hands-on programs and job opportunities at the farm.

Two recent projects with NRCS have made the farm more sustainable and efficient: a seasonal high tunnel installation to extend the growing season, and an Agricultural Energy Management Plan, including an energy audit of the greenhouses, cooler and farm market. If you've never visited this unique farm, we recommend it highly! (Go to www.blog.urbanoaks.org for info.).



Mike Kandefer, Urban Oaks
Founder and Farm Manager,
receiving the District's 2013
Cooperator Award

District News & Events

INTRODUCING BOARD MEMBER ERIC DAVISON

Our newest board member, Eric Davison, found his way to the District through his conservation activities. A practicing Wildlife Biologist, Eric is also certified as both a Wetland Scientist and a Soil Scientist. He has worked as a land use professional for 15 years, and currently operates Davison Environmental Consulting, providing natural resource assessment, management, mapping and restoration planning services. Also active in his community, he serves on the Chester Inland Wetlands Commission. Last year, Eric was a presenter for the 2013 CT Land Conservation Council (CLCC) annual conference, through which he met our Chairman, Tom ODell, also a member of the CLCC Steering Committee. Eric's varied experience and skills dovetail perfectly with the District's work, and we are excited to have him on board as a resource.

9TH ANNUAL RIVER CRUISE FUNDRAISER ENJOYED BY ALL!!

Our 9th annual CT River Tree Swallow Cruise and Wine Tasting to benefit the Connecticut River Watch Program held in late August was another great success! A warm summer evening, beautiful scenery, delicious food, plentiful fine wine, a sky full of swallows and many other avian sightings (bald eagles, cormorants, great blue herons...), and a boatful of fun people! What more could you want?!?



Thank you to our very generous sponsors—CT River Expeditions, Priam Vineyards, Organic Vintages, Clinton Nurseries and R2 Graphics—and all of the cruise participants for supporting our efforts to engage our communities in working for cleaner rivers. And don't miss out... stay tuned for information about this year's cruise!

23RD ANNUAL SHRUB & SEEDLING SALE TO BE HELD April 25-27, 2014 *Old Saybrook Shopping Center, Boston Post Rd. & Elm St., Old Saybrook*

It may be cold and snowy outside, but it's not too early to start planning your spring landscape improvements!! Our annual plant sale is coming up, where you can select from an extensive list of Connecticut native plants, including shrubs, ground covers, evergreen tree seedlings, grasses, ferns, flowering perennials, edibles, pollinator plants, wet-loving plants for rain gardens, and plants suitable for your waterside buffer gardens (see cover article). We'll also have Collins Organic Compost once again, and new this year—a special group of hummingbird attracting plants in a rustic, reusable handmade pine box. Whether you'd like to enhance your landscape with natives, pick flavorful berries in your yard, grow your own herbs, provide food and cover for wildlife, attract butterflies and birds, promote pollinator health and survival, or protect water quality...you won't be disappointed in our selection!



For a brochure and order form go to www.conservect.org/ctrivercoastal, or phone (860) 346-3282. Quantities of your selections may be limited, so don't miss out—*reserve your plants by sending in your order form by April 7, 2014.*

DISTRICT AWARDED GRANT TO DESIGN FISHWAY

This past fall the District was awarded a Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant to design a fishway for Chapman Mill Pond Dam in Westbrook. We are excited about our first fish restoration project, which we'll be working on in partnership with DEEP and the town of Westbrook, among others. Check our website for updates on the project as it progresses!

January 2014

The Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District, Inc. is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the sound use and management of our natural resources through technical assistance and education.

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The District serves the towns of Berlin, Chester, Clinton, Colchester, Cromwell, Deep River, Durham, East Haddam, East Hampton, Essex, Haddam, Hebron, Killingworth, Lyme, Madison, Marlborough, Middlefield, Middletown, New Britain, Newington, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, Portland, Rocky Hill, Salem and Westbrook.

The Board of Directors holds public meetings every fourth Wednesday, 7:00 PM, at the deKoven House Community Center in Middletown. All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, marital status or handicap.

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