

Wild & Scenic News

Volume 7, Issue 2

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"I Own Property Along the Farmington W&S River — What Should I Do (or Not Do)?" *By Bill Roberts, Canton Rep*

Another beautiful summer is wrapping up and many of us have been fortunate to spend some time over the past few months enjoying our Wild & Scenic Farmington River and its watershed. We've enjoyed fishing, swimming, tubing, paddling, or just meandering along its banks and feel lucky to live so close to such an outstanding natural resource. But as summer ends, it's worth re-visiting what helps keep the river in its excellent condition and to consider what we, and especially riparian landowners, can do to ensure that the Farmington River is enjoyed in its present state for years to come.

In our Spring 2006 newsletter, we looked at one of the Farmington River's most important protections — the river overlay district regulations. While exceptions exist, the regulations generally limit removal of vegetation and prohibit constructing new buildings, installing septic systems and excavating sand and gravel in the 100-foot riparian zone. A goal of these regulations is to maintain as much undisturbed river shoreline as practical in order to stabilize the shoreline, improve recreational opportunities, provide wildlife habitat, maintain clean water and provide numerous other benefits to landowners, river users and the river itself.

In managing land to comply with the regulations, many landowners often wonder: What should I do to make sure my land is helping maintain and improve the river? What should I avoid? In light of such questions, FRCC thought it would be helpful to briefly outline some "best practices" that river landowners can turn to when faced with such questions. While every parcel of land is different, and not all best practices can (or should) be used on every parcel, the following paragraphs highlight practices that local landowners can consider.



A good rule of thumb for filtered views is to trim only enough so that at least 2/3 of the view is vegetation and 1/3 is river view.

Fertilizers/Herbicides/Pesticides.

Fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides are some of the river's biggest threats. When these substances enter the river, they adversely affect the health of the river, local wildlife, and river users. The best practice here is to avoid using these substances near the river, but if you do, be sure to make use of a strong vegetative buffer (as discussed below) and apply the minimum necessary. You can also opt for natural compost rather than chemical fertilizers or low- or no-phosphorus fertilizers.

Lawn & Garden. When mowing a lawn or trimming shrubs, don't dispose of the refuse in the river. As these wastes decompose, oxygen levels in the water are depleted, threatening the survival of fish and other aquatic life, and nutrients are added to the water, often resulting in excessive growth of unwanted aquatic plants.

Pervious Surfaces. A great way to reduce run-off of both pollutants and sediment is to reduce the amount of impervious surfaces on your property. Opt for a gravel driveway rather than a paved one, or limit pavement to only the amount you need.

Vegetative Buffers. The overlay district regulations provide that landowners

should maintain a vegetative buffer along the shore. Keeping a healthy density of trees, shrubs and other types of vegetation along the river provides numerous benefits to the river, including providing wildlife habitat and filtering possibly polluted runoff before it enters the river. To achieve these benefits on your land is easy — keep your trees and shrubs along the river and, if you want a view, practice selective trimming to achieve a "filtered" view. A good rule of thumb is to trim enough so that at least 2/3 of the view is vegetation and 1/3 is river view.

Plant Selection. As we have written about in the past, the selection of native plants for your property is one of the most important (and easiest!) ways you can improve the ecological value of your land and protect the health of the river corridor. Native plants provide food and shelter for native mammals, butterflies, birds and other local creatures and are often more resistant to disease and less susceptible to drought than non-native varieties. Many are also perfectly adapted to life on the river and provide important bank stabilization and erosion control benefits. Fortunately, many local nurseries carry a wide selection of native plants. Next time you are shopping for landscape

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plants, keep an eye open for some of the following options:

TREES: While all native trees provide benefit to local wildlife, many native trees are either well suited to, or are commonly found in, riparian corridors, such as along the Farmington River. Consider the following species when planting trees in the overlay district, many of which tolerate seasonal flooding — Red Maple, Tulip Tree, Sycamore, Cottonwood, or River Birch.

SHRUBS: Winterberry, Arrowwood, Nannyberry, and American Highbush Cranberry are all strong growers that provide excellent food and cover for many native bird species. Red twig dogwood is a great choice to prevent stream bank erosion. Buttonbush is an excellent choice for areas that often have standing water and ducks relish the fruit.

FLOWERS AND GRASSES: While they may be more difficult to find, native grasses and sedges make great additions to the

riverbank. While few greenhouses carry native varieties, seed mixes may be found online. As for flowers, consider Culver's Root or Joe-Pye Weed for slightly upland areas; or Swamp Milkweed or Marsh Marigold (not to be confused with lesser Celadine – a non-native invasive plant) for low-lying areas.

Septic Systems. If you have an existing septic system in the overlay district (such as a grandfathered system), be sure to have it cleaned regularly and checked for cracks/leaks. Replacing the tank's filter on a regular basis is also good preventive maintenance that will save you money and help protect the river's water quality.

FRCC has access to additional resources on landowner best practices and would be happy to assist a landowner in evaluating his or her property or put a landowner in contact with local experts. For additional information, please visit our website at www.farmingtonriver.org or contact Liz Lacy at 860-379-0282 or Liz_Lacy@nps.gov.

Junior River Rangers Pilot Program

On July 1, the National Park Service started its Junior River Rangers pilot program on the Farmington Wild & Scenic River in Connecticut, and the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Wild and Scenic Rivers in Massachusetts. This pilot effort is a youth engagement program designed to get young people out and onto the river, along with learning about the Wild and Scenic Rivers System.

The program is a sister program to the Junior Rangers programs in National Parks. Kids can pick up an activity booklet that focuses both on the specific river, its unique resources, and the history of the Wild and Scenic Rivers program. Although mostly geared towards children aged 6 to 12, young people of all ages are encouraged to do the program. Once the activities in the booklet are completed, the participant can bring it in, have it checked over by rivers staff, and receive a Junior



River Ranger badge and certificate.

The goal of this program, aside from getting young people and their adults to learn about rivers and the Wild and Scenic designation, is to get people — especially kids — outdoors. With interesting programs like this available, youth may become more apt to go outdoors and explore. This program also gives kids a chance to get their hands into the growing field of conservation. The Wild and Scenic designation promotes conservation and enhancement of rivers and the outstanding resources they hold. Kids get a chance to understand how they can help out in the effort.

For more information on these pilot programs, please email: Tiffany_Caisse@contractor.nos.gov, Liz_Lacy@nps.gov or Lee_Steppacher@nps.gov

Emerald Ash Borer

By Nicki Hall, Hartland Alternate

Highly visible along many of western CT roads are large purple cylinders strung up in the trees. As you may know, these are insect traps designed to detect and monitor the presence of a non-native beetle, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB), a species from eastern Asia that most likely arrived in woody packaging materials in the Detroit area several years ago.



The EAB is a small green beetle about a half inch long whose wings look like polished metal. This insect, in the Buprestidae family, feeds exclusively on ash trees. If an ash tree becomes infested with the beetle, it will decline rapidly and most likely die within 3-5 years. As CT has about 22 million ash trees, loss of this species would be devastating for our forests. The EAB to date has not been found in CT, but has been detected as close as 25 miles from our western border in Saugerties, NY. This year, more than 940 of the purple traps have been placed in the western counties of CT. The traps use oil to attract the beetles which are then caught on its sticky surface. Monitoring of these purple traps is being done by a cooperative effort of both the state of CT and private landowners.

Everyone can help deter the invasion of the Emerald Ash Borer by not transporting firewood and by only buying wood for use from local sources in your town or county. The EAB is a serious pest that can spread quickly once it is established. For more information visit our website, www.farmingtonriver.org.



SPOTLIGHT on FRCC Apprentice Tiffany Caisse

By David Sinish, FRWA Rep

FRCC would like to put the spotlight on Tiffany Caisse who has been a dedicated intern for us for the past three years. She worked for two years part-time primarily with our consulting botanist working on non-native invasive plant species management in the 14-mile W&S corridor. Last November, Tiffany became a 10-month full-time apprentice to the FRCC through the National Park Service under the Student Conservation Association and Americorps Program. This fall, Tiffany will be reducing her hours with FRCC to complete her senior year at Westfield State University in Westfield, Massachusetts where she majors in Biology and is a member of the Phi Kappa Phi honors society. We will miss her nearly-constant presence at Squires' and on the river.

A large focus of Tiffany's work at FRCC has been on invasive species with Betsy Corrigan, of Washington, Connecticut, as her supervisor and mentor. With Betsy, theoretical skills learned in the classroom have become practical knowledge. They have been conducting field studies of invasives,



seeing the effects of invasives, and working on eradication (through "weed pulls," burnings, and other methods). These actions, along with reaching out to the general public through presentations and reports, have now become part of Tiffany's many skills.

Tiffany enjoys working with the many volunteers and professionals who really want to help preserve and protect the river environment. She says that although volunteers are hard to find, once on board they are hardworking,

dedicated and loyal to the cause. The blend of approaches, knowledge and new ideas they offer is inspiring. Her transition from student, with a formal class progression, to having to plan, develop and institute programs without professorial experience has been most educational and rewarding for her.

Another new role has been developing new ways to reach out to the W&S area community. Tiffany has been improving the FRCC website and regularly posts blogs written by our committee members. The Junior River Ranger program is particularly meaningful – Tiffany helped develop and direct the pilot on the Upper Farmington this summer. She developed a workbook of activities about the Wild and Scenic program, in particular the Upper Farmington. (See article on page 2.)

What is next for Tiffany? First, completion of her degree and then possibly grad school for plant biology or botany, or a job continuing environmental work. Tiffany says "there are many pathways to follow." Without a doubt she will continue to learn, contribute, and improve the environment wherever she goes.



Please email us at info@farmingtonriver.org if you would like to receive this newsletter electronically in the future.

Who is FRCC?

The Farmington River Coordinating Committee was established when fourteen miles of the upper Farmington River were designated as a National Wild & Scenic River on August 26, 1994. The FRCC comprises representatives from each of the five towns adjacent to the Farmington River and from groups noted below. The FRCC embodies an important partnership among the riverfront towns and others to provide stewardship of the Farmington River and its upper watershed. Visit us at www.farmingtonriver.org. Call us at: 860-379-0282. Current representatives are:

Barkhamsted – Mario Santoro; Roger Behrens, alt.

Canton – Bill Roberts; Cherie Robinson, alt.

Colebrook – Tom Stanton; Edna Travis, alt.

Hartland – Nicki Hall, alt.

New Hartford – Alison Murdock; Mark Lindquist, alt.

CT DEP – Susan Peterson; Maryann Nusom Haverstock, alt.

Farmington River Anglers Association – Paul Pinette; Tom Karpeichik, alt.

Farmington River Watershed Association – David Sinish; Eileen Fielding, alt.

Metropolitan District Commission – Tim Anthony; Carol Youell, alt.

National Park Service – Jamie Fosburgh; Liz Lacy, alt.





Farmington River Coordinating Committee
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www.farmingtonriver.org

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**Join us at our Open House and W & S Art Show
 Thursday October 6, 4:30–7 pm at Squire’s Tavern**



Sunset at Hogback, photo by Fred Jones

**Please Join Us for Farmington River Coordinating Committee’s
 7th ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE
 and Wild & Scenic Art and Photo Exhibit
 Thursday, October 6, 2011 — 4:30 to 7:00 p.m.
 Squire’s Tavern (Barkhamsted Historical Society)
 100 East River Road, Barkhamsted**

See the work of area artists celebrating our beloved Farmington River, hear fun and catchy tunes by the musical group Traveling Trout, taste some delicious locally-made food, and enjoy the company of friends and neighbors. To submit your own artwork or photos – contact FRCC at 860-379-0282 (or www.farmingtonriver.org). The exhibit continues until October 17, and can be viewed during Squire’s Tavern regular open hours:
 Wednesdays: 9:00 am – Noon • Sundays: 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm.



Please let us know
 if you would like assistance removing invasive plants* from your property — and replacing them with native plants that are good for the river area!

*shown: Japanese Knotweed

Please see
 our blog
 at
www.farmingtonriver.org