

“PLEASE TELL YOUR FRIENDS – NO GLASS, NO TRASH” OUTREACH CAMPAIGN BEGINS ON UPPER FARMINGTON RIVER



New Hartford, CT

By the Farmington River Coordinating Committee

The Farmington River is well known for its fine recreational qualities. Many recreational users see to it that the river's safety and scenic beauty is not degraded by litter, cans and broken bottles. This summer, an extra effort is being initiated by a coalition of river protectors to keep the river safe and enjoyable.

The joint outreach project was inspired by Jeremy Harraden of Farmington River Tubing in New Hartford, CT, after a frustrating summer in 2012. He approached the Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC) in August of 2012 to explain how “the health of the Farmington River and the quality of recreation upon it is steadily degrading” in the area known as Satan's Kingdom. In a study done by FRCC, many people reported that degradation is increasing throughout the entire 14-mile Wild and Scenic section from Hartland to Canton – with litter and glass being top offenders.

FRCC is a locally – appointed committee comprising representatives from the towns of Barkhamsted, Canton, Colebrook, Hartland, and New Hartford and the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Farmington River Anglers Association, Farmington River Watershed Association, Metropolitan District Commission, and the National Park Service. It was formed when the upper 14 miles of the Farmington River were designated a national wild and scenic river in 1994. The mission of the committee is to coordinate efforts to protect the values of the river for which it was designated –recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, history and scenic beauty. Bringing different people together to work jointly on projects that help the river is its major focus.

The FRCC will recruit the river users themselves to help discourage irresponsible behavior. As a start, the message “Tell Your Friends: No Glass, No Trash” and a very sad little fish will be displayed along the river's access points, and several other venues, including Farmington River Tubing. Additional public outreach will be kept up throughout the summer to make the point that everyone benefits if everyone participates in river upkeep and respectful behavior.

Voluntary participation is needed. Harraden says that Farmington River Tubing's customers at Satan's Kingdom are provided with tubes and life jackets, and prevented from taking glass or alcohol along on the trip. But the tubing concession cannot address non-paying users' behavior. “Our staff has spent numerous hours collecting trash out of and along the sides of the river, but it is going in faster than we can take it out,” states Harraden.

Susan Whalen of CT DEEP says that, “while our Environmental Conservation police officers do patrol parts of the river, they are not able to be there all the time, so support and assistance of others is critical in keeping it free of litter.”

David Sinish, who represents the Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA) on the FRCC and is a lifelong paddler of the river, also expressed concern, “This section has been federally-protected and is of international renown. It is a tremendously important resource, right in our own backyard. We need to protect it.”

For more information, please contact David Sinish of the Farmington River Coordinating Committee at dsinish@comcast.net and visit FRCC’s website at www.farmingtonriver.org.

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