

2023 REPRESENTATIVES

Barkhamsted
Mario Santoro
Roger Behrens

Canton
Matt Vinick
Bill Coleman

Colebrook
Alison Jassen

Hartland
Dan Bowler

New Hartford
Alison Murdock

**CT Department of
Energy & Environmental
Protection**
Peter Aarrestad
Matt Goclowski
Susan Peterson

**Farmington River Anglers
Association**
Torrey Collins
Derrick Kirkpatrick

**Farmington Valley Trout
Unlimited**
Jim Buchok
Tom Carpenter

**Farmington River
Watershed Association**
Laura Hart

**Metropolitan District
Commission**
Jim Randazzo
Lindsay Strole

National Park Service
Andrew Petitdemange
Liz Lacy

*Cover photo credit:
Vicki Hammer Rosenkrantz*

FARMINGTON RIVER COORDINATING COMMITTEE FISCAL YEAR 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Greetings:

Thirty years ago Congress created one of the first partnership rivers in the country by designating "Wild and Scenic" status to the upper west branch of the Farmington River. As part of the designation, Congress also established the Farmington River Coordinating Committee, whose mission was to protect river resources through locally based partnerships. This Annual Report explains who comprises the FRCC, how it functions and details the significant ways that it protects the outstanding values of the entire upper Wild & Scenic Corridor.

Many very important environmental, recreational and economic values are dependent on the best management practices regulating the cubic feet per second (CFS) flow of the Farmington River. The flow is controlled by releases from both the Army Corps of Engineer's Colebrook River Dam and the Metropolitan District Commission's Goodwin (Hogback) Dam. Due to difficulty predicting weather patterns, the management of water releases into the river is not a perfect science, however, for years it has been managed with precision based on records, statistics and cooperation with the top priorities being flood control and the health of the river. Because of contractual disputes between the USACE and the MDC, long established best practices for releases are no longer being respected or upheld.

The FRCC's challenge for this past year has been to ensure that flows are being released according to established best practices. It is not in the FRCC's purview to become involved or have a position with contract disputes. However, it is our responsibility and mission to protect the river ecosystem, recreation and local economy that depend on the health of the river. While contract disputes are being settled, we will continue to work with all stakeholders to be sure that the river flows are once again managed to best support these values.

The Farmington River adds beauty and vitality to our towns. We are fortunate to be able to play a part in guaranteeing that this outstanding resource will be protected and remain wild and scenic for generations to come. We encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with us and wish you continued enjoyment of this special area.

Roger Behrens
FRCC Chairman



A PARTNERSHIP WILD & SCENIC RIVER: PROTECTING THE UPPER FARMINGTON RIVER

The Farmington is among the first “Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers.” Protection comes from federal, state and local town governments and other organizations with a vested interest in the health of the river, from its initial designation in 1994. The designated section is 15.1 miles long on the Upper Farmington River - from the Goodwin Dam (aka Hogback) in Hartland to the confluence with the Nepaug River in Canton. The additional 1.1 miles were added 2019, under the Dingell Act. Our river provides clean water, wildlife habitat, and recreation. Every year, thousands of people canoe, kayak and fish the waters of the Farmington and visit the state parks, forests and historic mills that dot the river's edge. It is critical that we work together to protect and preserve this natural beauty.

The Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC) is an advisory body that was created when the river was designated to coordinate management activities, by implementing the Upper Farmington River Management Plan. The purpose is to promote long term protection of the Wild & Scenic Farmington River through the existing town, state and federal authorities. The Committee is made up of representatives of the five river-fronting towns (Hartland, Colebrook, Barkhamsted, New Hartford, and Canton), the Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA), the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), the National Park Service (NPS), the Farmington River Angler's Association (FRAA), and the Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited (FVTU), who joined the committee in 2022. The FRCC office is located at the historic Squire’s Tavern, in Peoples State Forest in Pleasant Valley, Connecticut. Learn more at farmingtonriver.org

FRCC focuses on Resource Stewardship, Education & Outreach, Land Protection, and Grants. Read on to learn about some of the projects FRCC was involved in and grants awarded in 2023. The events listed are over the calendar year, however the financials on page 8 correspond to the fiscal year of October 2022 to the end of September 2023.

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

FRCC’s Resource Stewardship subcommittee meets monthly to discuss resource protection and stewardship concerns, challenges, and opportunities and bring grant proposals and ideas in line the with the Management Plan to the full committee. Some of the areas of focus in 2023 are explained below.



Fungal Diversity Study

FRCC contracted with DeWei Li Ph.D., Mycologist, Department Head/Chief Scientist, Valley Lab, The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) to conduct the first fungal diversity study in the Upper Farmington River Watershed. Plants and animals are well studied in the area, but not fungi. Fungi are ubiquitous in nature and present in a wide variety of habitats. It is understandable there is a knowledge gap in fungal diversity in the Farmington River Watershed. Such information is useful to know for fungal resources existing in the area and for better nature conservation and management.

To make such information available, a fungal diversity study of macrofungi (mushrooms and wood decay fungi [the fungi developing conks]) in the Upper Farmington River Watershed was proposed. The list of macrofungi from this study will provide crucial and useful information on fungal resources and fungal biodiversity for the watershed of the Upper

Farmington River and FRCC including sample number, date, location, substrate (wood, soil, leaf litter, moss, needle duff, grass dung etc.), habitats (forest type), nearby trees in The American Legion, Peoples SFs (Barkhamsted), Tunxis SF (Harland, Algonquin SF (Colebrook) and Nepaug SF (New Hartford). It can be used by FRCC to develop a new or revised strategy for managing the forests in the watershed area based on the functions of the fungi (beneficial or

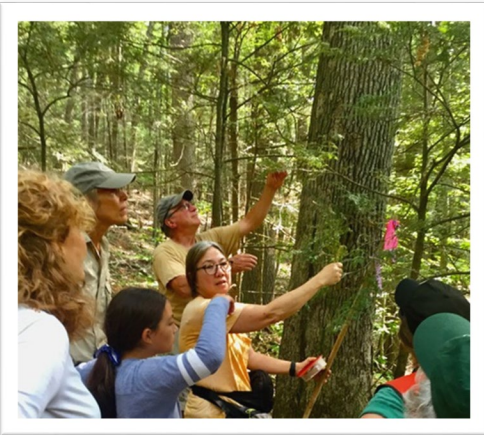
detrimental or ones in between). It is important to know what are present, what kind of functions of these fungi play in the area, what can be protected, what can be utilized or promoted (mycorrhizal, edible, and medicinal fungi), and what should be managed or minimized, such as plant pathogens (*Armillaria* spp. and wood decay fungi, especially the ones on or associated with living trees). To maintain healthy forests and a balanced ecosystem in the Upper Farmington River watershed, it is necessary to incorporate fungi in the long-term plan of management.

Invasive Plant Management

Betsy Corrigan, field biologist with FRCC and noted invasive plant species expert, continued control work of invasive plants, surveys, planning and research, mapping and documentation - all of which benefits the ecosystems along the riverbanks and floodplain zones of the Upper Farmington River. This program is in its 14th year and involves approximately 80 control locations. Outreach to partner organizations including Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forest (FALPS), CT DEEP, Colebrook Conservation Commission, New Hartford Land Trust, the Town of Barkhamsted, Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited (FVTU), New Hartford Open Space Preservation Commission, and the MDC continues, as we plan for partnering control methods in the 2024 season.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Control

The Peoples and American Legion State Forests are extensive watershed forests bordering the upper Farmington River, and are important for natural diversity, wildlife, and recreation. These forests have a large eastern hemlock component, critical for wildlife habitat, thermoregulation, and filtering of the streams that feed into the main river. FRCC has been working with Dr. Carole Cheah, Research Entomologist with the CT Agricultural Experiment Station, to continue control efforts of the hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) through the release of *Sasajiscymus tsugae*, a beetle that predaes on HWA. Our native Eastern Hemlock is susceptible and severely impacted by HWA, especially when also stressed by drought and other native and exotic insect pests. The upper west branch of the Farmington River has several tributaries which have a heavy component of eastern hemlock which shade and maintain cold water temperatures which then feed into the Upper Farmington. In 2022, hemlock decline was observed from HWA infestations in these watershed forests which are also recovering from the stress from the moderate summer drought of 2022. After 2-3 warm winters, recent widespread HWA infestations were discovered in October 2022.



In 2023, FRCC funded the purchase of 5,000 *S. tsugae* for strategic releases on HWA infestations along the Farmington, with expansion of releases to its tributaries to control HWA. Tree Savers hand delivered FRCC shipments of *S. tsugae* to the laboratory in Windsor in late May-early June where the beetles were maintained in cool temperatures in an incubator until the day of release. All release sites had been extensively pre-scouted for suitable HWA populations during the winter and early spring. However, on Feb 4, 2023, CT experienced a sudden polar vortex event which brought extreme subzero arctic air over much of the state for a few hours. Connecticut recorded an average of 90% of HWA statewide with northern sites experiencing over 95% HWA winter mortality.

Water Quality Monitoring

Water quality monitoring has been conducted by Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA) on the Farmington River Watershed since 2004. The principal objectives are to: document high quality waters for protection and preservation; measure inputs from tributaries to the Farmington River; establish a database for use in documenting future changes in water quality; identify impairments and locate potential preservation & restoration opportunities; educate and involve residents in waterbody protection; inform a cohesive understanding of the entire Farmington River watershed, in CT; and, reveal trends relative to changing climate and precipitation patterns via long term monitoring.

Polluted stormwater runoff (nonpoint source pollution) is the primary water quality concern in the watershed. Water quality in some watershed streams is particularly important to maintain since the Farmington River Watershed contains the water for the Greater Hartford drinking water supply, serving 400,000 people. Our data is shared with partners, including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), and helps educate watershed residents. All data is submitted to the CT DEEP and used to evaluate assessed waters for the Integrated Water Quality Report (IWQR) which is submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency every two years. Data can be viewed in the Farmington River Watershed Water Quality Report 2023 at frwa.org/resources.

Bacteria: Nineteen sites were monitored for bacteria, from June to September. Due to increased precipitation and high flows in 2023, some sites did exceed the Water Quality Criteria for bacteria. Sites that exceeded the criteria include the Still River and Mad River in Winsted, and Cherry Brook and Barbour Brook in Canton. This data can better inform where there may be higher levels of polluted stormwater runoff and help to determine potential land causes behind these factors. Results are updated weekly during the summer on Connecticut River Conservancy's Is It Clean? website.

Water temperature: FRWA deployed water temperature loggers at thirteen sites in 2023. Loggers record water temperatures hourly throughout the year to monitor ambient in-stream temperatures to identify and document cold water habitat to assess long term trends. The data recorded indicates cold water on the Farmington River at two sites, and tributary Indian Meadow Brook in Winsted, with other tributaries being warmer.



Macroinvertebrates: FRWA conducts macroinvertebrate sampling days in the fall to monitor streams of the watershed on a rotating basis through the CT DEEP's Riffle Bioassessment for Volunteers (RBV) program. Macroinvertebrates are used to identify high-quality, cold-water habitats in tributaries. Five sites were surveyed in 2023. Photo to left shows sampling Indian Meadow Brook in Winchester.

Chloride: Eight sites were monitored for chloride in 2023. This program is in partnership with the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) Salt Watch program. Sites are monitored year-round to determine how locations fare throughout the year, especially in winter months when road salts are applied, and in summer during high-production times for aquatic plants and animals. All locations had low concentrations of chloride. Jim Brook in Canton had a chloride average considered good but had a spike at one point in the year.

Road Stream Crossings: FRWA has been continuing work assessing stream crossing (culvert) conditions within the Farmington River Watershed in order to determine structural integrity, as well as the ability of passage for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Road-stream crossing assessments can be useful in determining which crossings may pose a threat to public safety during storm events, and they also provide insight into the ability of aquatic organisms such as diadromous fish to move throughout the watershed. FRWA performs these assessments using the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) protocols and contributes its findings to the NAACC database. FRCC gave a small grant to University of Mass/Amherst to help with the costs of the database. In 2023, FRWA received a small grant from FRCC to support its culvert survey program, and 25 assessments were performed in the towns of Barkhamsted, Hartland and Canton.

Conductivity: A continuous conductivity logger is being used by FRWA to collect additional data concerning chloride contamination to determine the conditions of Jim Brook in Canton. Due to the strong correlation between chloride and conductivity, conductivity will increase in response to the rise in chloride levels. This occurs when road salts make their way into water bodies and release free chloride ions. This will allow FRWA to determine if future source monitoring, best management practices (BMPs), and prioritizing Green Snow Pro trainings are needed.

GRANTS and LAND PROTECTION

As part of our effort to support local endeavors and enhance protection of the Upper Farmington River, FRCC offers small grants for applicable projects from the riverbank to the watershed level. FRCC Land Protection Program supports conservation and restoration of the river as well as land protection within the five riverfront towns along the Upper Wild & Scenic Farmington River. Some of the projects FRCC supported this year are listed below:

Barkhamsted

FRCC gave a small grant to the Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival held in Peoples State Forest, and FRCC and the Farmington River Steward were present.

FRCC is supporting the scope of work for the Town of Barkhamsted provided by the consultant engineers at Princeton Hydro to address the streambank restoration adjacent to West River Road just below entrance of Sandy Brook into West Branch Farmington River, as this projects progresses.

Colebrook

FRCC help fund expenses for the Town of Colebrook to update and expand the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) to be included in the next Colebrook Town Plan of Conservation and Development, due in 2024. Researchers are looking into lichens, birds, moths and butterflies, weather, geology, plants, aquatic resources, and conducting mapping for this project. FRCC also sponsored 3 Town of Colebrook staff to attend the Green Snow Pro training on road salt applications.

Hartland & Barkhamsted

\$5,525 to the Friends of American Legion & Peoples State Forest (FALPS) to assist in the cost of creating a historic interpretive loop trail along the Farmington River in Barkhamsted and Hartland, in memory of David Leff. FALPS is working to establish an approximately 1 mile easy walking loop trail through a centuries old historic industrial site. The trail will begin at the north end of School Street in Riverton and continue along the Farmington River north through Hartland. The trail will provide responsible recreational use and promote education about the river, its resources and history. CT DEEP and FALPS volunteers are actively involved in invasive control throughout the site. FALPS volunteers have completed laying out and clearing the trail.

New Hartford

FRCC provided a \$10,000 grant to the New Hartford Land Trust (NHLT) to help complete the acquisition of 31.7 acres at the north end of Stub Hollow in New Hartford. This land is an important part of a wildlife corridor, core forest and related habitat. It contains woodlands, wetlands and watercourses that shed north to the East Mountain Brook and then to the Wild & Scenic West Branch of the Farmington River.

Winchester

\$10,000 grant for the Cannavo Springs Watershed property awarded to the Winchester Land Trust (WLT). The primary goal is to preserve the undeveloped watershed and, by doing so, protect the purity of the Cannavo Spring, Highland Lake, Mad River, and ultimately the Farmington River, from harmful runoff. WLT will own 25 acres of land above the spring, but not the spring itself. This land is currently unprotected and subject to development pressure, being zoned for up to 12 home sites. Such development would significantly increase run-off and contamination of several bodies of water nearby. The WLT intends to preserve and protect the water source from contaminants and to continue to allow public access to the spring. Spring water flows through drains to the Mad River, then the Still River, and then the Farmington River – where many people fish and swim - and tube! Protecting water purity in this watershed area will impact water quality in many other areas for many other uses.

EDUCATION and OUTREACH

FRCC's Education and Outreach subcommittee meets monthly to discuss educational programs, projects, outreach events, publications, and opportunities and bring grant proposals and ideas in line with the Management Plan to the full committee. Some of the areas of focus in 2023 are explained below.

River Steward Program

The FRCC River Steward Program was created and is run by Stephan Bastryzcki. Donna Bastryzcki, Stephan's wife and the Barkhamsted Recreation Director, generously volunteered with this program. 2023 had 8 Assistant River Stewards working on weekends from June to August. We started the season by having an NPS specialist— Scott Gausen, attend our training day and work with the stewards on creating effective messaging when engaging users. He had insightful information about how people come to the river for different reasons, and how each may have a different perception of the same scenario than someone else.

The stewards spend much of their time engaging users along the river and at local events. They educate visitors about the importance of treading lightly while outdoors, and limiting items people bring with them to the river, and especially on the water. The stewards are also a source of information on topics like fishing regulations, access points, and river flows. The stewards attended several events to gain access to a wider audience including attending the Barkhamsted Summer Camp where the stewards helped promote the Junior River Ranger Program, or the Collinsville Farmer's Market. Events cohosted by the steward team included two paddle nights with Collinsville Canoe and Kayak, and a Family Fun Day at People's Forest. We were fortunate to again have help from our partners to access sections further downstream without having to shuttle our own boats. Farmington River Tubing for use of their equipment and shuttle helped cover Satan's Kingdom and Collinsville Canoe and Kayak for kayaks to paddle the flatwater section in that area.

The weather and consequent flows had a large impact on the river and visitation this summer. With all the rain in July, dam levels were high, resulting in Colebrook Reservoir reaching flood stage and water being released by the Army Corps of Engineers. From the USGS West Branch gauge in Riverton, there were 21 days in July where the flows were over 1000 cfs (a couple of the days these flows were during the evening or early morning hours), not including tributary inputs or downstream confluence of Still River/Sandy Brook. As one can imagine, the high flows limited much of the recreation on the river, including tubing, boating and fishing. For safety reasons, Farmington River Tubing is required to remain closed when flows are over 1000 cfs. The end result was a river of extremes – often too high in July for safe recreation, and at other times too low for enjoyable boating or tubing. The team engaged a large number of users (estimated 825 in 2023 vs 610 in 2022).

Statistics and Data

Number of paid stewards: 8

Total paid hours: 1512

Total volunteer hours: estimated 95

Estimated # of people engaged: 825

of garbage bags picked up with litter: 55

Areas with the most litter: Satan's Kingdom, Matthies Grove, Parking lot at start of Hogback Rd, Whittemore, Party Rock in Collinsville, Ramp Road.



Wild & Scenic Educational Kiosks

The kiosk project has spanned several years. FRCC funded the building of 10 kiosks, by local carpenter, William A. Winchester, Jr. Kiosks were replaced on CT DEEP and MDC properties, with help from the River Steward Team, and FRCC reps. A big thanks to the crew from CT DEEP Maintenance and to MDC for their help in providing equipment and labor. As this project continues over a few years, new back panels are being reviewed by FRCC Education & Outreach subcommittee for two new locations in Canton. Photo to the right shows a new kiosk being installed on CT DEEP property in Canton.



Farmington River Quilt Project

The Quilt was on display at the State Capitol in the Legislative Office Building concourse in Hartford, CT for the month of September and FRCC hosted "A Quilter's View of the Upper Farmington River" at the State Capitol Legislative Office Building on September 18th, with guest speakers Roger Behrens, Dan Bowler, Matt Goclowski, and Mark Anderson. It was a great opportunity to celebrate the 50 foot long quilt and the Wild & Scenic Upper Farmington River. Photo at the hanging on the quilt with Aimee Petras, Laura Hart, Tom Carpenter, and Dan Bowler. To see the entire quilt virtually visit farmingtonriverquilt.org



FRCC Open House

FRCC was pleased to get back to hosting the Open House event at Squire's Tavern in October 2023 with photography from Tom Camera and Rick Warters, live music from Travelin' Trout, and a large gathering of river folk (see photo, right.)

Earth Day Cooperative Farmington River Cleanup

FRCC participated in the 3rd Earth Day River Cleanup, organized by the Farmington River Anglers Association, and in partnership with the Farmington River Watershed Association and Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited. The cleanup was a great success with volunteers filling a large dumpster full of trash collected along the river from below Hogback Dam to Collinsville.



Barkhamsted Nature Day Festival

The family-friendly event was held at Matthies Grove Pavilion, Peoples State Forest, Barkhamsted, and was co-sponsored by the Town of Barkhamsted, Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forest, and FRCC.

Wild & Scenic Film Festival

FRCC was proud to yet again help host the Wild & Scenic Film Festival along with the Farmington River Watershed Association. The greater Farmington River community came together at the Canton Town Hall Auditorium and virtually. 191 people enjoyed celebrating the river and learning about Wild & Scenic designations.

ANNUAL REPORT 2023—OVERVIEW OF EXPENDITURES

Resource Stewardship - \$46,547.41

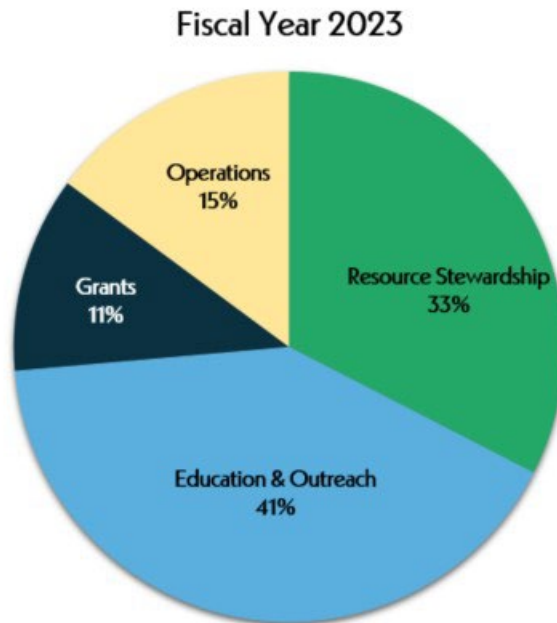
- Invasive Species Programs
- Water Quality Monitoring Programs
- Land Protection Assistance
- Stream Crossing Surveys

Education and Outreach - \$58,710.80

- Kiosks
- River Steward Program
- Publications and website
- Farmington River Quilt Project

Grants - \$16,466.15

Operations - \$21,264.24



The federal fiscal year is 10/1/2022 to 9/30/23. Fiscal year 2023 total \$142,988.60 and \$19,000 Indirect



THE FARMINGTON RIVER COORDINATING COMMITTEE

FRCC's mission is to promote long-term protection of the Upper Farmington River by:

- Bringing interested parties together on a regular basis
- Stimulating cooperation and coordination among the parties
- Providing a forum to discuss and resolve issues
- Coordinating implementation of the Upper Farmington River Management Plan

FRCC

100 East River Road
 Pleasant Valley, CT 06063
 860-738-2456
FRCC@farmingtonriver.org

WEBSITES

FarmingtonRiver.org
 FarmingtonRiverSteward.org
 FarmingtonRiverQuilt.org

