



REPRESENTATIVES

Barkhamsted

Mario Santoro
Roger Behrens

Canton

Matt Vinick
Bill Coleman

Colebrook

Alison Jassen

Hartland

Dan Bowler

New Hartford

Alison Murdock

CT DEEP

Peter Aarrestad
Matt Gocłowski

FRAA

Torrey Collins
Derrick Kirkpatrick

FVTU

Jim Buchok
Tom Carpenter

FRWA

Laura Hart

MDC

Jim Randazzo

National Park Service

Andrew Petitdemange
Liz Lacy

Cover photo:
Eastern Painted Turtle by
Mark D Phillips

FARMINGTON RIVER COORDINATING COMMITTEE FISCAL YEAR 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Greetings:

A river is always moving. Perhaps that's what fascinates us. Sometimes it carries leaves, sometimes logs. Whatever falls upon it is carried downstream. Like life, we are carried along and sometimes need a reminder to reflect and appreciate. That is what the Farmington River does for us all.

2024 marked the 30th Anniversary of the West Branch Farmington River Wild and Scenic designation. Together with the Centennial Celebration of Peoples State Forest it was a milestone year. As you know, the Wild & Scenic corridor brings beauty and vitality to our towns. Each year, more and more people come to appreciate this remarkable resource and increasingly recognize the FRCC's important role to protect it. The FRCC works cooperatively with public and private organizations to accomplish its goal to conserve and enhance natural and cultural resources of the entire Upper Wild & Scenic corridor. Through Resource Stewardship and Education & Outreach the FRCC has initiated and supported many plans of action, projects and strategies to help ensure that this outstanding resource will be safeguarded. This Annual Report highlights this past year's accomplishments. Please take a moment to look it over. I think you will agree that it was a good year.

Protecting environmental, recreational, and economic values are dependent on a tireless commitment. In 1874, John Muir noted, "Uncle Sam seldom manifests any disposition to look very far into the future". Since the Wild & Scenic designation, the FRCC, as part of the National Park Service, has been sustained by a forward looking Congress willing to invest in protecting our country's precious natural resources. We now have the advantage of years to look back and acknowledge the wisdom and considerable returns on this investment. We are optimistic that this support and commitment will continue and our work will carry on and ensure that the Farmington River will remain Wild & Scenic for generations to come.

We encourage you to become aware of matters affecting the river and to share your thoughts and ideas with us. We wish you continued enjoyment of this special area.

Roger Behrens
FRCC Chair



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

The Upper 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 tube, canoe, kayak, and fish the waters of the Farmington and visit the parks, forests and historic sites that dot the river's edge. It is critical that we work together to protect 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, CT. 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 2024. The events listed are over the calendar year, however the financials on page 8 correspond to the fiscal year of October 2023 to the end of September 2024.

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 2024 are explained below.

INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT



Oriental Bittersweet
Celastrus orbiculatus

Photo by Chris Evans; University of Illinois

FRCC worked with CT DEEP Forester, Jerry Milne, to locate and determine the best location to begin targeting the invasive plant species, Oriental Bittersweet. Like many of our non-native invasive plant species, this was brought in as an ornamental plant. Bittersweet regenerates by sprouting from roots, root fragments, and the root crown, and from seed (often dispersed by birds or humans), and grow rapidly. It grows as a vine that smothers plants and uproots trees due to its weight. The harm on native trees and plants, partially on forest edges, is substantial in the watershed. It is listed as a high threat in deciduous, coniferous, and mixed conifer-deciduous forests, old fields, grasslands, riparian areas, and fresh wetlands.

FRCC funded the work to cut a 15 foot wide by 6,800 feet long section of bittersweet vines along the Farmington River in American Legion State Forest, working closely with CT DEEP. 102,000 square feet have been managed in the fall of 2024. FRCC plans to continue with follow-up, and moving on to other locations along the river.

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 the 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 predate on HWA. Native Eastern Hemlock is susceptible and severely impacted by HWA, especially when stressed by drought and other insect pests. Hemlocks are critical for bank stabilization and cold water temps in our tributaries and river. It looked bleak in the 90's, but there has been improvement in the health of hemlocks since Dr. Cheah's research began, and continued work will help to further improve the health of our forests.

In 2024, FRCC funded the release of 5,000 beetles in targeted areas with high infestations of HWA. Tree Savers hand delivered FRCC shipments of *S. tsugae* to Dr. Cheah. All release sites had been extensively pre-scouted for suitable HWA populations during the winter and early spring. Report on farmingtonriver.org. Sites for releases were along the following tributaries and west branch of the Farmington River:

- West Branch Farmington River - Peoples State Forest, Matthies Grove, Barkhamsted
- Unnamed tributaries - American Legion State Forest, West River Rd and Henry Buck Trail, Barkhamsted
- Cherry Brook - Canton Land Trust Pratt Preserve, Canton
- Jim Brook - Canton Land Trust Onion Mountain Preserve, Canton
- Jim Brook - Werner Woods, Nepaug State Forest, Canton
- Sandy Brook - Algonquin State Forest/Kitchel Wilderness, Colebrook
- Thorne Brook - Tunxis State Forest, Hartland
- Cedar Swamp Brook - Wildlife Management Area, New Hartford
- East Mountain Brook - New Hartford Land Trust properties (Jones Sawmill and Bilanin), New Hartford
- Unnamed tributary - New Hartford Land Trust Oliva property, New Hartford



WATER QUALITY MONITORING

FRCC supports water monitoring for the upper Farmington River and tributaries through a contract with the Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA). FRWA has been collecting data since 2004. The program's 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. FRWA's data can show sites of concern, and lead to potential restoration efforts. Through the program contract with FRCC, FRWA shares all data with FRCC in an annual written report and presentation, and shares all data with CT DEEP, uploads to EPA's WQX Portal, and helps educate watershed residents. All data submitted to the CT DEEP is used to evaluate assessed waters for the Integrated Water Quality Report (IWQR) which is submitted to the EPA every two years. Data can be viewed in the Farmington River Watershed Water Quality Report 2024 at frwa.org/resources. Details continue on page 4 of the FRCC funded monitoring on the following parameters.

BACTERIA

Nineteen sites were monitored for bacteria, 8 times from May to September. The West Branch Farmington River and Farmington River in New Hartford consistently have low *E. coli* values with one of the lowest *E. coli* geomean ever recorded in Riverton at 3 MPN/100mL in 2024. Winsted has a higher percentage of impervious surfaces leading to increases in *E. coli* values in the Mad and Still Rivers. Morgan Brook remained low in *E. coli*.

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. FRWA's bacteria results are updated biweekly during the summer on Connecticut River Conservancy's Is It Clean? website. connecticutriver.us/

WATER TEMPERATURE

FRWA monitors for temperature at 15 sites in the upper river watershed with 3 sites on the river and 12 sites on tributaries, 5 of which also log hourly conductivity. Almost all tributary temperatures were considered cool, with Rugg Brook in Winsted being cold and an Unnamed Tributary to the Farmington River on FRWA Frey property, New Hartford and Still River, Winsted being warm. This Unnamed Tributary is monitored due to lack of a streamside buffer and exposure from previous land use on the property.

CHLORIDE

Eight sites were monitored for chloride in the upper river watershed and are considered excellent to good conditions, except Jim Brook, Canton, which had chloride spike during winter storms. Jim Brook chloride worsened in 2024 but was not as high as values in 2022. 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.

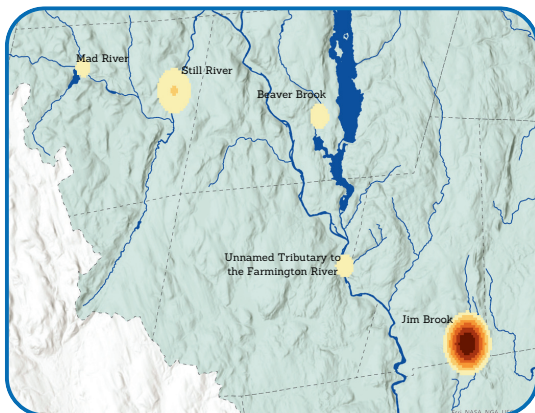


Figure 22: Kernel Density Map of Logger Locations by Highest Conductivity

CONDUCTIVITY

Additionally, FRCC helped fund the expansion of conductivity loggers in the upper river watershed from 1 to 5 via a grant. 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 research allows FRWA to determine if future source monitoring, best management practices (BMPs), and prioritizing Green Snow Pro trainings are needed. Working with CT DEEP, and based on existing discrete measurement data, FRWA added loggers on the Mad and Still Rivers, Beaver Brook, and unnamed tributary on the FRWA Frey Property. Jim Brook and Still River were higher in conductivity and with the highest being 1113 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ in January 2024 at Jim Brook.

ROAD STREAM CROSSINGS

FRCC funds FRWA to conduct surveys of road stream crossing (culvert) conditions within the upper 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 and FRWA will work with Trout Unlimited and the local municipalities to address severe barriers on cold-water habitat tributaries by creating preliminary designs for culvert replacements.

FRCC gave a grant to University of Mass/Amherst to help with the costs of the database. In 2024, FRWA received a small grant from FRCC to support its culvert survey program. 14 assessments were performed in Canton by FRWA. Tom Carpenter, FVTU committee rep was fully trained by FRWA.

GRANTS and LAND PROTECTION

As part of our effort to support local endeavors and enhance protection of the Upper Farmington River, FRCC offers grants up to \$15,000 for applicable projects from the riverbank to the watershed level. FRCC Land Protection Program supports conservation and restoration of the river and land protection within the five riverfront towns. Some of the projects FRCC supported this year are listed below:

BARKHAMSTED

FRCC supported the River Day school event with a \$5,000 grant, which was held at the Riverton Fairgrounds in September with 400 youth from the local elementary schools of Barkhamsted, Hartland, Colebrook, and Norfolk. Each student was also given the new Junior River Ranger booklet.

FRCC gave a grant of \$450 to the Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival held in Peoples State Forest, with both FRCC and the Farmington River Steward tabling at the annual event.

Friends of American Legion & Peoples State Forest (FALPS) received \$10,000 to purchase trees for the 100th Anniversary of Peoples State Forest, which cumulated in a great public event in October at Matthies Grove.

CANTON

FRCC gave \$2,000 to FRWA to host the 7th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival, which was as a 2-day event in Collinsville celebrating the Wild & Scenic Farmington River and showing films related to the issues facing our river.

COLEBROOK

FRCC continued to help fund expenses for the Town of Colebrook to update and expand the Natural Resource Inventory to be included in the next Colebrook Town Plan of Conservation and Development. Researchers are looking into lichens, birds, moths and butterflies, weather, geology, plants, aquatic resources, and conducting mapping for this project. The total grant is for \$7,000.

HARTLAND & BARKHAMSTED

FRCC continued to support 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 has established a 1 mile easy walking loop trail through a centuries old historic industrial site. The trail begins at the north end of School Street in Riverton and continue along the Farmington River north through Hartland.

NEW HARTFORD

FRCC provided an additional grant of \$1,500 for continued support to the New Hartford Land Trust for the purchase of the Oliva Property, with the overall support from FRCC at \$10,000.

FRCC provided a grant of \$695 the Collinsville Canoe & Kayak's 1st Paddling Film Festival held at Brewery Legitimus for the local paddling community.

WINCHESTER

FRCC gave out the \$10,000 grant for the Cannavo Springs Watershed property 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. 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.

FRCC awarded a \$10,000 grant for the surveying costs of the 507-acre Laurel Ridge property to WLT. The Land Trust in partnership with the Highland Lake Watershed Association will be purchasing 507 acres of land between Highland Lake and Route 800 with funds from a CT DEEP Open Space & Watershed Acquisition grant. Preserving this land will protect major watersheds of the Mad and Still Rivers which are tributaries of the Farmington River.

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 2024 are explained below.



RIVER STEWARD PROGRAM

The FRCC River Steward Program is a flagship program created for FRCC by Stephan Bastrzycki. Donna Bastrzycki, Stephan's wife and the Barkhamsted Recreation Director, generously continues to volunteer with this program. With Stephan running this seasonal program, 2024 had 7 river stewards and 1 river steward volunteer working on weekends from June 1 to August 18. This year, 4 were returning stewards.

The flows in the river over the summer lead to increased river activities. The vast majority being tubers. The highest hourly total during survey times occurred on July 14th (a sunny and 90 degree day), with 493 people going through Satan's Kingdom between 1-2 PM. On three other days in July when counts were taken, there were 400+ users per hour. Contrast this with the 2023 season when the highest hourly user count the stewards recorded for the summer was 398. Having access to boating equipment allows the stewards to engage users maybe otherwise not accessible from shore, and pick up trash.

Education and outreach is a big part of what the stewards do. Common topics discussed with river users included: river conditions, the Wild & Scenic designation, fishing spots and regulations, information on the monofilament containers, trash in the area, area wildlife, local events, and the river steward program.

The 2024 season marked the 10th continuous year the Farmington River Steward program has been helping with education and outreach on the Upper Wild and Scenic Farmington River. From its first year in 2015 with three paid summer stewards, it has grown to seven stewards. While the mission to make the Farmington River a safe and fun place to recreate has basically stayed the same, the additional support has allowed the steward team to have better coverage along the river, participate and host more events, and help create a path forward for students seeking a career in environmental science. There are many people and organizations that work hard to protect this beautiful river. The steward team is happy to be a part of that effort, especially with the growing number of recreationists.



STATISTICS & DATA

Total paid hours for the 7 Assistant Stewards: 1536

Total volunteer hours: ~70

of people engaged: ~1100

of garbage bags of picked up litter: 100

Areas with the most litter: Church Pool, Satan's

Kingdom, especially the independent tubing

takeout, and parts of the riverbank in Collinsville.

JUNIOR RIVER RANGER BOOKLET

FRCC created a working group and hired a graphic designer to recreate the Junior River Rangers booklets. They have been completed and already given out to well over 500 youth in the community.



WILD & SCENIC EDUCATIONAL KIOSKS

The kiosk project has spanned several years, and is finally completed with 14 newly built and revised front and individual back panels, with 4 new kiosk locations. FRCC funded the building of the 14 kiosks, by local carpenter, William A. Winchester, Jr. Kiosks were replaced on CT DEEP and MDC properties, and added to the Town of Canton and Nepaug Forest. A big thanks to the crew from CT DEEP Maintenance and to MDC for providing equipment and labor. Photo to the right shows a new kiosk being installed on CT DEEP property in Nepaug.

FRCC AND DEEP PADDLE EVENT

FRCC hosted its 2nd paddling event, lead by Dan Bowler, Hartland Rep and paddler, with FRCC reps, Rivers Alliance, staff from several CT DEEP departments, and State Representative Mark Anderson. The paddle was a great way to experience the river first-hand, share knowledge and ideas, and continue collaborative protection of the river.

FRCC OPEN HOUSE

FRCC hosted the Open House with live fly-tie demonstrations, macroinvertebrate images, specimens, and information, live music from The Travelin' Trout, and a large gathering of river folk.

EARTH DAY COOPERATIVE FARMINGTON RIVER CLEANUP

FRCC participated in the 4th Earth Day River Cleanup, organized by the Farmington River Anglers Association, and in partnership with the FRWA and FVTU. 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.

PEOPLES STATE FOREST CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARY

The 100th Anniversary of Peoples State Forest was celebrated this past fall by CT DEEP and FALPS, with FRWA, FVTU and the FRCC River Steward in attendance. A film was made that also features the Wild & Scenic Farmington River, so stay tuned!

FARMINGTON RIVER QUILT PROJECT

The Quilt is being prepared to be shown with the soon-to-be completed Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Quilt. To see the entire quilt virtually visit farmingtonriverquilt.org

WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL

FRCC was proud to yet again help host the Wild & Scenic Film Festival along with the FRWA. The greater Farmington River community came together at the Canton Town Hall Auditorium and virtually for two days and two different programs.



ANNUAL REPORT 2024—OVERVIEW OF EXPENDITURES

RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP TOTAL - \$62,738.25

- Invasive Species Programs \$18,479.50
- Water Quality Monitoring Programs \$25,520.00
- Land Protection Assistance \$16,581.95
- Upper Watershed Resilience \$2,156.80

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH TOTAL - \$69,967.14

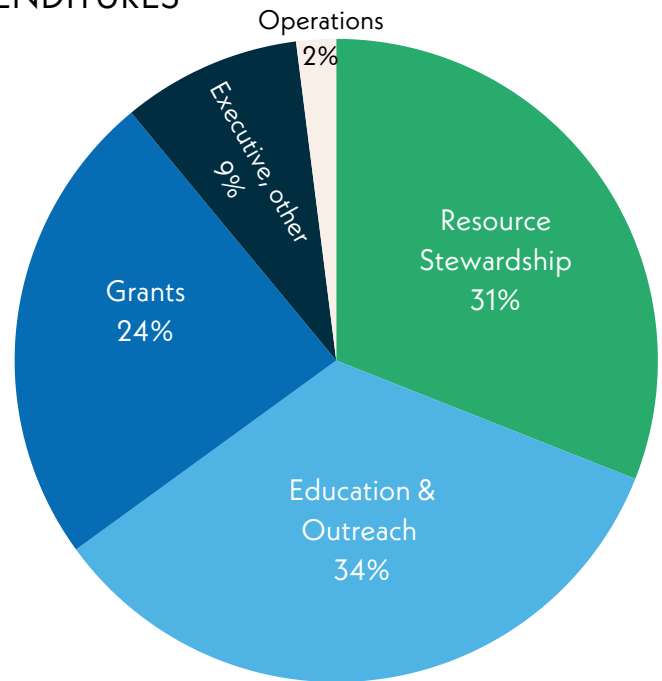
- River Steward Program \$58,914.01
- Publications and website \$10,451.13
- Outreach & Farmington River Quilt Project \$602.00

GRANTS - \$49,852.75

EXECUTIVE OTHER - \$18,364.00

- Organizational development \$364.00
- Program Assistance \$18,000.00

OPERATIONS TOTAL- \$4,472.08



The federal fiscal year is 10/1/2023 to 9/30/24. Fiscal year 2023 total \$205,394.22 and \$19,090 Indirect*
 *Note that some of these funds were carried over from fiscal year 2022.



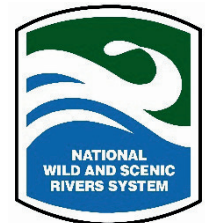
Farmington River Coordinating Committee

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



Paddle of the Farmington River led by Dan Bowler on June 28, 2024 with DEEP and other partners



FRCC
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 Pleasant Valley, CT 06063

WEBSITES
FarmingtonRiver.org
FarmingtonRiverSteward.org
FarmingtonRiverQuilt.org