



Willimantic River Review

Spring 2011

Looking for Water

One of the many challenges of the 21st century is the rising demand for clean water as population grows and development spreads. Three towns in the river's watershed are currently facing this challenge. **Tolland** has applied for a permit to double withdrawals from its wells along the river (to 511,000 gallons per day), and to connect to a Ct. Water Company (CWC) pipeline (from Shenipsit Lake) for a back-up water supply. **Coventry** needs additional water in Coventry Village during the summer months and possibly for fire hydrants. In **Mansfield** the town is seeking water (projected at 170,000 gallons per day) for the Four Corners upgrade in Storrs and for new development elsewhere in Storrs, such as an assisted living facility. Both Mansfield and Coventry are considering a new well along the Willimantic River and possibly sharing it.

The **University of Connecticut** has drafted an update to its five-year water supply plan (which WRA is reviewing). The plan acknowledges that the Storrs campus needs more water during dry summers. In fact, there have been three conservation alerts in the past five summers; the 2010 alert lasted from late June into November. One of UConn's proposals to address this shortage is a new wellfield by the Willimantic River.

Mansfield and UConn are also considering an interconnection with an existing public water supply. CWC could provide water from Shenipsit Lake via their **proposed regional pipeline** that would extend along Rt. 195 from Tolland to Storrs. CWC may apply for permits as early as this summer. This pipeline would involve transferring significant water amounts from the Hockanum River watershed to the Willimantic River watershed. It could also result in the demand for more intense development in the pipeline corridor along Route 195 in Tolland, Coventry and Mansfield.

To conserve water, UConn is also pursuing a **reclaimed water facility** to recycle treated wastewater from their sewage treatment plant. This could save up to 400,000 gallons per day of drinking water, but it would reduce the flow in the Willimantic River below the treatment plant's outfall at Eagleville dam even as the plant receives additional flow from Four Corners.

All of these options overlap and have both positive and negative impacts. Addressed separately, these water supply decisions could create unintended consequences. The Alliance is advocating for a **coordinated regional approach** where all of the parties can explore solutions with mutual benefits and minimal adverse impacts.

Water Trail Signs

The **Willimantic River Water Trail** will become more visible this spring, as water trail signs show up at launch sites from Stafford to Columbia. The sign's format is being tested before permanent signs are made for several water trails in northeast Connecticut. The Alliance has been pioneering a regional water trail development project with the National Park Service (NPS) and The Last Green Valley (TLGV). In addition to posting signs, WRA has updated its website with a new paddling page and a NPS paddling guide (pdf format).

NPS and TLGV are organizing water trail projects on several rivers and coordinating a joint application for local water trails to be recognized as National Recreation Trails. Before the November deadline, WRA will be tuning up its application and meeting with partner towns and DEP about their participation in managing launch areas.

Algae Alert

An invasive algae has shown up in the Farmington River downstream of Riverton. Didymo (also know as "rock snot") covers the river bottom and smothers small plants and insects. To prevent the spread of didymo, be sure to clean your fishing and boating equipment. Visit www.ctflyfish.org for more information and cleaning tips.

Riverwatch

KILL THIS BILL

A year ago, the Ct. DEP held hearings on the first Connecticut **Stream Flow Standards and Regulations**. These regulations would promote stream flow rates that allow aquatic life to survive in rivers and streams, especially during low-flow conditions. Water users such as industries, farms and water companies objected to these regulations, claiming that there would be heavy restrictions on water supplies and too much expense to change their infrastructure so it could return sufficient water to a watercourse. During the past year, the draft regulations were reviewed by the legislature's Regulations Review Committee. After water users complained to this committee, the draft regulations were referred back to DEP twice for revisions.

The most recent attempt to prevent these regulations from being approved is the legislature's **Senate Bill 1020**. It would create an approval procedure that would stall that process for many years and require approval by the Dept. of Commerce and Development (DOCD) and the Dept. of Agriculture (DA) as part of the process. When this bill was considered in the legislature's Commerce Committee, the Alliance submitted testimony to Rep. Gregg Haddad (Mansfield/Chaplin), Vice-Chair of that committee. We asked him to vote against this bill, explaining the inappropriate power granted to DOCD and DA and the impossible approval process being proposed. Gregg stepped up to the plate and voted against the bill, in spite of a 15-2 majority voting in favor. Thank you Gregg!

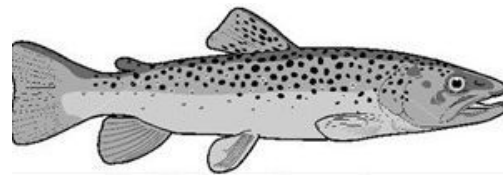
The bill is now moving through the legislative mill, and the Alliance will continue to monitor its progress and advocate for its rejection. These stream flow regulations have been five years in the making, and it is time for the Regulations Review Committee to find a compromise rather than start all over again. DEP is aiming to have another draft ready by the summer.

SEWERS ADVANCE

The extensive housing development around the **Bolton lakes** has contributed to poor water quality in the lakes and in their outflow into the Hop River. Bolton and Vernon have received grants and permits to begin a four-phase sewer construction project. Phase One is almost complete, and the first connections will be made to Manchester's wastewater treatment plant. When this project is completed, water quality will be much better in the lakes, in the Hop River and ultimately in the Willimantic River (from Columbia through Windham).

Spring Paddling Tips

Water levels can make or break a canoe/kayak trip on the river. Before going out, check the USGS Willimantic River stream gauge (in South Coventry) at the Alliance website's Recreation page, Paddling section. **Launch sites and maps** for the 24-mile Water Trail are also in this section. **Safety tips:** state law requires that between October 1 and May 30 each person must wear a life jacket (PFD), and year-round there must be a PFD aboard for each person. Bring an extra rope and paddle, and tell someone where you plan to launch and take out. If you are a beginner, the safest place to try river paddling is in the slow current at River Park's handicapped-access boat launch on Plains Road (off of Rt. 32 just south of the Rt. 44 intersection in Mansfield Depot).



Fishing Season Opens

The river is stocked with trout, and the first day to try your luck is **Saturday, April 16**. For information about fishing in the river, visit the Alliance website's Recreation page, Fishing section.

Calendar

The Alliance is now posting events on its **blog**. You can link to it from our website's Events page and find the latest posting.

Wednesday April 27

WRA's Annual Meeting and Open House

Join us for pizza at Willington Pizza House on Rt. 32 in South Willington from 6 to 7 p.m. to share news and photos of the river and Alliance projects. Who will receive a "Spirit of the River" honor this year? Annual meeting precedes at 5:30.

Saturday, April 30

Upper Willimantic River Paddle

Canoe or kayak down this beautiful stretch of river for 8 miles from Tolland to River Park in Mansfield. Sponsored by AMC Ct. Chapter. For experienced paddlers with their own boats. Bring water and lunch. Life jackets required. Contact Betty at 860-429-3206 or pbrobinson@snet.net to register.

Saturday, May 21

Willimantic Riverfest

Family paddling down the river from Eagleville Dam to Willimantic, Sponsored by The Chamber of Commerce. Information: www.windhamchamber.com or 860-423-6389.

Saturday, June 4

Family Cruise on the Willimantic River

Easy flatwater trip for canoes and kayaks from River Park to Eagleville Lake. Choice of short or long (two mile) round trip. Bring your own boat. Life jackets required for all participants. Bring water, lunch optional. Moderate to heavy rain cancels. Time: 10 a.m. to noon. Meet at River Park on Plains Road in Mansfield. Sponsored by Willimantic River Alliance and Mansfield Parks and Recreation Department. For information, call 429-3015 x 204.

Water Supply Forum

In response to issues highlighted on Page One, the Alliance is hoping to sponsor a public informational meeting concerning regional water supply issues. The forum is being planned for May at the new Storrs Community Church on Rt. 195 by the river in Coventry. Details will be available on the Alliance blog via our website's Events page.

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Inquiries or submissions for the Fall 2011 Edition may be submitted to:

WRA, P.O. Box 9193, Bolton, CT 06043-9193 or info@willimanticriver.org

View previous newsletters at www.willimanticriver.org.

Get Outside!

It's time to enjoy the great outdoors! Visit the Willimantic River Greenway Parks and Trails Guide as www.willimanticriver.org to discover 25 public access sites along the river. Or visit the website's Paddling page for detailed information about the river's 24-mile canoe-kayak route.

Willimantic River Alliance – Membership Form

Name _____
 Address _____
 Town _____ State _____ Zip _____
 E-Mail _____ Phone _____

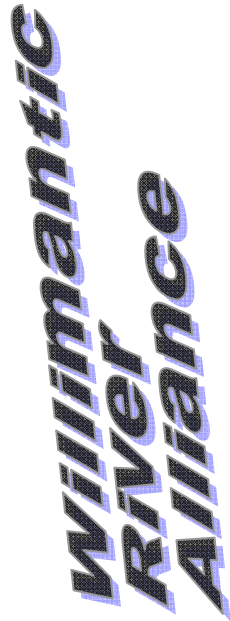
Contact me about volunteer opportunities for the WRA

Mail completed form and check to:

WRA at P.O. Box 9193, Bolton CT 06043-9193

| Memberships | Annual Dues |
|----------------|-------------------|
| Senior/Student | \$ 5.00 |
| Individual | \$10.00 |
| Family | \$15.00 |
| River Steward | \$ 50.00 |
| Patron | \$ 250.00 |
| | (Lifetime Member) |

Thank you for joining the Alliance! Your membership dues may be tax deductible.



Founded in 1996, the Alliance has a mission “to protect and preserve the Willimantic River through cooperative and educational activities that promote regional awareness, stewardship, and enjoyment of the river and its watershed.” As a coalition of citizens, officials and local agencies, the Alliance sponsors events such as regional forums and outings and publications, including a newsletter and website www.willimanticriver.org. Our email address is info@willimanticriver.org.

Willimantic River Alliance, Inc. is a nonprofit 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt corporation. The Alliance promotes development of the Willimantic River Greenway, an official state greenway along the river’s 25 miles from Stafford Springs to Willimantic. This regional project aims to connect recreational, historical and natural resource features along the river. These connections are being created by the nine riverside towns through natural resource preservation and recreation projects, such as linking trails and improving access to the river.

The river’s watershed includes seventeen towns: (in Ct.) Andover, Ashford, Bolton, Columbia, Coventry, Ellington, Hebron, Lebanon, Mansfield, Stafford, Union, Tolland, Vernon, Willington, Windham, and (in Mass.) Monson, Wales.

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