



Farmington River News



What a dry summer it has been!
Read on to see how low water
levels forewarn us of potential
problems in my home.

Activities and Issues in the Farmington River Watershed

Drought Drawbacks– Lack of Rain Leads to Cyanobacteria Blooms and Chloride Contamination

On August 26th of this year 86.6% of Connecticut and 96.1% of Massachusetts were experiencing severe drought (drought.gov). Drought can lead to water quality issues including heightened levels of *E. coli*, nutrient concentrations, chloride, and temperature. This summer FRWA staff and members witnessed many dry streambeds, elevated chloride levels in many tributaries and small streams throughout the watershed, and a cyanobacteria bloom in Rainbow Reservoir that was caused by excessive nutrient loading from stormwater runoff. Runoff is especially common during droughts because as the ground dries up, it becomes less permeable. This means that the rain that does fall gets washed into our storm drains and waterways, often carrying contaminants from our daily lives (fertilizer, pet waste, bacteria, pesticides, etc.). One way homeowners can help mitigate nutrient and chloride pollution is to decrease stormwater runoff. *Scan the QR code to the right to visit riversmartct.org and learn about how you can decrease stormwater runoff near your home.*



Cyanobacteria are single-celled organisms that thrive in warm, slow-moving bodies of water. It can be quite noticeable when a body of water is experiencing a bloom, such as the case with the Rainbow Reservoir in Windsor, CT, where the water is almost neon green in some places with a thick, algae-like appearance. While cyanobacteria aren't always toxic, they have the potential to create cyanotoxins which can affect both humans and pets through skin absorption, ingestion, and inhalation. Cyanobacteria blooms are episodic, so it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly which toxins are in a bloom even with thorough research. Best practice is to avoid water bodies that appear contaminated.



FRWA staff have been researching cyanobacteria blooms on Rainbow Reservoir and exploring potential remedies. We also partner with the Izaak Walton League of America (IWLA) Salt Watch program to investigate chloride contamination from road salts throughout our watershed. If you are interested in volunteering for Salt Watch, email pvichiola@frwa.org. UCONN's CT Technical Training and Assistance Center (T2 Center) provides workshops that instruct municipalities on road salt application best practices. If your municipality or company would like to attend a Green Snow Pro: Sustainable Winter Operations training workshop, email apetras@frwa.org.

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PLUS: Annual Meeting and Wild & Scenic Film Festival invitations inside!

Article written with submissions by Kelsey Murray, FRWA 2022 intern. Photos taken in summer 2022 by FRWA staff.



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FRWA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the Farmington River and its Watershed through research, education, and advocacy.

Fall 2022 FRWA & Partner Events

Watershed Connections - Hosted by the Bloomfield Public Library Virtual Presentation- Wednesday, December 14, 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM

Join FRWA Education & Outreach Manager Heather Geist as she explains the characteristics of a watershed, the ways that stormwater runoff pollution leads to issues such as cyanobacteria blooms (also known as Harmful Algal Blooms) in waterbodies, and what you can do to help reduce surface water pollution and conserve our drinking water resources.



Scan the QR code or visit bplct.org to register.

SAVE THE DATE

A CELEBRATION OF THE FARMINGTON RIVER

Friday, October 28, 2022, 6:30pm

- 5 course dinner with wine pairings
- Cash bar
- Silent auction with exciting prizes
- Look for the invitation in September ~ seating is limited, so reserve early!

Metro Bis Restaurant
690 Hopmeadow St.
Simsbury, CT 06070
www.metrobis.com



Join fellow River Friends as we enjoy a 5-course meal prepared by award-winning celebrity chef and owner, Chris Prospero. A portion of every ticket sold will support FRWA!

The New York Times declares "...Prospero is a technical master, an original American chef whose restaurant is worth traveling for" and the Zagat Survey has ranked Metro Bis in the top five in the state for American food.

Partnership Wild & Scenic Projects

Did you know that the Farmington River has two Wild and Scenic designations? The Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC) and the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic Committee (LFSWS) aid in the decision-making processes regarding the waterways protected by the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. You can learn more about these partnerships on the FRCC website at farmingtonriver.org and on the LFSWS website at lowerfarmingtonriver.org. If you are interested in serving on one of our Partnership Wild & Scenic committees, please email lhart@frwa.org.

LFSWS Library Displays

Visit the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic library displays this October at the Simsbury Public Library and Hartland Public Library.



Farmington River Quilt Project

The Farmington River Coordinating Committee presents the Farmington River Quilt. You can view the quilt at the Burlington Public Library from September 3-October 27.



**Farmington River
Coordinating Committee**



Summer 2022 Research & Outreach– What Have We Been Up To?

Frey Property Trail Cameras

This summer FRWA installed several motion-activated trail cameras on our recently acquired 13-acre Frey Property in New Hartford, CT. The cameras were funded by a generous endowment from the Estate of Lily Frey and FRCC in order to document wildlife among the riparian, meadow, and pond habitats in the area. The footage collected from these cameras will give us a better understanding of the species that visit the property as well as the frequency and seasonality of species. This will help to inform future habitat restoration projects such as removal of invasive plant species and native plantings to act as stream buffers and pollinator habitat.

Right: Deer and heron images collected from trail cameras on the Frey Property



Water Quality Monitoring

FRWA staff and interns kept busy this field season! We conducted stream crossing assessments in CT and MA, monitored five sites on Rainbow Reservoir for cyanobacteria, nineteen sites in CT for nutrients, twenty-one sites in CT for chloride, eighteen sites in CT for temperature, and sixty-seven sites in CT and MA for *E. coli*. We extend our thanks to the Town of Simsbury for allowing us to use their lab facilities to process our *E. coli* samples this year! Scan the QR code to view our 2022 *E. coli* results on frwa.org.



FRWA Summer Twilight Paddle– Collinsville, CT

Members, volunteers, and friends of FRWA gathered at Collinsville Canoe & Kayak (CCK) on July 21 to explore the Farmington River in Collinsville during the 2022 summer drought. CCK offers canoe, kayak, SUP, and bicycle rentals as well as paddling lessons. You can learn more about CCK at collinsvillecanoe.com. Many thanks to CCK for hosting this event!

Right: photo taken in Collinsville by Rick Warters



Diversify Whitewater Community River Float– Windsor, CT

FRWA received funding from Diversify Whitewater, a nonprofit organization based in Fort Collins, Colorado, to host a community paddling event for members of the BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) community and allies on August 13th. More than 40 participants from the Greater Hartford Area and beyond—many who have never paddled before—traveled from the mouth of the Farmington River into the Connecticut River. FRWA extends our thanks to Diversify Whitewater for helping us share the joys of river recreation with our watershed residents.



Scan the QR code or visit diversifywhitewater.org to learn more

Right: photos taken by Rick Warters





"On the River with Rick" by Michael Feldman

The text arrived: "We're on for Friday morning 6:00. Meet me in front of Cracker Barrel Pub, Tariffville."

It was a clear, perfect summer morning. Rick Warters drove up and gestured to follow him. He parked his SUV at the take out spot—a sandy area along the river in Tariffville Park. He got in my car and I asked: "If we take out here, it seems we won't be going through the Tariffville gorge rapids." "No," Rick replied, "not part of today's plan. You'll have to talk to Andy Kuhlberg or Dave Sinish about the gorge." (I may do that).

We left my car at his house, trekked down to the river and got into the kayaks—his red, mine blue. We glided into the gentle current—the early morning river quiet and all to ourselves, except for the abundant wildlife surrounding us.

"Check out the osprey on the upper branch," he said just as it took off in flight filling the sky with its wide wingspan. He clicked a few photos with his high tech long range camera. "I am seeing a lot more of those ospreys this year."

Rick is an avid nature photographer. Years of patience and luck from the seat of his kayak have allowed him to capture all manner of watershed life in their natural setting.

Families of wood ducks and mergansers rested on the banks. A great blue heron perched on low branches, and flew off as we approached, keeping track of us as we paddled down river.

A side trip down an "oxbow," as he called it, took us to a habitat for painted turtles—hundreds of them—sitting on logs. "You see all those dots on the logs—all painted turtles." As we gently approached, the turtles eyed us with suspicion. I eyed them as they slid into the water and was reminded how, when on the Farmington River you are nestled in suburbia, just a stone's throw from route 315 or a residential subdivision. Yet you feel you are deep in the remote wilderness. And what a reminder it is of the work we do to keep it that way.



Michael Feldman, President, FRWA Board of Directors in his blue kayak



An osprey in flight



A family of mergansers



Painted turtles on a log

Photos by Rick Warters

What does our Wild & Scenic Farmington River mean to you?

Share your stories, poems, or high resolution photos with FRWA. They may be featured in future newsletters, on social media posts, or in other promotional materials that support our mission! We want to hear about the riverscapes, recreation destinations, and wildlife that make the Farmington River and its watershed special to you. Please email your submissions to hgeist@frwa.org.

By submitting a photo for use by the FRWA, you attest that (1) the photo is yours and is free for use, and (2) any identifiable person in your submission has consented to the publication of their image.



"On the River with Michael" by Rick Warters

I spend a lot of time kayaking on our river. So far this year, I have paddled more than 1,000 miles on the north-flowing section of the Farmington River between Farmington and Tariffville.

The richness of life that lives in and passes through this corridor makes every outing a new adventure. The river's bends are the same, but what lies around them changes from moment to moment. Uncovering its wonders requires an inquisitive perspective, a good deal of patience, and a healthy dose of luck. And some familiarity of the river and its inhabitants helps.

I was happy to share one of these recent experiences with Michael Feldman. Seeing the river through the eyes of a less frequent traveler is a good reminder of the uniqueness of this resource. The tranquility of an early morning paddle envelops you. Absent occasional road noise, you could be anywhere. But you're just a stone's throw from the center of town.

Keep your eyes scanning from the waterline to the treetops. That ripple moving across the water perpendicular to the banks is a muskrat. The white spot in the forest of green a few hundred yards downriver is a bald eagle. Keep your ears peeled for a rustle in the brush, the cry of a hawk, or the chirp of an osprey. And there's no more stirring sound than the beat of a great blue heron's wings taking to the air less than the river's width away. You'll see him again in a minute. He almost always flies ahead of you.

Three miles into the trip, Michael and I entered a section of the river that tries to create an island when the water is higher. It reaches back toward Route 315 and the soccer fields. Quiet reaches like this are oases of life where fish breach the surface, turtles abound, and herons feed in the shallows while raptors circle overhead. Beneath the surface, colonies of bryozoa that date to the Jurassic period cling to plants and serve as a filter, a food source, and a reminder that these environs long pre-date us.

We are the beneficiaries of all that has been done since the 1950s, when the river was described as a health menace. But we need to remain vigilant about the trash strewn carelessly in our river, the chemicals spread on our lawns, and the endless push for development that isn't river smart. Time on our wild and scenic river is a reminder of our obligation to future generations to protect what those before us worked hard to restore.

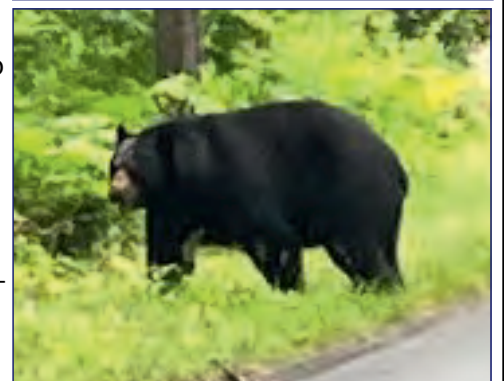
Creature Feature: Wildlife Encounters

Autumn is a great time to observe wildlife, but we should take care to view from a respectful distance without interacting. Use the zoom function on your camera to get that perfect shot, and try not to interrupt the animal or block its path. If an animal walks away from you do not follow, as this may cause it to feel threatened.

Never attempt to feed wildlife, as their digestive systems are not designed for human food. Creatures can also become familiarized towards humans who feed them and may begin to approach humans, which can be dangerous for the humans and the animal. If your canine friend likes to hike with you, be sure to keep them on a leash. Dogs are considered predators to many wild species, especially when raising their young, and they can inadvertently disturb ground-nesting birds.

If an animal looks sick, injured, or in need of help, do not bring it into your home for your own safety and theirs. Contact a wildlife rehabilitator, your local Animal Control, or DEEP's 24-hour emergency dispatch line at 860-424-3333. You can also visit wildlifehelp.org for tips on how to deal with wildlife.

Creature feature photos taken by FRWA staff during the summer sampling season.



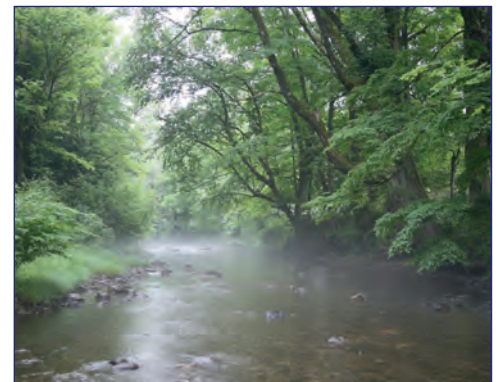


Wild & Scenic Spotlight: McLean Game Refuge Wildlife Sanctuary- Granby, Simsbury, and Canton, CT

Spanning over 4,400 acres of land in Granby, Simsbury, and Canton, CT, and hosting over 20,000 visitations per year, the McLean Game Refuge has been protecting wildlife and their habitats for the past 90 years. It has been recognized as a National Natural Landmark Area by the National Park Service, and it contains part of West Branch Salmon Brook, which is part of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic designation.

When hiking at the Game Refuge you may come across wetland habitats such as vernal pools, beaver marshes, ancient hemlock groves, and forested floodplains. Red cedar glades and dry woodland ridges occupy the higher altitude areas, and open meadow habitats are interspersed throughout. These habitats are home to over 1,300 species (as of 8/8/2022) of plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, including 21 that are listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern by CT DEEP.

Aside from preserving these beautiful landscapes and species, the McLean Game Refuge conducts various types of ecological research. The Game Refuge maintains a database of organisms that have been identified on the property via field monitoring, motion-sensor cameras, and ecological studies. Among these are trees up to 350 years old and flowering populations of American chestnut trees, which the Connecticut chapter of the American Chestnut Foundation hand pollinates to collect seeds for restoration work. Game Refuge staff also study population dynamics of eastern coyotes, and they conduct biological assessments for stream quality with FRWA. Scan the QR code or visit mcleancare.org to learn more.



*Photos by Connor Hogan,
Director, McLean Game Refuge*

How Bad Is It...to leave my leaves on the lawn?

Fall leaf cleanup can often feel like an arduous and never-ending task, but what would happen if we decided not to clean them up? Your neighbors would likely not be pleased, but your yard may thank you! In natural woodlands and forests leaves fall to the ground where they are broken down by passing animals, insects, bacteria, and fungi to release their nutrients back into the soil. You can mimic this natural cycle by shredding your leaves with a lawn mower or a mulching leaf blower. Shredded leaves decompose more quickly than whole leaves, they won't smother your grass, and they are less likely to blow away in the wind. Shredded leaves can be used to mulch your lawn, gardens, trees, and newly established plantings to:

- provide habitat for small wildlife and pollinators
- loosen soil to increase porosity and reduce compaction
- help prevent weed germination by blocking sunlight
- increase moisture retention in soil by preventing evaporation
- provide a temperature buffer to keep soil cool in summer and warmer in winter

If you have too many leaves to mulch you can create a compost pile, purchase a compost bin for your home, or scan the QR code on the right to visit a table of active leaf composting facilities on CT.gov.



*Shred your leaves for
free organic mulch and
fertilizer! Scan the QR
code on the left to
learn more about fall
lawn care on frwa.org*





Volunteer Spotlight - Water Quality Monitors

FRWA would like to show special acknowledgement to our volunteers who donated their time and energy to helping us collect *E. coli* data this summer. Dave Cappello, Susan Olsen, and David and Carrie Sinish ventured out in the heat every other week to collect samples on our Lower River Avon, Lower River Canton/Farmington, and Upper River FRCC routes, respectively. Thank you all for your help and dedication to the health and protection of our river!

We also want to thank our volunteers who help with outreach events including summer paddling trips and our annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival, as well as with macroinvertebrate sampling, culvert assessments, tree and rain garden plantings, invasive plant removals, and our river clean-up.

Keep an eye on frwa.org for upcoming volunteer opportunities, including the 35th Annual Farmington River Clean-up on September 24th. If you are interested in serving on one of our Partnership Wild & Scenic committees, please email lhart@frwa.org.

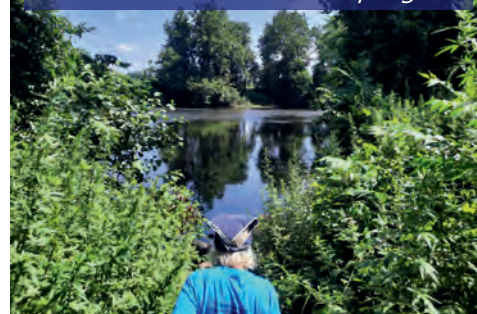
Volunteer photos by Laura Hart

Supporters Help Keep Our Programs Afloat

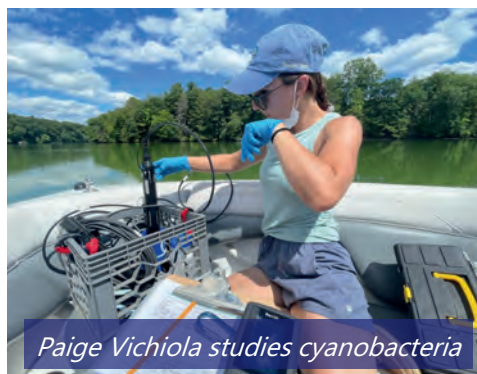
The nonprofit world can be unpredictable when it comes to funding, and grant assistance for water quality programs can often be difficult to obtain. Thanks to generous support from the Werth Foundation, FRWA was able to sample cyanobacteria and get a sense of the full extent of the bloom in Rainbow Reservoir this summer. Our data was shared with CT DEEP and the Windsor Health Department to assist them in reporting about this public health risk, and next summer we will be able to further investigate blooms thanks to an Aquatic Invasive Species grant from CT DEEP.

This summer we also began an investigation of the Cherry Brook Watershed to determine potential sources of *E. coli* contamination, which was made possible by funding provided from FRCC. Our stream crossing assessment projects are funded by FRCC, LFSWS, and the Berkshire Clean, Cold, and Connected Regional Partnership (BCCC). Lastly, a major source of funding for our research, education, and projects comes from member support, which makes up approximately one-third of our funding. Thank you for your continued support!

Susan Olsen heads to a sampling site



David Sinish collects a water sample



Paige Vichiola studies cyanobacteria



Scan the QR code to support FRWA by donating online today!

Remember, FRWA is a 501(c)(3) organization, so gifts are tax deductible.

Prefer to mail in your gift? Send this slip to the address below .

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____ City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____ Phone Number: _____

Check one: ☐ \$50 ☐ \$75 ☐ \$125 ☐ \$150 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$_____ other amount

___ I have enclosed my check payable to FRWA, or please charge my ___ MasterCard or ___ Visa.

Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____ CCV _____ Amount \$ _____

Name on Card: _____ Signature _____

Please send to: **Farmington River Watershed Association, 749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070**

Credit card donations may be submitted online at frwa.org via our secure online contributions server.



Farmington River Watershed Association Fall 2022



The Farmington River Watershed Association
749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

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Protecting The Farmington River, For You, For All, Forever.

FRWA 2022 Fall Events

Saturday, September 24 - 35th Annual Farmington River Clean-up - multiple locations

Friday, October 28 - A Celebration of the Farmington River - Metro Bis, Simsbury

Saturday, November 5 - FRWA Annual Meeting, Simsbury Public Library

Friday, November 18 - Wild & Scenic Film Festival - Canton Town Hall Auditorium and Virtual

Wednesday, December 14 - Bloomfield Library Presentation - Virtual

More event details inside!

Scan the QR code to visit frwa.org, where you can find a full list of our upcoming events with ticket and registration information!



You can support Farmington River Watershed Association by shopping at **smile.amazon.com**. Amazon will donate **0.5%** of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to FRWA when you shop on AmazonSmile.

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