



Farmington River News



Look inside— we're finishing our 70th year with more programming than ever!

Activities and Issues in the Farmington River Watershed

Safeguarding the River and Expanding Programs in 2023

FRWA spent our 70th year growing and expanding many of our programs, thanks to our base of generous supporters, dedicated volunteers, and invaluable partners. We were able to educate watershed residents about stormwater via our River Smart initiatives which included lawn care workshops, handing out downspout diverter kits, and talking with the public at farmers markets and other community events. We monitored changes in bacteria, temperature, and chloride to give us real-time data that moves us toward finding hot spots in our watershed and opportunities to make meaningful changes. We surveyed aquatic habitats and the structures that can affect them to find barriers that can potentially be removed, and we supported river cleanups and invasive plant removals that helped to keep our waterways and streambanks clean and healthy. Not least of all, we advocated as a voice for the river to protect our wetlands and floodplains with responsible development, speaking with state legislators about efforts to protect our river and the watershed.

This year we also decided to expand our chloride monitoring program to include continuous conductivity loggers, which will allow us to gather long-term data and predict future chloride trends. Rather than one chloride sample taken at each site per month, which only shows what is happening at that moment, we take a reading every two hours for months on end, which will let us see spikes in chloride values that we previously could not see. From this data, we can see the amount of chloride that is making its way into our waterways, and we can educate businesses and communities on how they can reduce their use of road salts. We currently have two conductivity loggers installed in MA and eight in CT. Look for our 2023 Water Quality Report on the frwa.org Resources page this winter to learn more about our monitoring data.



Paige shows off a new conductivity logger in its cinderblock housing.

Why are we monitoring conductivity in our streams?

The conductivity of water is a measure of its ability to pass an electrical current based on the amount of ions dissolved in that water.

Ions are particles that possess electrical charge, such as calcium, magnesium, and chloride. Since chloride is such an abundant ion in our tributaries, conductivity measurements can be used to estimate how much chloride is dissolved into a stream.

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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.

A Look Back at 2023

January

FRWA started off 2023 monitoring chloride throughout the watershed and assessing road-stream crossings in Sandisfield, MA.

February

We continued monitoring chloride and assessing road-stream crossings in Sandisfield with the help of our returning 2022 FRWA intern, Ciara Kilkenny.

March

"Water's Way", an art benefit featuring framed paintings and photos from local artists, was held at Lost Acres Vineyard in Granby. We also gave a presentation about stormwater pollution at our rain garden in Page Park, Bristol.

April

FRWA joined the Farmington River Anglers Association's (FRAA) Earth Day Cleanup and the Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forest's (FALPS) Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival, installed new conductivity and temperature loggers, and wrapped up winter chloride monitoring.

May

FRWA joined the Hartland School to release juvenile salmon into Salmon Brook as part of the Connecticut River Salmon Association's Salmon-In-Schools program, and hosted an "Underwater Wonders" children's program at the Farmington Public Library.



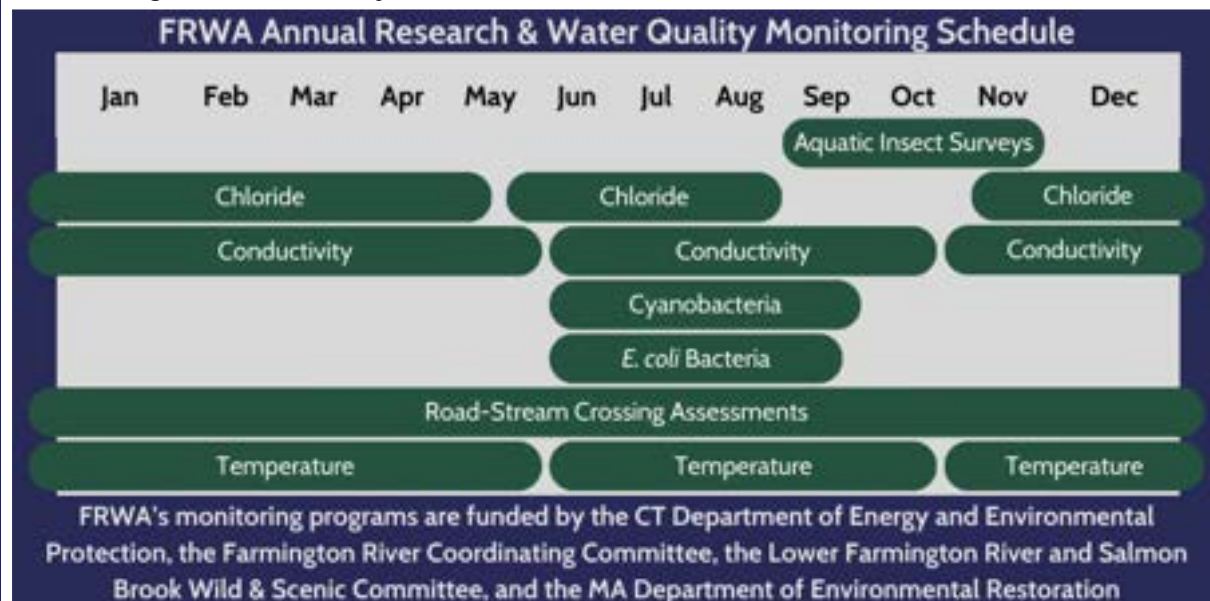
Paige tests a stream for chloride.



Ciara installs a temperature logger



FRAA's Annual Earth Day Cleanup





A Look Back at 2023

June

FRWA welcomed our 2023 seasonal interns Olivia, Emily, and Chris. We kicked off our *E. coli* bacteria, cyanobacteria, and summer chloride sampling seasons, and began a series of invasive water chestnut pulls on Barber Pond in Bloomfield with KNOX Hartford and the Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC).

July

In addition to our monitoring programs, we paddled with Youth Leaders from the Nonprofit Accountability Group (NAG) and with the Environmental Learning Centers of Connecticut (ELCCT), and we studied aquatic insects with McLean Game Refuge staff and interns.

August

FRWA toured the Burlington State Fish Hatchery and Simsbury Wastewater Treatment Plant, visited Hammonasset beach with ELCCT, promoted River Smart practices at the Bloomfield Summer Concert Series, and finished our water chestnut pulls.

September

We conducted training for aquatic insect assessments as part of the **CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (DEEP) Riffle Bioassessment by Volunteers (RBV) program**, retrieved and uploaded our temperature loggers, completed 2023 monitoring of Rainbow Reservoir, and hosted our 36th Annual Farmington River Cleanup as part of the CRC's Source to Sea Cleanup.

October

FRWA welcomed Ciara on board as our year-round Program Assistant. We held a Celebration of the Farmington River benefit gala and silent auction at Metro Bis in Simsbury, and we tabled at **the Burlington State Fish Hatchery's 100th anniversary celebration**. Staff visited Project Oceanology with Bristol Eastern High School, installed more new conductivity loggers, and conducted RBV with Lewis Mills High School students, DEEP staff, and FALPS.

November

We held our 70th Annual Meeting, and our 6th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival was a huge success! We also tabled at the KNOX Harvest Market in Hartford and at the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions Annual Meeting, and we began our winter chloride monitoring.

December

We ended our year with a visit to Miss Porter's School to discuss water quality, and we collaborated with Park Watershed to promote our River Smart program to the Town of Bloomfield's Conservation, Energy, & Environment Committee.

FRWA's Research & Water Quality Monitoring Programs are funded by CT DEEP, Farmington River Coordinating Committee, Lower Farmington and Salmon Brook Wild & Scenic, MA Dept of Ecological Restoration, and the Werth Family Foundation.



FRWA's summer 2023 interns assess an open-bottomed arch culvert



NAG Youth Leaders paddle the Farmington



Heather, Paige, and Laura conduct RBV



Paige and Ciara celebrate after finding a well-hidden temperature logger



How Bad Is It...to leave out bird feeders in winter?

Few things warm our hearts in winter and remind us of the coming spring like watching birds outside. Many people stock up on birdseed to care for our feathered friends during the cold months. Unfortunately, bird feeders also provide an easy, high-calorie snack that can attract hungry black bears to your yard. Items like feeders, garbage cans, and grills in your yard smell like food to bears. These items can encourage bears to overcome their instinctive fear of humans and cause them to associate humans with food. Bears usually spend their winters in hibernation, however warmer winters and earlier spring thaws can trigger bears to wake early, and they always wake up hungry. Fortunately, there are plenty of ways that you can attract birds without leaving out feeders.

Follow these steps to turn your yard or porch into a bird haven:

- Create an insect-friendly habitat. Many birds rely on insects as part of their diet, so avoid pesticides and try to encourage pollinators.
- Install nest boxes that resemble natural cavities in trees.
- Provide fresh water for drinking and bathing. A heated bird fountain lined with some gravel or small stones will create an attractive-sounding haven for birds to congregate.
- Install a dust bath. A small sand and gravel pit will give birds a space to clean excess oil and parasites from their feathers, and it will provide grit that they can swallow to aid digestion.
- Incorporate native plants that produce seeds, nuts, and berries that birds enjoy, as well as native branching trees and shrubs that can provide perches for rest, shelter, and protection from predators.

Learn more at bearwise.org, and visit the Native Plants Database at audubon.org/native-plants to find bird-friendly native plants.



Bird feeders are an easy snack for hungry bears!



Wild & Scenic Spotlight- Ski Sundown, New Hartford, Connecticut

Just over a mile north of where the East Branch Farmington River meets the Wild & Scenic West Branch, tucked between Ratlum Mountain and Breezy Hill, sits Ski Sundown. Sundown draws water from nearby Ratlum Brook and the Barkhamsted Reservoir for snowmaking, and the ski season runs from early December to late March. They provide group and private lessons, night skiing, and terrain parks. Ski Sundown was also the first ski resort in Connecticut to offer adaptive ski programs.

Ski Sundown's base facilities offer a rental shop with top quality ski and snowboard equipment, tuning & repairs, coin operated lockers, and free cubicles for personal belongings. There are two food courts in the Lodge, as well as an outdoor BBQ and The Last Chair bar, and the Ski Sundown Ski Shop has everything you need to hit the slopes plus logo apparel, giftware, and souvenirs! Visit skisundown.com for hours and more information.



Ski Sundown's 70 skiable acres boast 16 trails including Satan's Stairway, the steepest trail in CT



Creature Feature— Bats, order *Chiroptera*

Bats have a reputation for being mysterious and elusive, since we usually only see them as dark shadows swooping through the night. In fact, there are over one thousand species of bats worldwide, and they are important pollinators for five hundred plant species. Connecticut is home to nine species of bats, six of which are cave-roosting, while the rest are tree-roosting. Bats are furred, warm blooded mammals, and are the only mammal that is capable of true flight. Bats are also unique in that they use echolocation, as well their good eyesight, to navigate and catch their food at night. Echolocation uses the echoes of ultrasonic pulses to locate targets and background objects. Bats are the only major predator of night flying insects, so using echolocation allows them to detect, pursue, and capture their prey in 1 second. As a result, they are capable of eating 1,200 mosquitos and other insects in one hour.

In CT, all nine species of bat are on the state's "greatest conservation need" as all of these populations have experienced a dramatic decline compared to historical numbers. In cave-roosting bats, the decline in populations is a result of White Nose Syndrome (WNS). WNS is caused by a fungus called *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd), which causes a white powdery growth on the noses and wings of bats. The fungus is known to thrive in cold, humid environments, which is why cave bats are so affected, and it is transmitted directly from bat to bat, usually when bats cluster together during hibernation. The fungus infects the bats during hibernation when their immune systems are down to preserve energy. This infection causes them to wake up more frequently, which effectively burns through their fat stores, and eventually kills them. State researchers are working hard to try to stop the spread of WNS and to develop safe control methods for the Pd fungus.

Do you want to help preserve bat populations? You can do so by building a bat house! You can either make your own, or buy a premade one. Check out CT DEEPs website for detailed instructions on how to build big and small bat houses!

When constructing your own bat house, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- Suitable temperature ranges—warmer is better!
- Distance to food and water
- Size and shape of inner roost spaces
- Roughness of clinging surfaces



Bats keep their wings and bodies incredibly clean in order to carry out intricate flight patterns., but WNS still has drastic negative effects on bat populations.

Scan to visit the DEEP Bats page and learn more about bats and ways to protect them, including how to build a bat house for your yard!



FRWA 2024 CALENDAR AVAILABLE NOW ON FRWA.ORG!

CALENDARS FEATURE PICTURES OF
THE FARMINGTON RIVER AND
WILDLIFE CAPTURED BY LOCAL
PHOTOGRAPHERS ALONG WITH
INFORMATION ABOUT FRWA!





January 2024 FRWA & Partner Events

MEET UP WITH FRWA

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28TH



FREY PROPERTY WALK

1:30 - 2:30 PM

JOIN THE FRWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR AN HOUR LONG WALK OF OUR NEWLY ACQUIRED FREY PROPERTY! THE WALK BEGINS AT 1:30 PM AT 65 FARMINGTON RIVER TURNPIKE, NEW HARTFORD. BE SURE TO WEAR BOOTS, AS THIS WILL BE A TRAIL-LESS WALK

LEGITIMUS BREWERY

3:00 - 5:00 PM

THE FRWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL BE AT LEGITIMUS BREWERY FROM 3-5 PM, AT 283 MAIN ST., NEW HARTFORD. COME JOIN US! THERE WILL BE FOOD FOR PURCHASE FROM THE CREPE HOUSE FOOD TRUCK, ALONG WITH LIVE MUSIC FROM ROBERT FULLERTON



FEEL FREE TO ATTEND ONE OR BOTH EVENTS!

PLEASE REGISTER WITH ANN AT 860-810-3938

HEMLOCK WOOLLY ADELGID DR. CAROLE CHEAH

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28TH 2024, 2 PM
THE SIMSBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

Dr. Carole Cheah of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station will be giving a presentation on her work combating the pest Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). Her work includes the deployment of a biological control, the HWA ladybeetle, which eats the Woolly Adelgids. The presentation will go into further details regarding the research, the importance of control, and more!



Visit the Simsbury Public Library website below to reserve your spot! Seating is limited.

<http://tinyurl.com/HWAJan28>

Snacks and drinks will be provided!

This event is funded by UFSWS Committee



lowerfarmingtonriver.org

Salt Smart is River Smart

Once you put salt down, it doesn't go away...



Be a Citizen Scientist!

Help FRWA track chloride in the watershed. Visit saltwatch.org to take the Salt Watch Pledge and receive your free kit!

Reduce your salt use to protect our water!

1. Shovel

Clear snow from sidewalks and driveways before it turns to ice. The more snow you remove, the less salt you'll have to use - and the more effective it will be!

2. Scatter

If you use salt, scatter it so there's space between the grains. A coffee mug of salt is enough to treat an entire 20 foot driveway!

3. Sweep

Once the salt has done its job, sweep up the extra so you can reuse it for later storms - and prevent it from washing away.

4. Switch

Salt doesn't work when the pavement temperature is 15 degrees or lower. Switch to sand or use a different deicer that works at low temperatures.

Compost Corner

This year, why not compost your old holiday decorations? Live branches, wreaths, and garland can provide 'browns' for your compost pile, or they can be shredded and added to your landscaping as mulch. Conifer chips are low in excess nutrients, so they can be great additions to your native perennial garden bed!

Do you want to start composting, but don't have the time or space? Blue Earth provides services in:

Avon
Bloomfield
Canton
Farmington
Simsbury
Windsor



Learn more at blueearthcompost.com



Board of Directors Update— New officers elected for 2024

FRWA hosted our Annual Meeting on November 5th this year in Canton, and members of our Board of Directors held an election for their 2024 officers. We are happy to announce that Robin Baran will be serving as the new President of the FRWA Board of Directors. Robin was raised on a farm in North Granby by parents who taught her to love and appreciate nature from a young child. She grew up admiring the Farmington River and after running a local non-profit for 2 years that successfully stopped a large-scale proposed development along the Farmington River, decided she wanted to continue those efforts of preserving our natural resources and joined our board of directors in 2020. Robin is excited to work with the board and staff this coming year, and the feeling is mutual!

We appreciate all of our officers for stepping up and taking on more responsibility in our organization. John Laudati and Brian Freeman who will both be serving as Vice President. Beckie Sahl and Chris Whelan will be serving as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. We also extend our gratitude to Carol Noble for serving as our President in 2023, and for continuing to serve on our board.

River-Friendly Resolutions— Three easy goals to help protect the river in 2024!

As the earth completes another revolution, it's time to come up with some new resolutions! Whether you want to find specific ways to help the Farmington River, or if you just want to find small ways to reduce your carbon footprint and help fight climate change, here are a few ways you can leap forward into the New Year with FRWA and add a few new resolutions to your list!

1. Pledge to be River Smart. Visit RiverSmartCT.org and learn about simple steps you can take at home that will help conserve drinking water and reduce the flow of stormwater pollution into our local waterways.
2. Be Salt Smart and take action against chloride contamination. Visit saltwatch.org to learn how you can be part of the solution to slow the spread of chloride pollution in our waterways.
3. Celebrate what you want to see more of by supporting FRWA's research and monitoring programs. Although it's a new year, FRWA is working towards many of the same goals as we did in 2023. Your gift helps us have the freedom to track down polluted hotspots and find potential new monitoring locations in the watershed. It allows us to discuss watershed issues with residents and officials and advocate for practices that will benefit the river. It can also support our outreach programming, which helps promote our work to people throughout the watershed and beyond.



Scan the code to support our research, advocacy, and outreach programs on frwa.org today!

Rivers cannot defend themselves. They don't have spokesmen, they don't have lobbyists, they don't have PACs. We realize that rivers have very important values of wildlife, fisheries, recreation, historic and scenic, but the rivers can't defend themselves. It is up to us to speak for the river and to defend the river. -David Sinish

Prefer to mail in your gift? Send this slip to FRWA at 749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070

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 _____

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



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

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



*Scan the code
above to visit
frwa.org, where
you can learn
more about what
we do and why.*

FRWA Thanks You For A Successful 70th Year

We are so fortunate to have a base of dedicated members, volunteers, and partners. Because of you, we are able to monitor and address the issues that affect the river and its surrounding landscape through our research, education, and advocacy programs. We appreciate you for helping us continue to protect the river for ourselves, for our neighbors, and for generations to come.

Thank you, and have a Happy New Year!



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