



Farmington River News



Why is my home one of the Most Endangered Rivers? Find out in this edition!

Activities and Issues in the Farmington River Watershed

Farmington River Named One of America’s Most Endangered Rivers of 2024

American Rivers has announced the inclusion of the Farmington River in its annual list of America’s Most Endangered Rivers. Listed at #6 on the list for 2024, the Farmington River has been designated one of America’s most endangered rivers due to the conditions at Rainbow Dam in Windsor, Connecticut. Rainbow Dam is managed by the Farmington River Power Company, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Stanley Black and Decker.

The Farmington River supports diverse fish and wildlife, is a vital source of clean drinking water for the region, and provides boating and other diverse recreation opportunities. The West Branch of the Farmington is a highly regarded trout fishery and the river provides stretches of whitewater, used by individuals including world-class paddlers, and outfitters, further adding to its cultural value as a coveted recreation destination.

But the Rainbow Dam, an outdated hydropower dam near the mouth of the river, is sapping life from the river, blocking fish migration and spurring outbreaks of toxic algae blooms that are harmful to people, pets, and wildlife. This facility, in operation since 1925, is in need of repair and impairing the Farmington River both upstream and downstream. In 2023, Rainbow Dam fishway was declared a failure and shut down due to its inability to provide safe and meaningful upstream fish passage, after decades of attempts.

The power company has an unprecedented opportunity to tap into federal infrastructure funding to fix Clean Water Act violations, eliminate toxic algae blooms, and allow migratory fish populations to flourish again. The Most Endangered River campaign is bringing awareness and visibility to this issue and encouraging people to take action and encourage Stanley Black and Decker to fix the problems at their facility.

Turn to page 7 to learn how you can help.



The poorly performing Rainbow Dam is the one remaining impediment to significant restoration of the Farmington River watershed. Since the fishway was closed in 2023, the Farmington River, which is abundant in natural beauty and biodiversity, is denied any chance of recovering historic fish runs.

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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.

Earth Day 2024 Cleanups & Events

Farmington River Anglers Association's Earth Day Farmington River Cleanup

Saturday, April 20, 9AM-1PM

37 Greenwoods Road, New Hartford, CT (Ovation Pool Lot)

Join FRAA for a fun day cleaning up the river from Collinsville to Goodwin Dam with prizes, activities, and an after party at the Parrott Delaney Pub.



Scan the QR code or visit fraa.club to find more information and register your team today!

Earth Day Community Cleanups in the Farmington Valley

Saturday, April 20, times and locations vary

Help keep our watershed communities clean this Earth Day!

Scan the QR codes to see more information and register for an event!



Avon

Burlington– email
ParNT.06013@gmail.com
or info@fvgeenway.org

to register



Canton



Farmington



Simsbury

FRWA Meet and Greet Membership Drive

Sunday, April 21, 3PM-5PM

Brewery Legitimus, 283 Main Street, New Hartford, CT

Come celebrate Earth Day at Legitimus Brewery, New Hartford with FRWA! Rescheduled from January, this event is free and open to all. Come listen to singer songwriter Robert Fullerton while enjoying a beverage and nosh at the food truck. Every attendee will get 4 door prize tickets, and those who join FRWA get an additional 5. Bring friends to learn about FRWA.



Collinsville Canoe & Kayak Spring Sale & Demo Day

Saturday, April 27th, 10AM-5PM

Collinsville Canoe & Kayak, 41 Bridge Street, Collinsville, CT

Visit the FRWA table and say hello!



9th Annual Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival

Sunday, April 28th, 12:30PM-5PM

Peoples State Forest Pavilion, Matthies Grove, East River Road, Barkhamsted

Come celebrate natural Barkhamsted in this free event! Enjoy food, crafts, educational demonstrations, and a live Birds of Prey show. All are welcome, no registration required.

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10AM - 2PM

CO-SPONSORED BY



River Smart Events

Free Natural Lawn Care Workshop

Saturday, April 27, 1:30PM to 3PM

Winding Trails, 50 Winding Trails Drive, Farmington, CT

FRWA Executive Director Aimee Petras will cover how to manage your lawn without using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. We will outline the steps you need to take, including mowing techniques to manage and control weeds. Additionally, we will delve into common lawn problems such as grubs and thatch.



Edgewood School Native Bioswale Planting Information Session

Tuesday, April 30, 6:30 PM– 7:30 PM

Bristol Public Library, 5 High Street, Bristol, CT

Come and learn about our latest stormwater improvement project at Edgewood School in Bristol. We will be installing four tree wells and diverting water from the school's parking lot to a vegetated swale that will absorb four acres of impervious surfaces. Our program will outline how you can get involved with a planting day scheduled for Friday, May 3rd.

Free informational session. Visit frwa.org for details.

Natural Lawn Care Tips

FRWA wants all our members to be RiverSmart when it comes to Lawn Care. See our handy Seasonal Lawn Care list (below) for ways to manage your lawn naturally.

We suggest you cut out the list below and hang it where you store your lawn care equipment for quick and easy reference!

NATURAL LAWN CARE'S SEASONAL "TO-DO" LIST*

SEASON:	WHAT TO DO:
Early Spring: March 15 to April 15	Remove winter debris; overseed thin areas; obtain soil test (can be done during any season); de-thatch if necessary
Mid to late Spring: April 15 to June 15	Overseed weedy or thin areas; aerate if needed, while adding soil amendments if necessary; begin mowing if grass is 3'-4" in height; leave grass clippings
Summer: June 15 to Aug. 15	Continue mowing to maintain 3"-4" lawn height; irrigate as needed, up to 1"; avoid irrigation during extreme heat
Late Summer: Aug. 15 to Sept. 15	Repair damaged lawn areas; mid-August, look for white grubs and apply nematodes if necessary; apply natural fertilizer to prep soil for winter months
Early to mid Autumn: Sept. 15 to Nov. 1	Decrease manual watering; stop watering completely as temperatures drop and rainfall increases; apply lime as indicated by soil test
Late Autumn: Nov. 1 to Dec. 1	Remove leaves during peak leaf drop; shred remaining leaves into lawn; mow grass short (2") once growth has slowed
Winter: Dec. 1 to early March	Continue shredding remaining leaves into lawn; no nutrients or organic matter application is necessary during this time

**Information adapted from the NOFA Organic Lawn and Turf Handbook.*

Nature Lecture Series

SPONSORED BY BLOOMFIELD PARKS, RECREATION & LEISURE SERVICES AND TRAPROCK RIDGELAND CONSERVANCY

RIVER SMART

THIS VIRTUAL PROGRAM WILL BE HELD ON MAY 1ST, 2024, 6:30 P.M. SIGNUP @ TRLANDCONSERVANCY.ORG

Join us to learn how to be River Smart! Farmington River Watershed Assoc. Education Manager, Heather Geist, and Park Watershed Director, Mary Rickel Pelletier will be discussing stormwater pollution, water conservation and the recent updates to the North Branch River Management Plan. UCONN Natural Resources Conservation Academy Asst. Extension Educator, Nicole Freidenfelds, will also join us to talk about some of the grant initiatives in storm water management and green infrastructure in our region. Come learn the importance of water in our area and how to protect it.



How Bad Is It... *to let my dog off-leash in the woods?*

While your dog may be well behaved off-leash, it's better for other people, dogs, and wildlife for your dog to remain leashed in public spaces. It's important to look out for any posted signs regarding whether your dog should be leashed or not. If a sign is posted, the reasoning could go beyond the safety of other people. Many places post signs to ensure the safety of the wildlife of the area, and to prevent habitat or nests from being trampled or abandoned. Ground nesting birds are especially vulnerable to unleashed dogs, who may step on or eat the eggs in a nest, or even scare the parents away altogether (read more about the ground nesting Hermit Thrush below). Vernal pools are also vulnerable to unleashed dogs and people, who may be unaware of where they are stepping.

Vernal pools are seasonal wetland depressions that are covered in shallow water during the winter and spring, and typically dry up in the summer. The unique environment of a vernal pool provides habitat for rare plants and animals that can survive in these conditions. There are often amphibian egg masses deposited in vernal pools, which are vulnerable to unleashed dogs that may trample them. It's important to be aware of vernal pools when walking or hiking and ensure your dog is secured to prevent eggs being trampled.

Leashing your dog is important for the environment and the health of wildlife, not just for the wellbeing of other people and dogs. Keep your eye out for posted signs about leashing your dog, and if you don't see a sign, look out for vernal pools and any noticeable wildlife habitat to ensure your dog stays clear!



Signs can help to inform dog owners about sensitive wildlife habitats in public walking spaces. Photo from Tim Bishop, Conservation Director, Town of Fairfield, CT

Creature Feature: Hermit Thrush, *Catharus guttatus*

The Hermit Thrush, *Catharus guttatus*, is a small, ground nesting bird that lives in Northeastern forest understories in the summer and migrates in the early spring and the late fall. They are roughly the size of a robin, with a red-brown tail and a dull brown back. They have a fairly long tail, which they have been known cock out and bob slowly. East of the Rocky Mountains you'll find the Hermit Thrush nesting on the ground, but further west they prefer tree nesting. During breeding season you can find them in coniferous and mixed forests, while during migration or winter they can be found in deciduous and mixed woods and thickets.



Hermit Thrush photo from allaboutbirds.org

Like their habitat, their diet also changes with the seasons. In spring, they enjoy mostly insects such as bees, crickets, and caterpillars, along with the occasional small reptile or amphibian. In the winter, they pick at fruits, especially berries. They do the majority of their foraging on the ground, using their beaks to flip over leaves as they hop around.

Their nests are typically found in natural hollows in the ground, but there have been sightings of some unique nesting spots including golf courses, cemetery graves, and mine shafts. The male will defend the nesting territory by singing, while the female builds out the nest with leaves, grasses, feathers, and more. They are known to make unique calls around their nests, one which sounds similar to a mewling kitten. Females will make a 'quip quip' sound when rearranging the eggs. In the morning, the adults will greet each other at the nest with a 'pweet pweet' call. As these birds nest on the ground, it's important to keep an eye out for nests when out for walks or hikes. Keep dogs leashed and on trails to reduce the chance of trampling a nest or scaring the birds.

Learn more about the Hermit Thrush and other ground-nesting birds at ct.audubon.org.



FRWA Winter/Spring 2024 Stewardship & Research

Frey Property Updates and Recent Work

The Frey Property was gifted to FRWA to steward and to use for education. It contains meadow habitat, a stream, and a stormwater retention pond. Meadows have become increasingly rare in Connecticut and so we are excited to be able to provide an important habitat for diverse wildlife—bobcat, bear, deer, fox, mink, eagle, heron, muskrat, beaver, and more have been observed on this property. The FRWA board of directors has established a Land Steward Committee to address the conservation goals of this property. As a watershed association, FRWA strives to be a good steward of the watershed and this project. We hope to use our Frey Property as an incubator of educational methods related to reforestation, native meadow restoration, wetland restoration, stormwater retrofits and invasive species management. Since 2019, when FRWA received the property, FRWA has been planning and working with partners to follow best management practices and develop a conservation plan.



A coyote inspects a trail camera on the FRWA Frey Property in New Hartford, CT.

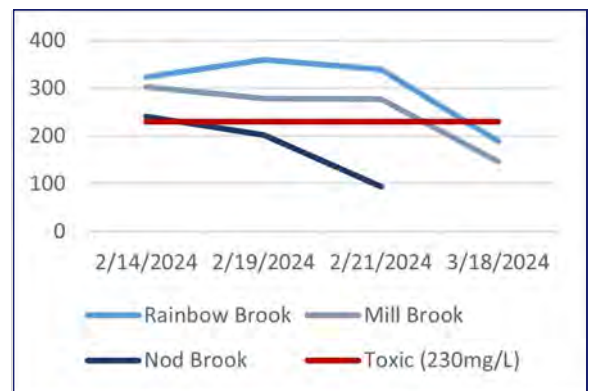
We recently replaced the broken fence with a cedar fence and removed some hazardous trees. We've been removing invasive plants through a contract with the USDA Nature Resources Conservation Service, and we're working with our partners from Trout Unlimited to plant more native trees. We've also been monitoring temperature and chloride in the stream, and will be planting a stream buffer to help reduce water temperatures and provide coldwater habitat for aquatic life.

FRWA Chloride Monitoring Program

Did you know that FRWA has been monitoring chloride in the watershed since 2004? From 2004-2019, water samples from the Upper Farmington River Watershed were analyzed for a multitude of parameters, one of which was chloride. While these samples were taken from spring to fall when road salts we not being applied, trends of chloride slowly increasing over the years are present.

The main contributor of chloride pollution in the watershed is from road salt applications in winter. High chloride values affect aquatic life and private drinking wells. While it felt like we had little snowfall this winter, Hartford totals in February were 8.5 inches which was more than 2022 and 2023. With the last three years having less precipitation and warmer weather than normal.

FRWA developed a year-round chloride monitoring program in 2021. From this we identified 7 locations in the watershed that have the potential to have higher chloride values. These locations are primarily in urban areas, along busy roads, or near shopping centers where impervious surfaces are more abundant and more stormwater runoff is present. Winter sampling for chloride includes sampling just after a snowstorm when road salts are making their way into waterbodies. Unfortunately, some of our tributaries had high chloride after a February storm with Rainbow Brook and Mill Brook in Windsor being the worst. From February 14th to February 21st, both tributaries had chloride values that are considered toxic conditions for aquatic life. Nod Brook in Avon had a high chloride value on Valentine's Day but decreased by February 19th.



Chloride in the Lower Farmington River in Winter of 2024. Nod Brook in Avon and Rainbow Brook and Mill Brook in Windsor exceeded toxic chloride levels this winter.

Visit iwla.org to learn more about how you can help reduce chloride pollution at home and in your community.



Wild & Scenic Spotlight: Exclusion Areas

The Farmington River Watershed boasts two nationally recognized Wild & Scenic Recreational River designations, with a total of 76.8 protected stream miles. These areas are designated as such under the National Wild & Scenic Rivers Act for their free-flowing nature, which is allowed by a lack of impoundments and diversions.

There are, however, areas in the Farmington River Watershed that are excluded from these Wild & Scenic designations. This is because there are areas of the river that are affected by dams and impoundments and therefore do not fit the criteria of 'free-flowing'. Current areas that are excluded from our Wild & Scenic segments include reaches upstream from two dams in Collinsville, CT and Rainbow Reservoir in Windsor, CT. Fortunately, the existence of exclusion areas in the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act makes it possible for the free-flowing reaches of our river to remain designated and protected for recreationists and wildlife.

Trash Talk 2024

Connecticut Bottle Bill Expansion

Bottle bills, also known as container redemption programs, were originally created to reduce litter and promote recycling. By charging a small deposit on beverage containers at the time of purchase and returning that deposit to the consumer upon redemption, states can assign a cash value to single-use containers that are often discarded. This makes the containers more likely to be collected and recycled, which reduces waste and litter.

As of January 1, 2024, all eligible glass, metal, and plastic containers in the state of Connecticut will have a redemption value of 10 cents. Retailers in CT are required to accept containers that they sell, and there are Bottle Redemption Centers throughout CT.



Scan the QR code or visit ct.gov to learn more about the current CT bottle bill.

Redemption centers in the Farmington River Watershed of CT

Bloomfield Redemption Center, 54 Granby Street, 860-839-7786, bloomfieldredemptioncenter.com

Maple End Package Store, 192 North Street, Bristol, 860-583-6176

CT Bottle & Can Return, 77 Pierson Lane, #C, Windsor, 860-386-5197, ctredemption.com

Household Hazardous Waste Collections in the Farmington River Watershed of CT

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) is any household waste that is toxic, flammable, reactive, or corrosive. This includes oil-based paints, thinners, pool chemicals, pesticides, mercury thermometers, and gasoline. HHW collection dates are scheduled for residents of many municipalities in the Farmington River Watershed; check out the table below to see if there's a date in your town!



Scan the QR code or visit ct.gov for more information on HHW dates, locations, and accepted items.

Avon, Canton, Farmington, Granby, Simsbury, Suffield	Contact Town of Farmington (860) 675-2550	April 20, 8AM-1PM June 8, 8AM-1PM October 19, 8AM-1PM	Farmington High School, 10 Monteith Drive Simsbury Public Works Facility, 66 Town Forest Road Simsbury Public Works Facility, 66 Town Forest Road
Bloomfield, East Granby, Windsor, Windsor Locks	Contact Metropolitan District Commission (860) 278-3809	May 4, 8AM-1PM September 7, 8AM-1PM October 19, 8AM-1PM	Poquonock Water Pollution Control Facility 1222 Poquonock Avenue, Windsor Public Works Building, 21 Southwood Drive, Bloomfield Public Works Garage, 6 Stanton Road, Windsor Locks



How You Can Help Make the Farmington River Safe for People and Fish

Rainbow Dam sits at a critical spot in the Farmington River and Connecticut River Watersheds. There are no dams downstream from the Farmington River's confluences with the Connecticut River. If Rainbow Dam's Fishway was operational, the entire 600 square mile watershed would be available for migratory fish, but at this time the dam is blocking all migratory fish from reaching the pristine tributaries Farmington River Basin.

Additionally, the Farmington River is impaired downstream of the dam due to variable flows imposed on the River by Rainbow Dam. The impending release of CT DEEP's Stream Flow Release Plan for the Connecticut River Basin in February of 2027 will require Stanley Black & Decker to meet new flow release standards, which will likely require them to improve dam operations. The public can pressure Stanley Black & Decker to come to the table and meet their obligations to provide minimal environmental flows.

Join us in urging CT DEEP to continue its leadership in river restoration and convince Stanley Black and Decker to act now to put the Farmington River first, ensuring its health and safety for generations to come. Scan the codes below to learn how.



Scan to visit the frwa.org Most Endangered Rivers Page



Scan to visit mostendangeredrivers.org and view the entire list of Most Endangered Rivers



Scan to visit the FRWA Qgiv secure donation page and support our mission

World Fish Migration Day Migration Celebration

Tuesday, May 21, 3PM-7PM

Northwest Park Nature Center, 145 Lang Road, Windsor, CT

Take a guided 3-mile walk along the Farmington River before enjoying a 2-hour social free flow and an indoor premier of "Reconnected: Restoring the Rivers of Long Island Sound," followed by a panel discussion with restoration experts.



Scan the QR code or visit worldfishmigrationday.com/events to learn more and register for all or part of this event!

Partner Spotlight: America's Most Endangered Rivers

Many thanks to our partners who have spent so much time collaborating and planning the announcement of the Farmington River as one of America's Most Endangered Rivers. We wouldn't be where we are without you!



AMERICAN RIVERS
Life Depends on Rivers™



Rivers Alliance of Connecticut



Save the Sound
Action for our region's environment.

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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The Farmington River—Most Endangered River in America?

FRWA Spring 2024 Events

- Saturday, April 20-** FRAA Earth Day Cleanup, New Hartford, CT
- Saturday, April 20-** Burlington Earth Day Community Clean-up, Burlington, CT
- Sunday, April 21-** FRWA Meet and Greet Membership Drive, New Hartford, CT
- Saturday, April 27-** Natural Lawn Care Workshop, Winding Trails, Farmington, CT
- Sunday, April 28-** Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival, Barkhamsted, CT
- Tuesday, April 30-** Native Bioswale Planting Information Session, Bristol, CT
- Wednesday, May 1-** River Smart Lecture for the Traprock Ridge Land Conservancy, Virtual
- Saturday, May 4-** Simsbury Sustainability Fair, Simsbury Public Library, Simsbury, CT
- Tuesday, May 21-** World Fish Migration Day Migration Celebration, Northwest Park, Windsor, CT

Learn more about these events inside this edition and on frwa.org.

If you would like to go paperless and receive our newsletter by email only, send a message to hgeist@frwa.org