



Little River Healthy Watershed Collaborative Meeting Notes for March 16, 2022 (draft)

The meeting was recorded. To replay the meeting video, visit <https://youtu.be/9qYaZHYBbPs>

Meeting attendance: Jean Pillo, Maura Robie, Dan Mullins, ECCD; Eric Thomas, CT DEEP; Carol Grassis, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Tyra Penn-Gesek, Director of Planning, Thompson, CT; Lisa Davidson, Ruby Senkowski, Woodstock Conservation Commission; Lucas Young, Nancy Adams, Jorie Hunken, local stakeholders.

J. Pillo gave an overview of the Little River Healthy Watershed Collaborative and invited all to be involved.

D. Mullins gave an update on a nutrient management project in East Woodstock, which included a rebuilt silage bunker on a farmstead, and the construction of a freestall barn with manure storage at a second farmstead. The project is nearly completed, and the cows have been moved into the barn.

M. Robie and J. Pillo gave updates on the status of the draft Little River Watershed Based Plan update funded by NRCS through a Connecticut Source Water Protection grant to the Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation. Additional funding is being provided by NRCS through two Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) grants. A summary of completed or in progress data gathering for the plan was outlined with a request for stakeholder input. Trends in agriculture in the watershed were summarized as well as current water quality conditions. M. Robie asked stakeholders to pass along link or QR code for a farm survey to any farms, livestock owners, homesteaders, hobby farmers they know.

J. Pillo overviewed an error discovered in the nutrient modeling calculations used for development of the 2018 Roseland Lake Management Plan. The error was corrected, and the revised calculations show a significant increase in the expected nutrient contributions from agricultural sources and a reduction of runoff from developed land. The new calculations reduced the estimated summer in-lake contributions of Phosphorus from 50% to 40%, but still demonstrate that in-lake sources of phosphorus contribute a significant negative impact to water quality in Roseland Lake during the summer. The in-lake sources of phosphorus are legacy deposits built up in the lake bottom over time.

E. Thomas shared that CT DEEP will be developing a nutrient budget for Roseland Lake in the near future using a recently completed process developed for Bantam Lake. It would be helpful for anyone who has data for 1) ambient monitoring of Roseland Lake, its tributaries or outlet and 2) information on any potential sources of nutrients in the watershed contributing to Roseland Lake, to share that information with CT DEEP.

CT DEEP released draft General Permit requirements for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) on February 22, 2022. Certain dairy farms (based on # of animals and/or discharge of pollution to waters of the state) in the Little River watershed may be required to register for a CAFO permit under the new regulation. The permit requires a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP) written by NRCS, inspections and with renewal every 5 years. To view the permit language or a fact sheet on the CAFO permit, visit <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Public-Notices/Public-Notices-Proposed-Actions---Opportunity-for-Comment/Proposed-General-Permits/General-Permit-for--Concentrated-Animal-Feeding-Operations>. There is a 30-day comment period. Comments should be directed to Joseph Wettemann, Bureau of Materials Management and Compliance Assurance, Department of Energy and

Environmental Protection, 79 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106-5127 and should also be submitted via electronic mail to joseph.wettemann@ct.gov.

CT DPH – No report. ECCD requested ground water quality for community wells in the Little River watershed. The request is pending completion.

NDDH – No report. ECCD requested ground water quality for private wells in the Little River watershed. The request is pending completion.

Town of Putnam WPCA- No report. ECCD requested data from 2 years of water quality monitoring in Roseland Lake in 2020 and 2021.

USDA NRCS – Recent Little River activity

- NRCS recently certified a Waste Storage Facility project that was done in collaboration with ECCD and CT DEEP.
- Two producers in the LR watershed renewed their Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) contracts for another 5 years with no-till, diverse cover crop and nutrient management enhancements.
- One producer in the watershed is starting a calf bedded pack facility in April to get calves and their manure under a roof

US EPA – no report. US EPA has been supporting ECCD staff with guidance on nutrient load reduction model choices for estimating the potential load reduction of agricultural conservation practices. These calculations will be an important part of the Little River Watershed Based Plan when paired with cost estimates for those practices to determine which practices will provide the “best bang for the buck”.

J. Pillo reported that the Woodstock Conservation Commission will be entering their third year of promoting the Pollinator Pathway initiative. The initiative involves voluntary participation of property owners to decrease the size of their lawns, incorporate more native plants into their landscapes, avoid the use of fertilizers and minimize the use of pesticides with the goal of improving habitat for pollinator species. An indirect consequence of improving pollinator habitat will be a reduction of impacts on water quality. A program on Native Plants has been scheduled for April 6, 2022 at the Woodstock Town Hall featuring Lydia Pan, President of the Wild Ones Mountain Laurel Chapter. The program will begin at 7 PM.

Wyndham Land Trust filed a report – Since 2009, Wyndham Land Trust has acquired approximately 1,000 acres of mostly forested land along the Bull Hill ridgeline, mostly in Thompson, CT. The Bull Hill ridgeline is in the Little River watershed. Land that slopes to the west drains into the sourcewater area of the Little River watershed. Land that slopes to the east drains into the Wheaton Brook watershed. Wheaton Brook drains into Little River in Putnam downstream of the Little River bypass to the water treatment plant.

Woodstock Agriculture Commission – no report. The Woodstock Agriculture Commission funded advertisement of the Pie and Farm Talk series hosted by ECCD and have been assisting ECCD in compiling a current list of farms in the Little River watershed.

Discussion –

Connecticut DEEP has updated the State Forest Plan. Several large forest blocks have been identified in the Little River watershed that were ranked as high priority for conservation. ECCD and NRCS will follow up to see if NRCS Healthy Forests Reserve Program (FRP) funds can be used in the estimate for the funding needed to implement the Little River Watershed Based Plan through the NWQI designated funding. The Last Green Valley may have a list of interested forest landowners in the watershed that were not selected for conservation easement funding as part of their Forestry RCPP.

A suggestion was made to bring in forest practitioners into the Little River Healthy Watershed Collaborative.

A suggestion was made to seek input on Source water protection efforts from the downstream users of water supplied by the Putnam WPCA.

Next steps.

- ECCD will continue to assess needs for funding needs to support conservation practices in the Little River Watershed.
- ECCD will prepare a first draft of the updated Little River Watershed Based plan by early summer and present an overview of it in a public meeting.
- ECCD will solicit comments from Little River stakeholders including local agriculture operations, local citizens, the Town of Putnam WPCA and other government officials, and conservation professionals involved during the planning process.
- ECCD will prepare a revised draft of the Little River Watershed Based Plan to present to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for review.
- The Final Little River Watershed Based Plan project end date is September 30, 2022.

Meeting notes respectfully compiled by J. Pillo. These meeting notes are considered draft until approved at the next Little River Healthy Watershed Collaborative meeting.