

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

Connecticut's United Voice for River Conservation

Winter / Spring 2008

Hydropower in Connecticut and the Northeast

On January 11, 2008, Rivers Alliance, along with a distinguished steering committee, held a conference entitled *Hydropower in Connecticut and the Northeast* at Northeast Utilities in Berlin, Connecticut. With the cost of fossil fuels on the rise, along with growing concerns over global warming, policymakers are developing laws and processes that provide incentives for clean, renewable power. In this context, decision makers are taking a fresh look at hydropower as a source of clean energy. Yet dams and hydro-power facilities typically have profound negative impacts to our rivers and streams. The purpose of the conference was to bring a diverse group of experts together to discuss the appropriate role of hydropower as a source of green energy, and how to integrate river upgrades within hydropower generation.



Rainbow Dam on the Farmington River in Windsor

The event was a great success with a truly varied group of approximately 120 people participating, including river scientists, engineers, hydro-power generators, investors, government officials, fisheries experts, inventors, and other stakeholders. *(Continued on page 6)*

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PROTECTING THE STATE'S WATERS IN 2008

The state's high-quality water resources are essential to good health, diverse and robust ecological systems, and, in an era of water scarcity, to the state's economic well-being.

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut (RA) is working with a number of groups on the following water issues, which will or may come before the legislature in 2008. If you are interested in these issues, we would be delighted to keep you informed. Call us at 860-361-9349 or email us at rivers@riversalliance.org.

Riverfront Protection. The Environment Committee will introduce a bill calling for

100-foot buffer protection alongside rivers and streams. This is a major piece of legislation, very similar to the river protection law in Massachusetts, so we know it can be done in New England. Among the many groups involved are RA, Connecticut Fund for the Environment (CFE), Trout Unlimited, and the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commission (CACIWC).

Wetlands Protection. Clarification of the wetlands statute to highlight the state's commitment to protection of wetlands/water courses and to clarify that the burden of proof is on the

(Continued on page 7)



Rivers Alliance of Connecticut

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, Inc. is a nonprofit, statewide river conservation coalition. Our members are individuals, organizations, and corporations concerned with the health and protection of our river environments. We were founded in 1992 to promote river conservation and protection throughout the state. We serve as the united voice for statewide river policy development and river corridor planning, as well as the resource to unite and strengthen the state's river protection organizations, and as a center for public education on river issues. We are governed by our Board of Directors with regular guidance and comment from the Housatonic Valley Association, the Connecticut River Watershed Council, the Farmington River Watershed Association, and other watershed organizations in Connecticut.

Funding for Rivers Alliance is received from our members, grants, and special events. Membership categories are: Individuals and Families: \$35.00; Nonprofit Organizations: \$50.00; Patrons: \$50.00; Sponsors: \$100.00; Businesses: \$250.00; Sustainers: \$250.00; Benefactors: \$500; Guardians: \$1000.00. (Membership donations, comments, and letters to the editor can be mailed to: Rivers Alliance, P.O. Box 1797, Litchfield CT 06759 or call (860) 361-9349.

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear supporters of Rivers Alliance:

I recently looked up the term "buffer" in Merriam-Webster and found more than I was expecting. Apparently, a buffer is not only "one who buffs" but also it has several definitions that can be related to rivers, floodplains, and life in general. A buffer

serves as: 1.) a device for reducing damage due to contact, 2.) a cushion against the shock of fluctuations in business or financial activity, 3.) a protective barrier, 4.) a substance capable of neutralizing both acids and bases, and 5.) a temporary storage unit (as in a computer). Alongside our nation's rivers and streams, undeveloped buffers with natural vegetation are critical to reduce damage, cushion against shock, protect, neutralize, and even provide temporary storage (of water during a flood event). Given the importance of buffers, one would think that we would give river buffers more respect.

Unfortunately, river buffers have historically received the same disregard as "restraint" receives in Las Vegas. We have used a "high risk, high reward" strategy wherein we build residential structures in a floodplain because: there's a flood control structure upstream; or it's been years since the last big flood; or, we like the view from the river's edge, and heck, we can get flood insurance that will help us rebuild in place. For every riverfront landowner that has taken pains to live in harmony with a river, there are at least ten more that try vainly to control nature. As John McPhee foretold in his 1989 classic *The Control of Nature*, battling against nature is comparable to the heroic but futile struggles of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers attempting to control the lower Mississippi River with dikes and levees.

One way to attain healthier rivers and safer communities is to respect river buffers and discourage new building within the buffer zone. Not only are structures within the buffer zone at higher risk during floods, but also the vegetation and permeable soils that would naturally help to absorb and attenuate floods as well as provide for wildlife habitats are largely lost once a buffer zone site is developed. So, we ask our members to support the efforts of Rivers Alliance and our partners (notably Connecticut Fund for the Environment and Trout Unlimited) to introduce a Riverfront Protection Act. This legislation would discourage new development within 100 feet of all rivers in Connecticut, and help to ensure that our buffers can actually serve the vital functions of cushioning, protecting, and neutralizing.

Eric Hammerling
President

DEP FUNDING / DEP ENFORCEMENT

Intertwined themes of concern in recent years have been inadequate funding of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and inadequate enforcement by the DEP.

Some twenty years ago environmentalists rallied to the slogan: "One percent for the DEP!" This translates to a call for one percent of tax dollars (General Fund dollars) to go to the DEP. Since then, we have been going backward. Connecticut spends less on the environment than any other New England state, and we are getting what we pay for: increased beach closings, increased water contamination, run-down state parks, and so on.

In 1972, DEP funding as a percentage of the state budget was 0.7 percent. Today it is only 0.2 percent! State dollars fund only about 26 percent of DEP's work, down from 40 percent just ten years ago. (Other funding comes from fees and the federal government, with strings attached).

At least partly as result of inadequate funding, DEP has fallen behind in enforcement with violations sometimes continuing for decades. Rivers Alliance, often working with CFE and other groups, has taken action to try to speed along enforcement of sewage treatment permits (especially the permits for on-site sewage treatment) and industrial waste discharge permits. We have also sent a number of pleas to the Department to look at wetlands problems around the state.



The Council on Environmental Quality the state group that receives citizens' complaints has been conducting an inquiry into DEP performance and DEP funding. Their report and findings by Rivers Alliance and others indicate that DEP needs as rapid as possible an increase to 0.7 or 0.8 percent of the state budget. This translates to an additional \$70 million to \$90 million.

On January 29, 2008, state Attorney General Richard Blumenthal and CFE attorney Roger Reynolds (named Rivers Alliance Environmental Attorney of 2006) announced settlements in four cases involving industrial discharges, and court action against a fifth: Atlantic Wire in Branford. CFE and Rivers Alliance are working cooperatively with a sixth company, Quality Rolling and Deburring in Thomaston, on a settlement to maximize improvements to the Naugatuck River as quickly as possible.

Governor M. Jodi Rell has heard directly and indirectly from Rivers Alliance, from all the groups mentioned above, and from the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters, that DEP urgently needs additional funds. At the January 29th press conference, the Attorney General and Mr. Reynolds made the same point.

All parties agree that DEP Commissioner Gina McCarthy has signaled a willingness to improve enforcement, and has taken steps in that direction. By contrast, past DEP leadership often denied that there was any problem. This is the time to link demands for better performance by the DEP with funding to support that effort.

WATER AND POWER PLANTS

Power generation is a hot business. To avoid meltdown, plants need cooling water. Nuclear plants and older coal and fuel oil plants require so much water (millions of gallons per day) that they must be sited on the coast or a major river. New technologies, such as dual-cycle plants fueled by natural gas, are more efficient and need less water.

The downside of this is that newer power plants can be located away from the coast, in upland regions. In 1998, when the newer technology met Connecticut de-regulation, River Alliance intervened in applications for three investor-owned power plants sited in uplands, and hosted a conference on how to forge good decisions on the siting and operation of plants. The single most important factor was and is early discussion among the parties.

Unfortunately, that lesson has been forgotten. For example, in the ongoing process of funding and permitting a proposed biomass plant in Plainfield, the impacts on air and water are being analyzed at the end of the process instead of the beginning. Rivers Alliance first heard of this project, when people from the neighboring town of Canterbury saw a legal notice that the plant would seek a permit to divert almost one million gallons per day from the Quinebaug River in Canterbury. Another controversial aspect was that the plant will be fueled mostly or entirely by construction and demolition debris.

Here is the timeline. In 2006, the project was awarded \$500,000 from the rate-payer supported Clean Energy Fund. Public Act 06-7, An Act Concerning Biomass, which excluded plants burning construction

and demolition debris from the category of clean energy, contained an exemption for the Plainfield project. Subsequently, the project went to the Siting Council and the Department of Utility Control, and, despite collecting a growing number of negative comments, was approved. As of this writing, the Department of Environmental Protection is considering permits relating to air, waste, wetlands, and water diversion. Sometime in the next few weeks or months, DEP will issue draft decisions and there will be a public hearing. Then there will finally be the opportunity for full, public discussion of the project's environmental and health impacts in front of an agency that is specifically responsible to protect air and water. *For everyone's benefit, informed public debate of health and environmental issues should be the first, not the last step in the process.*

WATERSHED ASSISTANCE SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM ~ AWARDS

Rivers Alliance Helps Distribute \$25,000 to 11 Environmental Groups Throughout the State.

Rivers Alliance administers a re-granting program for small or expanding river and watershed groups. This funding comes through the Watershed Assistance Small Grants Program, conducted in association with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The purpose of the program is to enhance the protection of water resources in river watersheds, especially by reducing non-point source pollution. The re-granting approach makes it possible for local groups to apply for federal 319 funds without going through all the cumbersome federal paperwork. Because the program's goal is for every river to have a dedicated group committed to protecting it, the grants are targeted to new groups or capacity-building by established groups. Over the last four years, this small grants program has successfully helped over thirty five local groups. Many of the beneficiaries of this program have said that receiving a small grant from the WASG program has made a huge difference and provided the impetus needed to get other funding for projects.



Award decisions are made by a committee consisting of representatives from the EPA, the DEP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rivers Alliance. In this fourth year of grants, the committee received nineteen applications and made awards totaling \$25,000 to eleven organizations. The DEP has secured another \$60,000 in funding for the fifth year of grants. Applications will be solicited this Spring, so stay posted for more details and feel free to give Margaret Miner a call at 860-361-9349 to discuss any ideas for a proposal.

Congratulations to the following grantees, and thank you for your excellent work!

Connecticut Audubon Society has been awarded \$3,000 for their "Citizen Science Program" (Stream Monitoring Projects).

Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District has been awarded \$2,000 to hire a facilitator and create a strategic plan for the CT River Watch Program.

Earthplace has been awarded \$4,000 to purchase water monitoring equipment (YSI Continuously Monitoring Meter).

Farmington River Watershed Association & the Park River has been awarded \$500 for community outreach.

Friends of the Hockanum River Linear Park of Vernon has been awarded \$2,500 to review planning & zoning regulations with the aim of reducing impervious surface in the headwaters region.

North Central Conservation District has been awarded \$1,600 to do a workshop in which the *Hockanum River: State of the Watershed* Report will be presented.

Northwest Conservation District has been awarded \$2,450 to create educational river signs for the Upper Naugatuck River.

Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition has been awarded \$2,000 to collaborate with the Southbury Land Trust to create a plan for land and watershed protection.

Pootatuck Watershed Association has been awarded \$2,250 to do storm drain labeling in the Pootatuck Watershed.

Save the River - Save the Hills has been awarded \$3,000 to do education and outreach in the Niantic River Watershed.

Sound Waters has been awarded \$1,700 for their "Young Scientists Program," which encourages students to learn more about aquatic habitats.

TIM O'BRIEN

Environmental Legislator of 2007

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut has named Rep. Tim O'Brien of New Britain as environmental legislator of 2007. The award was presented on December 19 at the organization's annual meeting in Hartford.

Thanks to the courageous leadership of Rep. O'Brien, the legislature, in a September 2007 special session, repealed a newly passed law that had threatened the quality of the state's drinking water supplies.

The threat arose during the 2007 regular session in an eleventh-hour amendment added to an innocuous bill (Senate Bill 1341) that made certain improvements in the management of water utilities. The amendment overrode state laws protecting Class I and Class II land in drinking-water watersheds. (These lands buffer drinking-water reservoirs and wells.) It was written to allow the New Britain water utility to lease more than 130 acres of Class I and II land that it owns in Plainville to the Tilcon company for rock mining.

The advantage to New Britain was that Tilcon reportedly was willing to pay in the range of \$12 million to \$15 million for a forty-year lease. The disadvantage to the residents of Connecticut was that this permission-to-mine would open the door to similar ventures in some 100,000 acres of drinking water lands that have been protected under state law for three decades. Connecticut has been, in fact, a national leader in requiring the conservation of watershed lands as a public health mandate to maintain the exceptionally high quality of the state's drinking water. Rep. O'Brien, who represents the state's 24th district, initially supported the mining project, as did the entire New Britain delegation.



From left to right: Rep. Tim O'Brien and Rivers Alliance President Eric Hammerling

As he learned more of the facts and implications of the hurriedly passed amendment, he took the lead in calling for its repeal. He and New Britain's senator, Don DeFronzo, pledged to seek repeal and eventually persuaded the rest of the delegation to join the cause. Ultimately, they persuaded Democratic leadership to implement the repeal.

Rep. O'Brien's willingness to acknowledge an error and to fight to repair the damage rescued the state's commitment to preserving healthy drinking water.

Prominent Environmental Scientist and Wetlands Protector Dies at 96



Richard H. Goodwin

Richard H. Goodwin passed away on July 7, 2007. He was 96. Goodwin was a pioneer on behalf of the environment, especially in land preservation and wetlands protection. He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Esther Bemis Goodwin, two children, four grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Goodwin was a professor emeritus of botany at Connecticut College, a past president of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) (1956-58 and 1964-66), and a co-founder, with William A. Niering, of the Connecticut Chapter of TNC.

Goodwin was a member of Rivers

Alliance of Connecticut for many years and a close friend of Rivers Alliance director David Bingham, who offers this remembrance:

Dick will be remembered as a giant among those who have worked for land conservation and protecting earth's natural resources.

He was a man of science who left a promising career and research to lead a movement based on stewardship of the land. He was a great teacher, a mentor for over two generations of students, both within and outside the classroom. He was a man of vision, with a knack for bringing people together to

accomplish their mutual goals. He was remarkably generous, both with his money and with his time, leading by example in achieving one successful project after another. And he was a man of gentle patience, waiting at times for decades for the moment when the seeds he had planted bore fruit.

We feel a great void, and no one will fill his shoes. But there are hundreds if not thousands of others that Dick Goodwin has inspired to carry on his important mission, working with dedication and confidence in the cause of stewardship he taught us how to pursue.



The agenda and presenters were selected by a steering committee representing leading environmental and energy groups active in Connecticut and New England. The committee included Fred Ayer of the Low-Impact Hydropower Institute based in Maine; Russ Cohen of Massachusetts Riverways; Konstantine Drakonakis of Connecticut Innovations/Connecticut Clean Energy Fund; Robert Gates of FirstLight Power (formerly part of Northeast Utilities); Eric Hammerling of the Farmington River Watershed Association; Dwight Merriam and Earl Phillips of Robinson & Cole, a New England-based law firm; Margaret Miner of Rivers Alliance of Connecticut; and Mark P. Smith of the Nature Conservancy.



Massachusetts' Holyoke Dam, on the CT River, boasts one of the most effective fish ladders in the eastern US.

The day began with a question, and a panel moderated by Fred Ayer, *Is Hydropower Really Green?* The panelists, Cleve Kapala of TransCanada, Jeff Reardon of Trout Unlimited, John Seebach of American Rivers and Thomas A. Tarpey of Essex Power Services, Inc., all wondered “compared to what?” and concluded that

green is in the eye of the beholder. All the panelists agreed that hydropower is green in the sense of not causing greenhouse gas emissions but is not always environmentally friendly. Jeff Reardon said the impacts of one large hydro facility could be easier to manage than the impacts of many small plants. He compared this to a choice between many short traffic lights along a road or one long traffic light.

The Technology of Clean Hydropower, a panel moderated by Robert Gates, featured Steve Amaral of Alden Research Laboratory, Konstantine Drakonakis of Connecticut Innovations, Inc./Connecticut Clean Energy Fund, and Paul Williams of Kleinschmidt Associates. These technical presentations helped to illustrate the kinds of innovative projects that have been starting up in New England and around the U.S. including “fish-friendly” turbines, projects capturing wave and/or tidal energy, and others.

Eric Hammerling moderated a *Case Study: The Farmington River*. The Farmington River is significantly affected by hydropower operations. The Metropolitan District Commission (Hartford region's most important utility), the Stanley Works, and the CT Department of Environmental Protection have a long-standing Riparian Agreement on hydropower releases, the most important single factor affecting flows. In addition, Summit Hydropower Inc. has held a FERC license to re-start hydropower operations at two dams in Collinsville (between the Upper and Lower Farmington River). This is a key location on Connecticut's most fished river and arguably most scenic river. A 14-mile stretch of the Upper Farmington, just below the MDC dam, was designated as Wild & Scenic in 1994, and a Wild & Scenic Study is underway on the Lower Farmington River. Thus, the Summit project could be a shining example of new, efficient, green hydro, or it could be

flawed, or it could fail. Tim Anthony of The Metropolitan District Commission, Duncan Broatch of Summit Hydropower, and Laura Wildman of American Rivers each presented how we strike the best balance for fish, flows, recreation, and power production in this sensitive location from the standpoint of a major utility, a private entrepreneur, and an environmental advocate.

Earl Phillips moderated a panel, *Hydro Regulation*, on the often contentious issue of permitting. Brian Emerick of the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, Bruce DiGennaro of the Essex Partnership, and Roger Reynolds of Connecticut Fund for the Environment presented their perspectives on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensing process.

Emerging Policy, Changing Landscapes was moderated by Mark P. Smith and featured John Rogers of Union of Concerned Scientists, Anne George of the Connecticut Department of Public Utility Control, David Deen, a Vermont State Representative and Connecticut River Steward, and Fred Ayer of the Low-Impact Hydropower Institute. They discussed the effects that policy intended to encourage the development of renewable energy can have on the landscape around us. Mr. Ayer reported that he gets frequent inquiries from potential entrepreneurs looking for sites available for small hydro facilities because of the financial incentives for renewable energy included in legislation being considered and passed by state governments throughout New England.

Two of the most pointed conclusions of the day's discussions were that it is important for all stakeholders to work towards striking a balance between the benefits and impacts of hydropower and that it is important to integrate hydropower policy within water management policy.



Konstantine Drakonakis of the Clean Energy Fund/CT Innovations, lead support for funding publication of the proceedings of the hydropower conference.

The steering committee intends to publish proceedings of this conference. Check the Rivers Alliance website for updates on hydropower issues regularly and an announcement that the proceedings are available.

We could not put on a conference of this scope without the generosity of our sponsors. We thank them for their support. The supporting sponsors are the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund and LFR, Inc. Other sponsors include the Connecticut Science Center, Farmington River Coordinating Committee, E/PRO – TRC, Fuss & O'Neill, Kleinschmidt Associates, and the Natural Resources Council of Connecticut.

We will publish the proceedings with the support of the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund and the Connecticut Institute for Water Resources. We would also like to thank Northeast Utilities for providing the venue, without which we truly would not have held a conference.

Amanda Branson



The American Museum of Natural History in New York City is featuring a wonderful and thorough exhibition on **Water: H₂O = Life**. The exhibit runs through May 26, 2008. If you would like more information, please check out their website www.amnh.org/exhibitions/water.

Some interesting water related statistics from the exhibition:

How much water do people use each day?

151 gallons per person per day (U.S., average domestic & municipal use)
31 gallons per person per day (U.K., average domestic & municipal use)
3 gallons per person per day (Ethiopia, average domestic & municipal use)

People in the U.S. and Canada use much more water than residents of most other countries. In the U.K. and most other European countries, people live more water-efficient lifestyles. Most Ethiopians, like many others in the developing world, can't get enough water to ensure basic health and sanitation.

Protecting the State's Waters — Continued from page 1

applicant to demonstrate that project will not harm these resources. Supported by the same groups.

No mining in Class I and II lands in drinking-water watersheds. Rivers Alliance, in partnership with CFE and others, will pursue legislative clarification of the statutes protecting Class I and Class II lands to ensure that protections for Class I are at least as strong as for Class II, and that commercial mining of rock, gravel, or other earth materials is prohibited. Rivers Alliance will also oppose any bill introduced to permit such mining.

Enhanced support for towns that zone to protect drinking-water sources. CFE is leading a coalition to improve legal protections for towns that follow the guidance of the Department of Public Health and the state Plan of Conservation and Development for zoning in drinking-water watersheds. Presently, this kind of prudent zoning is excessively vulnerable to legal challenges.

Lakes and ponds: buffers and BMPs. RA will support the Connecticut Federation of Lakes, which is seeking to introduce legislation to require a 200-foot protective zone around lakes and ponds in which best management practices (BMPs) will be used for stormwater, sewage treatment, cleaning of boats, and maintenance of vegetation.

No dumping of medications into state waters. In 2007, Rep. Terry Backer, the Long Island Sound Keeper, brought forward a bill to prohibit nursing facilities from throwing unused medications down the drain. These substances affect wildlife physiology, impair functioning of sewage treatment facilities, and promote development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. RA and the Farmington River Watershed Association will be working with legislators and medical stakeholders on a bill to require a safer disposal method. Legislation this year is uncertain.

REGULATION

Streamflow standards. The DEP has been working with multiple stakeholders to create new flow standards for all the state's streams, as mandated in Public Act 05-142. This major regulation is due to be rolled out this summer for public comment and legislative review. This is a challenging, complex, controversial, and extraordinarily important regulation. Without strong public support, DEP will not succeed in getting this passed.

Packaged sewage treatment systems. On-site, "advanced" sewage treatment technology promises to deliver sewage treatment on properties that could not support traditional septic and do not have access to sewers. The technology holds promise for remediation and as a support for village centers. Unfortunately, performance thus far has been far lower than the performance advertised. In 2002, the legislature banned these packaged systems in drinking-water watersheds. Last year, the systems were the focus of several bills, including one from Sen. Ed Meyer calling for a temporary moratorium. Similar legislation may be introduced this year. Presently, under a law passed last year, regulatory authority is divided between DEP and DPH, and there is confusion as to how regulation should be developed. The groups attempting to work with the agencies toward consistent, enforceable, protective regulation include Rivers Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, Citizens for a Clean Hammonasset, River Watch/Harbor Watch, and others.

LEARNING MORE, GETTING INVOLVED

Rivers Alliance of Connecticut will happily provide additional information on pending legislation and regulations, the major groups involved, and how you can find out more and join the fray. We will also be pleased to discuss any water-related problem that you feel needs to be addressed.



~ ~ ~ RIPPLES ~ ~ ~

New Report Released by the Union of Concerned Scientists

The Union of Concerned Scientists has issued an invaluable report *Time For Climate Action In Northeast Is Now* about the effects of greenhouse gas emissions in the northeast by the end of the next century. "We're poised to leave the next generation a fundamentally different New England," said Peter Frumhoff, director of science and policy at UCS. Nancy Cole, Deputy Director, Global Environment Program, UCS and Lynn Stoddard, CT DEP presented "Climate Change: Connecticut Impacts and Connecticut Solutions" at a Connecticut Watershed Conservation Network Conference in May 2007. Both presenters were exceptionally well-received. The full UCS report can be found online at www.ucsusa.org, just click on *Time For Climate Action In Northeast Is Now*.

Between Land and Water

A new video documentary has been released that gives views of the state's frogs and salamanders in their native habitats never before available. "Between Land & Water: Life Stories of Connecticut's Amphibians" follows Connecticut's native amphibians over an annual season. The video documentary describes roles the animals play in local wetland and forest ecosystems as well as conservation needs that must be addressed to preserve amphibian biodiversity.

Videotaped and narrated by naturalist Brian Kleinman, "Between Land & Water" also describes aspects of vernal pool, stream, and woodland habitats upon which amphibians rely.

This DVD makes familiar calls such as those of Spring Peepers, Gray Tree Frogs, and American Toads into invitations to explore native wildlife and habitats.

Here follows excerpts from a review by Hank Gruner of the Connecticut Amphibian Monitoring Project & The Children's Museum:

"Connecticut is home to twenty-two

kinds of salamanders, frogs and toads. Most remain hidden in the forests, swamps and streams that share our neighborhoods – until now. Naturalist Brian Kleinman has captured some stunning images on a DVD that brings the world of Connecticut's amphibians into your home or school."

You will be amazed at the range of patterns, colors, and behavior on display in the amphibian world and will discover new things with each viewing.

For more information, call Nancy Hanrahan at (203) 767-6509 or visit <http://www.cttrips.com/pages/BLWdetail.html>.

Barley Straw Used to Control New Algae Growth in Ponds

Barley Straw has been increasingly used recently to help control algae blooms in ponds and lakes. Barley straw was initially used in small ponds in England. England has seen great success, but studies of barley straw's effectiveness have been inconclusive in the US.

It is commonly believed that the decomposing barley straw releases a chemical that prevents new algae from growing, but does not harm fish or other plants and animals in the water. It does not kill the algae, so is considered an algistat not an algicide.

While the recommended ways of measuring vary, it seems that 225 lbs. (or approximately 5 bales) of barley straw per acre of water is the consensus ratio. The barley straw should be loosely packed in netting to allow water and oxygen to pass through (decomposition is an aerobic process). Onion sacks and the netting used to package Christmas trees are recommended. The barley straw should be applied in the early spring and lasts 4-6 months. It is advisable to anchor the sacks and place floats in them (because the straw is only effective in the upper 3-4 ft of the pond/lake, where the most oxygen is).

The Watershed Alliance of South Kent is planning to use barley straw to inhibit

algae growth in ailing Hatch Pond beginning in spring of 2008. Rivers Alliance is very interested in the progress and eventual results of this project and will keep you informed.

Water Shortages and Conflict

The U.N. is urging the world to place the impending crisis over water shortages at the top of the global agenda. Water shortages contribute to poverty and social hardship in countries all over the world, including Somalia, Chad, Israel, the Palestinian territories, Nigeria, Sri Lanka, Haiti, Columbia, and Kazakhstan. The current conflict in Darfur began with drought. Climate change and worldwide population growth exacerbate these conditions.

Addressing world leaders at the World Economic Forum, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said "there is still enough water for all of us – but only so long as we can keep it clean, use it more wisely, and share it fairly." He cited a report by International Alert that identified 46 countries with 2.7 billion people where climate change and water-related crises create "a high risk of violent conflict" and a further 56 countries, with 1.2 billion people "are at high risk of violent conflict."

Help Us Name Our Newsletter

Since the founding of Rivers Alliance in 1992, we have published a newsletter for our members. Curiously, it has never had a name. It has just flowed on as an untitled stream of water consciousness.

We ask our members to send in your suggestions. The winning submission will be selected by our distinguished board of directors. The inventive author will be honored in these pages.

Suggestions may be emailed to rivers@riversalliance.org.

Thanks from everyone at RA.



CT Watershed Conservation Network Conference

Over seventy five people attended the Connecticut Watershed Conservation Network conference on November 16th at Northeast Utilities, Berlin, CT.

One of the most popular presentations involved the issue of **Salt vs. Sand: Impacts of salt vs. sand application on Connecticut's winter roads.** Presenter Paul Corrente of the CT Department of Transportation, Environmental Planning, explained that the average application per winter of salt/sand mix from 2000-2005 was 108,000 tons of salt, and 231,000 cubic yards of sand. DOT was also spending 7 months a year doing post-season clean up because of sand in drainage systems, on residential lawns, and in wetlands and watercourses. With the new salt application procedures, DOT trucks can apply salt up to five days in advance of a predicted storm event, and actually use less salt overall. Post-season cleanup can be done in one month. The new salt procedures have less impact on aquatic habitats and water quality, wildlife, because of the enormous decrease in the use of sand and because it allows a more efficient use of the trucks and manpower.



DOT is currently working on mapping aquifer protection areas and posting their boundaries so that truck operators can modify applications in those areas. There are several studies going on to test and monitor any other environmental effects of the salt application. If you would like to receive information or announcements regarding future conferences, please call us at 860-361-9349 or send us an email at rivers@riversalliance.org.

The Book Corner



Russ Cohen. *Wild Plants I have Known ...and Eaten.* (Essex County Greenbelt Association \$15). Edible wild plants in Essex County (and most of New England). Mr. Cohen is with Massachusetts Riverways and is a prominent expert on wild plants one can eat. To order go to ecga@ecga.org or call (978) 768-7241.

Daniel C. Esty and Andrew S. Winston. *Green to Gold: Smart Companies Use Environmental Strategy to Innovate, Create Value and Build Competitive Advantage* (Yale \$25). This book was featured on WNPR.

John Echeverria, Pope Barrow, and Richard Roos-Collins. *Rivers at Risk: Concerned Citizen's Guide to Hydropower* (Island Press \$31). A handbook that describes how to intervene in the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) licensing process.

David H. Getches. *Water Law in A Nutshell* (West Publishing Co. \$27). This book is part of the Nutshell Series. *Environmental Law in a Nutshell* by Roger W. Findley and *Modern Public Land Law in a Nutshell* by Robert L. Glicksman are two other titles from the series that are equally as pertinent to the issues we tackle at Rivers Alliance.

Richard Louv. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder* (Algonquin Books \$13.95). Written by a child advocacy expert, this book explores the separation between today's ever more sedentary youth and nature. Louv points out that exposure to nature can even be a treatment for attention deficit disorder. This is another book featured on WNPR.

Tim Palmer. *Lifelines: The Case for River Conservation* (Rowman & Littlefield \$26.95). This plain volume is one of our favorites. It reminds us of the central role of rivers to our lives and well being. This book is a must for anyone who wants to present cogent arguments (economic as well as ecological) for saving rivers. *Rivers of America* (Harry N. Abrams \$40) is Palmer's latest collection of photographs.

Paul Tokey. *Organic Lawn Care* (Storey Publishing \$19.95). This is a fantastic book for rehabilitating once chemical dependant lawns and for information on basic lawn maintenance.

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Fiscal Year 2006 –2007

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