

## 2019 NWCD Annual Meeting Celebrates Conservation, Friends & “Wild and Scenic” Trinity Retreat Center, West Cornwall

At precisely 5PM, rainy skies cleared revealing blue sky in West Cornwall as NWCD guests arrived for a site walk at the Bend on Lower River Road. Housatonic Valley Association’s Watershed Conservation Director Michael Jastremski and Earth Tone’s Native Landscaper Liza Turozci, led the tour of the newly created recreational area designed with Low Impact Development (LID) features for both river access and parking for West Cornwall Village. The site, with views of the Covered Bridge, showcases what environmental partners can achieve with common goals. (See The Bend - Page 3).

By 6PM, meeting attendees had traveled up Lower River Road to the Trinity Retreat Center. Joe and Heidi Rose, Retreat Center Programming managers, welcomed NWCD’s guests to the campus complete with gardens, braying donkeys and fall river views. Following a brief annual meeting, three conservation award winners were honored.

A Lifetime Conservation Award was presented to William “Bill” Davenport by NWCD board chairman, Curtis Read. Bill was recognized for his long career as an Agriscience teacher at Nonnewaug High School where he trained and influenced many students to pursue careers in agriculture and science. Bill addressed his new “retirement career” as Extension Educator for 4-H Youth Development at the Litchfield County UConn Extension Center.

The Conservation Partner Award was presented to the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (the COG) by NWCD staff Cynthia Rabinowitz and Karen Nelson. The COG was recognized for its partnership with NWCD to deliver programs and services that foster sustainability and environmental health for all with shared COG and NWCD towns. Rick Lynn and Jocelyn Ayer accepted the award on behalf of the entire staff, speaking to the COG’s long standing relationship with the District.

The Conservation Farm Award was presented to Bantam’s Wild Carrot Farm by Vivian Felton, NRCS Conservationist. The farm was cited for its dedication to using ecological practices, serving as a model farm for the community, cultivating interest in farmland stewardship and providing mentorship to young growers. Joanie Guglielmino and Mark Paladino accepted the award on behalf of the farm, giving a lively spirited history of the eclectic farm and their multi-tiered jobs.

The annual meeting was followed by a panel discussion on “Wild and Scenic River Designations – What It Means for The Farmington and Housatonic Rivers – Where We Are, And Where We Are Going”. Presenters were Liz Lacey, National Park Service (NPS) and Farmington-River Coordinating Committee (FRCC), David Sinish, Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA) and William Tingley, Housatonic River Commission (HRC) chairman. (See “Wild and Scenic” - Page 2).



*L to R - Curtis Read, Rick Lynn and Jocelyn Ayer of the Northwest Hills COG, William Davenport and Joanie Guglielmino and Mark Paladino of Wild Carrot Farm*

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# “Wild and Scenic Designation”

On May 21, 2019, the U.S. Postal Service released a series of Forever stamps spotlighting Wild and Scenic Rivers. These stamps commemorate the US National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, created by Congress in 1968 (Public Law 90-542). The Wild and Scenic (W&S) Act reads as follows: *It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.*

NWCD, serving 34 northwestern CT towns, has two “Wild and Scenic” rivers within its boundaries, the Farmington and Housatonic Rivers. The following excerpts are from our three annual meeting panel speakers.

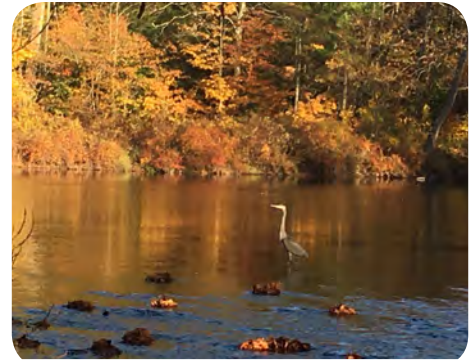
Liz Lacey, NPS representative, also serves as the FRCC Director,



a committee comprised of appointed representatives for five Farmington riverfront towns, and state, federal, and private partners. The FRCC is integral to the

implementation of the Upper Farmington River Management Plan approved as part of the enabling legislation for the W&S designation of the upper section segment running from Goodwin Dam in Hartland to the New Hartford/Canton line on August 26, 1994. Liz’s presentation highlighted the many facets of stewardship needed to preserve and protect W&S Rivers in keeping with the spirit of the Act. She addressed the recent long fought for addition of 1.1 downstream miles from the New Hartford/Canton town line to the Nepaug River confluence in Canton to the Upper Section on March 12, 2019. Liz is currently working with the HRC in their long standing quest for W&S designation,

David Sinish, FRWA representative, spoke to the inception of the Farmington River W&S designation through a chance 1981 meeting with the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) regarding access to the Barkhamsted Reservoir. It was learned that a referendum, two months away, to fund an aqueduct/tunnel from the West Branch to the East Branch distribution system, would be voted on by MDC member towns only. The upstream donor towns would have no vote. Numerous questions raised regarding the impact to upstream towns went unanswered. An urgent FRWA campaign focusing on the lack of answers led to the defeat of the referendum. Thirteen years passed from the referendum defeat to Congressional Designation in August 1994. A recent October FRCC event commemorating the 25th Anniversary



of W&S designation celebrated the critical protection afforded by the designation as well as the successful 1.1 mile addition despite the current political climate.

Bill Tingley, HRC chairman, addressed the long quest for W&S designation of the Housatonic. The HRC is responsible for monitoring and advising Housatonic riverfront towns in northwestern CT and was formed in response to the NPS recognizing a 42 mile stretch of the River from the Massachusetts border to the New Milford section of the Housatonic as one with outstanding scenic, recreational and ecological value in the 1970’s. In Bill’s blunt words, “At present, the W&S designation is completely stalled by a federal administration that is unable to function normally. All the necessary paperwork in its final form sits in Washington on the Assistant Secretary of the Interior’s deck. Of course there is no Assistant Secretary of the Interior. Like so many unfilled appointments in all departments, and particularly those whose scope is humanitarian and/or environmental, apparently there just aren’t enough bad guys to plug into these positions. So.....we wait. Thanks to NWCD for all the support and good work for the Housatonic River and the quest to gain the recognition it deserves.”

## NRCS Assistance & Funding Opportunities

The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides conservation planning assistance to farmers and landowners of large and small farms and woodlands. This service is free of charge. A conservation plan is a document that describes practices needed to solve identified natural resource concerns associated with soil, water, air, plants, livestock, energy, and wildlife. It ensures that a land's natural resources are managed to maintain sustainability and productivity. On-site assessments and conservation practices including but not limited to: multi-species cover crops, minimal tillage, livestock grazing management, and farm energy improvements can become part of a conservation plan. Management decisions in the plan are made by you, with assistance from the NRCS, for the land you manage. Your social and economic interests, as well as federal, state, tribal,

and local requirements are considered during the planning process. A plan may help you qualify for financial assistance and easement programs provided by NRCS or other federal, state, or local programs. It may also help you gain or maintain eligibility for USDA farm program benefits. If you are interested in learning more about developing and implementing a conservation plan, your local NRCS office can assist you. Call the USDA Service Center in Torrington at (860) 626-8258.



## The Bend Project - A Partnership Success

The Bend project showcases what environmental partners can achieve with common goals. This HVA project, dating back to 2007, was made possible with a grant from the Housatonic River Natural Resources Damages Fund Trustees and numerous other state and local funding sources. The original plans included an all-abilities-accessible fishing platform extending into the Housatonic River but subsequent engineering analysis revealed that the site was not appropriate for construction in the river channel. Over the years, as the project evolved, new stormwater management practices, such as Low Impact Development (LID) were slowly being incorporated into regulatory processes throughout the State. With the guidance of Cornwall's town planner, Tom McGowan, LID stormwater measures were adopted in Cornwall in 2014. These

changes provided for more environmentally sensitive designs for the protection of natural water resources. The Cornwall amendments added more protection along the Housatonic River corridor. The corridor is defined in the Housatonic River Management Plan created in 1981 by the HRC and modified in 2006. As a result, the Bend project, with guidance and support from the NWCOG, NWCD and town staff, resulted in the approval of a more traditional car-top boat launch, designed with LID to minimize impact to the river and adjacent wetland. Other measures included invasive plants removal, restoration of native trees and shrubs and an interpretive kiosk. The updated plans were approved at Town Meeting in August of 2018, and construction was completed a few months later in December. The completed project

provides safe access for boating and fishing, addresses runoff issues that had persisted at the site for decades, restores riverside wildlife habitat and provides parking for people visiting West Cornwall. To quote HVA's Michael Jastremski in a July 2019 Bend opening press release, "The perseverance of everyone involved in seeing this project through from concept to construction is truly amazing. This project is a success because of all the folks who helped improve the plan over the years." All of us at NWCD, are proud to be a partner in this environmental success.



## Connecticut Woodlands Make Our State Unique

Connecticut, the 3rd smallest state in area (3.2 million acres) and the 4th most densely populated (739 people per square mile) state, is also the 13th most wooded state in the country. CT's 3.2 million acres is covered by 1.8 million acres (58%) of woods.

CT's woodlands are middle to late age with 80% of the trees being 60 years or older. Approximately 80% of the trees are in the saw timber size class. This classification is based on the trees' diameter exceeding 11 inches when measured at 4.5 feet from the ground. The predominant forest type is oak/hickory. Oaks dominate 70% of the States woodlands – northern red, black, white, scarlet, and chestnut oaks. There are also substantial amounts of red maple, sweet birch, white ash, sugar maple, hemlock, white pine, and beech present. In terms of total number of trees, red maple is the most common tree in CT.

You would be surprised that 73% (1.31 million acres) of CT's woodlands are owned by approximately 3% of the State's population (110,000 private individuals). When we look at the number of individuals that own 10 or more acres of woodlands that number shrinks to >1% percent (25,000) of the State's population owning 71% (1.29 million acres) of CT's woodlands. The average size of a private woodlot is 33 acres.

Some of the benefits all CT residents derive from abundant tree cover are clean air and water, local wood products, wildlife habitat, climate change mediation, seasonal temperature moderation near homes, and scenic amenities adding to quality of life.

To ensure that CT's woodlands keep providing these and other benefits to society, private woodland owners need help and guidance in managing this valuable resource. This assistance comes from the State's and Federal natural resource agencies, Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) Forestry and Wildlife divisions, University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service (UConn Coop Ext), Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES), and the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). DEEP Division of Forestry has dedicated two foresters (Service Foresters) to meet one-on-one with private woodland owners who are interested in learning more about their woods and how it can be better managed to meet their goals.

Since only 2 Service Foresters can't possibly meet the demand of 25,000 potential customers, a program to train peer-to-peer landowner counselors called COVERTS was developed in 1983 by UConn Coop Ext, and DEEP Forestry and Wildlife divisions. Covert is a word that describes a thicket providing sheltering cover for wildlife. The COVERTS Program is a 3-day training seminar for a select group of woodland owners, and environmentally engaged citizens. The curriculum consists of a series of lectures and field walks on topics such as the different types CT woodlands, the where, how and why trees grow, the different wildlife species associated with CT woodlands, and sources of professional help that are available to woodland owners. The instructors for the seminar are foresters, wildlife biologists and ecologists from DEEP, UConn Coop Ext, CAES, Connecticut Forest & Park Association (CFPA), and other natural resource organizations. The seminar is held in September at the Yale University Forestry Camp in the Great Mountain Forest in Canaan, CT. CFPA is the major sponsor of the program and handles all the logistical arrangements. The cost to participants is \$150 for meals, lodging, training and reference material. In exchange, participants agree to volunteer as COVERTS Program Cooperators, returning to their communities and sharing what they have learned with others. They become knowledgeable advocates for sound woodland management in CT.



*Larry Rousseau is the Vice-Chairman of the Northwest Conservation District. He has been a Torrington resident for 37 years. He has been employed by the DEEP's Division of Forestry as a forester since 1978. His present position is Service Forester for the Western half of the State. Larry has been an instructor at the COVERTS Program for the last 25 years.*

## CT Envirothon - Giving Experience to Future Professionals

CT Envirothon is a state-wide environmental competition for high schoolers that was started in 1992 by Connecticut Soil and Water Conservation Districts. There are five main focus areas: forestry, wildlife, soils, current topic and aquatics. These core areas have a common goal to provide students with a hands-on learning experience that fosters environmental awareness, appreciation and stewardship. A workshop is offered on each core topic every year. In May, a statewide competition is held and the winning team competes at the national level. This past May, the competition was held at Spring Meadow Farm in Tolland CT. The aquatics exam asks students to identify various aquatic organisms and answer a range of questions relating to watersheds, stream ecology, nonpoint source pollution and more.



An all-day aquatics workshop is held on a Saturday in January and exposes students to a wide range of aquatic and watershed related topics. Students learn the identification of fish, aquatic plants or macrophytes, and amphibians. Students attend presentations on nonpoint source pollution in watersheds and the importance of responsible land use. A major goal of the program is to inform students on how important water resources are, and on management strategies available to us to protect water resources for years to come.

During this workshop, students meet professionals working in the diverse field of aquatic biology. State workers, private limnologists and even CT Envirothon Alumni present on their relevant research or work, giving students exposure to a wide variety of professions and jobs relating to aquatic sciences. Students are also exposed to the importance of protecting our natural resources. Information is presented on human health concerns and the importance of lakes acting as economic engines of communities. The importance of protecting these essential natural resources is emphasized. Students are also given hands-on tools for identification and, in the process, develop a respect for the natural environment. To support CT Envirothon or learn more, visit [ct.envirothon.org](http://ct.envirothon.org).

*Kelsey Sudol, Environmental Associate for NWCD, Research Assistant for the Lake Waramaug Task Force, and Chair of Aquatics Committee for 19'-20' Envirothon year.*

## Torrington High School Students Learn about Low Impact Development

This fall, students from Torrington High School's (THS) BioClub, Honors Biology, and Introductory Biology classes in partnership with Northwestern Connecticut Community College (NCCC) and the Northwest Conservation District (NWCD) helped plant a native pollinator rain garden in the THS courtyard. The garden will serve as a LID watershed management space and living laboratory for students at THS and NCCC. Stormwater runoff will be significantly reduced as a result of this low-maintenance installation.

This garden will expand opportunities for students to become further involved in outdoor citizen science projects that can lead to long-term studies of various research questions. Ownership and investment in a particular scientific question, and exposure to nature, have been shown time and again to deepen students' connection to the planet, increase interest in the subject at hand, and broaden their concepts of what is possible for their own future.

This project was also made possible thanks to a grant from the Environmental Professionals Organization of Connecticut (EPOC). Special thanks to NCCC and THS for their work on this collaboration!



# SustainableCT – An Opportunity For Connecticut To Maximize Resiliency and Preparedness

SustainableCT is a program that was developed by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Institute for Sustainable Energy at Eastern Connecticut State University to increase town-wide resiliency and public awareness. There are ten categories of actions on which towns can choose to focus. When actions are completed, and specific point levels earned, towns are awarded certification in either a bronze or silver certification level, bringing recognition to the town and its citizens. To learn more, visit <https://sustainablect.org/>



Northwest Conservation District is committed to helping towns that request assistance with their SustainableCT efforts. We are supporting SustainableCT actions in our 34 towns by offering presentations on a variety of topics such as best practices for storm water management e.g. rain gardens and LID design; water quality, conservation approaches in farming e.g. healthy soils and composting, designing and growing gardens that provide habitat for beneficial creatures such as pollinators including insects and birds. Hosting a workshop or presentation earns points or credits for towns towards SustainableCT certification. We have recently provided technical assistance in two communities, Bethlehem and Watertown, to implement LID projects with educational signage provided by NWCD with the support of funding through a grant from Connecticut Community Foundation.

In spring 2019, as a member of the Bethlehem Conservation Commission, I spearheaded the process of Bethlehem becoming a Sustainable CT town. NWCD used Connecticut Community Foundation funding for the design and construction of an LID demonstration rain garden behind Town Hall. The rain garden project and educational components may now be leveraged for points towards Bethlehem's effort to be Bronze Certified with the SustainableCT program. In addition, the demonstration rain garden in Bethlehem has already spurred an effort by the Bethlehem Land Trust to design and implement a large rain garden on its



In the top picture is NWCD staff installing a rain garden behind the Bethlehem Town Hall. The bottom two pictures are Taft School volunteers planting a rain garden by the Heminway Municipal Office Building in Watertown

flagship property, The Bellamy Preserve. This 81+ acre site is adjacent to the historic Bellamy-Ferriday house. There are many visitors to the house, gardens and preserve who will be able to learn about the benefits of rain gardens through educational signage.

In Watertown, the restoration of an old public school building into a town office complex provided the opportunity to demonstrate LID infrastructure in the form of a large rain garden which receives runoff from the impervious surfaces connected with the construction project. The rain garden is located below a new parking lot at the Municipal Office Building. The rain garden intercepts the runoff from the impervious surfaces of the parking area and the building roof, allowing it to infiltrate into the ground and be cleaned before entering Steele Brook, an important



watercourse nearby, and tributary in the Naugatuck River watershed. Project design and construction was funded in part by Connecticut Community Foundation and in-kind funding from the Town of Watertown.

As part of its mission, NWCD stands ready to provide technical and educational services and programs in the areas of conservation and protection of natural resources, e.g. farming, food security, soil health, stormwater management, sustainable resource and energy use, watershed, ecosystem and open space management. NWCD can provide GIS services to support towns land use and open space planning and reporting. We will advise and support those engaged with implementing sustainable actions in all our 34 towns regardless of whether the town is participating in SustainableCT. The staff at NWCD looks forward to assisting our towns on a path to a resilient and sustainable future by providing assistance wherever and whenever we are requested.

*Cynthia Rabinowitz, NWCD Executive Director*



NWCD serves the following 34 northwestern CT towns, those in bold are current SustainableCT towns with \* indicating bronze certification:

- Barkhamsted, Bethel, Bethlehem,** Bridgewater, **Brookfield\***, Canaan (Falls Village), Colebrook, **Cornwall\***, Danbury, Goshen, Hartland, Harwinton, Kent, Litchfield, Morris, New Fairfield, New Hartford, **New Milford\*, Newtown, Norfolk, North Canaan,** Plymouth, **Roxbury\***, Salisbury, Sharon, Sherman, Southbury, **Thomaston, Torrington, Warren, Washington,** Watertown, Winchester and **Woodbury\*.**

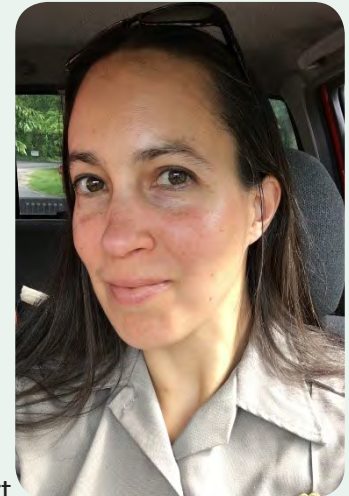
## Welcome New Board Member Marissa L. Wright

Environmental Protection Specialist

Marissa has over 20 years of experience in environmental protection and sustainability. Employed with US Army Corps of Engineers since 2005, she regularly interfaces with federal, state, and local non-profit organizations. She is an expert at building and leading diverse teams, overseeing projects and resources to ensure environmental compliance, as well as strategic planning. She has deployed 7 times to areas impacted by natural disasters, and is currently completing an MS Degree in Biology at CCSU.

Marissa served on the Thomaston Wetlands Commission for 6 years, volunteered for NWCD for 5 years, served as Liaison for CT Emergency Ops Center, and has 14 years of experience with CT DEEP. Additionally, she has over 7 years of experience as an Independent Investigator for missing person's cases.

Her passions are conservation and transformational leadership, helping people find their true strength, to accomplish their mission.





Northwest Conservation District  
1185 New Litchfield Street  
Torrington, CT 06790

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## Conservation Calendar

[nwcd.org](http://nwcd.org) 860 626 7222

### NOVEMBER

- 22 The Connecticut Forum: presents Climate Crisis, a call-to-action conversation about climate change. 7:30PM-10:00PM, for more visit [ctforum.org](http://ctforum.org)
- 23 CACIWC Annual Meeting and Environmental Conference - [www.caciwc.org](http://www.caciwc.org)

### DECEMBER

- 16 Christmas Bird Count - Litchfield Hills Audubon, if you want to help, contact 860-482-4046 for more

### JANUARY

- 23 Farm Energy Workshop, 2 PM, UCONN Extension Center, hosted by NWCD and CT Farm Energy Program, this is a free workshop, to learn more or sign up email [info@nwcd.org](mailto:info@nwcd.org) or sign up on [nwcd.org](http://nwcd.org)
- 25 NWCD Rain Garden Presentation, 1-2PM, Bethlehem Public Library, sign up at [NWCD.org](http://NWCD.org)



### *Save the Date:*

**April 24th-26th**, NWCD's 39th Annual Earth Day Plant Sale at the Goshen Fairgrounds. For order forms, available March 1, 2019,