



## FARMINGTON RIVER COORDINATING COMMITTEE



### REPRESENTATIVES

#### Barkhamsted

Mario Santoro  
Roger Behrens, alternate

#### Canton

Lans Perry (Secretary)

#### Colebrook

Tom Stanton (Vice Chair)

#### Hartland

Dan Bowler (Chair)  
Bob Beeman, alternate

#### New Hartford

Alison Murdock  
Tony Mitchell, alternate

#### CT Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP)

Peter Aarrestad  
Matt Gocłowski, alternate  
Susan Peterson, alternate

#### Farmington River Anglers Association (FRAA)

Mark Swenson

#### Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA)

David Sinish (Treasurer)  
Laura Hart, alternate

#### Metropolitan District Commission (MDC)

Jim Randazzo

#### National Park Service (NPS)

Andrew Petitdemange  
Liz Lacy

## ANNUAL REPORT

The Upper Farmington River is designated Wild & Scenic due to its Outstandingly Remarkable Values. What does this mean in the context of the Wild & Scenic Farmington River? For a river to be designated Wild & Scenic by the United States Congress, a river must include one or more of these qualities, named Outstandingly Remarkable Values, or ORV's:

- **Free Flowing:**

*The sound of water tumbling down its rocky course, undammed.*

- **Fish and Wildlife:**

*A trout rising to an insect hatch or a bald eagle flying low over the river.*

- **Scenic:**

*The view from Chaugham's lookout or the gorge at Satan's Kingdom.*

- **Recreation:**

*Paddling a canoe, fishing, swimming, or just relaxing along the banks.*

- **Historic:**

*Archaeological sites such as the Barkhamsted Lighthouse and the stone foundations of 19<sup>th</sup> century water driven mills.*

The Upper Farmington River has all these values in abundance. Reflecting on these values and acting to preserve them is the mandate of the Farmington River Coordinating Committee (FRCC). We strive to encourage the public to enjoy all these resources with a river etiquette so every visitor becomes a protector—a steward, of these Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

We are gifted to live by or near the Farmington River and should appreciate its heritage, its natural value, and maintain its legacy.

The volunteer representatives of the FRCC are committed to these values and work diligently on the programs you will find in detail in this report. It is not an easy task. There are many unseen hours on these committed projects. With the arrival of COVID-19 this past year it has increased the public's desire to recreate along, in and on the river. But this increase in recreation has put a strain on the river. Our ongoing efforts protect the Outstandingly Remarkable Values.

As you read the Annual Report and learn of the FRCC's current projects and goals please join us in protecting this beautiful river we all enjoy.

Sincerely,  
Dan Bowler, FRCC Chairman



## A PARTNERSHIP WILD & SCENIC RIVER: PROTECTING THE UPPER FARMINGTON RIVER



In 1994, the 14-mile segment of the West Branch (Upper) Farmington River from below Goodwin/Hogback dam in Hartland to the Canton/New Hartford line received its designation. In 2019, under the Dingell Act, 1.1 miles were added in Canton above the Collinsville dams at the confluence of Nepaug River, to the existing Upper Farmington designation. The Upper Farmington River free-flowing designated segment is now a total of 15.1 miles.

This section of the river was entered into the National Wild & Scenic Rivers System as a result of a great effort by citizens and organizations to protect the river from a proposed diversion and other major water resource projects. The Farmington is among the first “Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers” as protection comes from federal, state and local town governments and other organizations with a vested interest in the health of the river.

*Quilt Image: Halfords Run by Nancy Benson, South Windsor, CT—Section 13*

## RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

### INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT

Betsy Corrigan, field biologist with FRCC and noted invasive plant species expert, continued control work of invasive plants, surveying, planning and researching, mapping and documentation - all of which benefits the ecosystems along the riverbanks and floodplain zones of the Upper Farmington River. This program is in its 11<sup>th</sup> year and involves approximately 80 control locations. Outreach to partner organizations including Friends of American Legion and Peoples State Forest (FALPS), CT DEEP Forestry Division, Barkhamsted Conservation Commission, Colebrook Conservation Commission, New Hartford Open Space Preservation Commission, Barkhamsted Land Trust, New Hartford Land Trust, the Town of Barkhamsted, Farmington Valley Trout Unlimited (FVTU), and the MDC continues. The River Steward Team was able to assist Betsy Corrigan in invasive plant removal, following social distancing practices. Learn more about FRCC’s invasive plant management at [farmingtonriver.org](http://farmingtonriver.org)

### WATER QUALITY MONITORING

Water quality monitoring has been conducted by FRWA on the Farmington River Watershed for the past 16 years. Establishing a baseline of data has allowed FRWA to identify long and short-term changes in water quality and land use. The data is shared with partners including the CT DEEP and is used to educate watershed residents. The monitoring program in the Upper Wild & Scenic Farmington River watershed is administered by FRWA Watershed Science Director, Alisa Phillips-Griggs and Conservation Projects Director, Laura Hart. Data from water samples, temperature, and macroinvertebrates are collected and analyzed.

Fifteen sites were monitored for bacteria, *E.Coli*, from July to September. Samples were collected by trained FRWA volunteers, David and Carrie Sinish. Analysis of the samples was conducted in the USGS laboratory in East Hartford for the 2020 season, and a yearly report was submitted by FRWA.

Water quality monitoring is also conducted upstream of the Upper Wild & Scenic section in the headwaters of the

Farmington River in Massachusetts. FRWA monitors 17 sites in the West Branch Farmington River and its tributaries in Massachusetts. 2020 was the second year of data collection in this section. This data helps us understand where in the watershed there may be higher levels of *E.coli* and may point to the sources as well. The headwaters contain pristine water with very low levels of *E.coli* flowing into the Wild & Scenic Farmington River and the largest sources of pollution come from the Still River in Winsted; an impaired tributary of the Farmington. This information helps us focus on green infrastructure solutions to reduce the amount of polluted stormwater from entering into the Wild & Scenic Farmington River, including a recently installed rain garden in Winsted, completed by FRWA with funding from the National Park Foundation. Learn more at [frwa.org/rain-gardens](http://frwa.org/rain-gardens)

FRWA deployed HOBO water temperature loggers at 8 sites within the Upper Wild & Scenic Farmington River Watershed in 2020. HOBOS record water temperatures hourly throughout the year to monitor ambient in-stream temperatures to identify and document cold water habitat to assess long term trends. Three are located in the West Branch Farmington River and one each in Center Brook, Cherry Brook, Mad River, Morgan Brook, and Still River. FRWA's data is shared with the CT DEEP and uploaded to the regional Stream Temperature Database.

FRWA normally conducts macroinvertebrate sampling days in September and October to monitor streams of the watershed on a rotating basis through the CT DEEP's Riffle Bioassessment by Volunteers (RBV) program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, CT DEEP cancelled all RBV sampling and therefore FRWA was unable to assess for the 2020 season. Past results are available on DEEP's website: [ct.gov/deep](http://ct.gov/deep)

## GRANTS & LAND PROTECTION

As part of our effort to support local endeavors and enhance protection of the Upper Farmington River, FRCC offers small grants for applicable projects from the riverbank to the watershed level. **FRCC Land Protection Program** supports conservation and restoration of the river as well as land protection within the five riverfront towns along the Upper Wild & Scenic Farmington River.

**Barkhamsted** – FRCC continued to support the scope of work for the Town of Barkhamsted provided by the consultant engineers at Princeton Hydro to address the streambank restoration adjacent to West River Road just below confluence of Sandy Brook into West Branch Farmington River.

**Hartland** – The grant to Hartland Land Trust went toward supporting the acquisition of 112 acres of land in West Hartland, near the Colebrook Reservoir. Hartland recently added 52 acres to the Mill District Preserve in West Hartland. The Preserve now totals 139 acres of contiguous forestland. FRCC was happy to help fund this acquisition of forested wetlands with an upper perennial watercourse that drains into the Wild & Scenic Farmington River. Fred Jones, President of the Hartland Land Trust, said *“The response from the community has been overwhelmingly supportive. Preserving this property in perpetuity provides another layer of protection to our pristine wetlands and will counter fragmentation and sensitive habitat loss.”*

**New Hartford** – FRCC helped fund the 9.19-acre Jones ‘Mountain Sawmill’ property on Steele Road acquisition by the New Hartland Land Trust. FRCC continued to assist the New Hartford Land Trust for the Helen Butler Riverfront Trail parcel that consists of 8.1 acres along the Farmington River in New Hartford. It is part of a protected riparian corridor supporting a diversity of wildlife species and their associated habitat as well as important recreational and historic resources.



## EDUCATION & OUTREACH

### RIVER STEWARD PROGRAM

Stephan Bastrzycki developed the River Steward Program for FRCC in 2015 and is the lead River Steward. Stephan works year-round and selects a summer Steward Team with the mission to carry out the outreach and educational goals of FRCC. 2020 was a challenging year. The Steward Program started in March with some very sad news – the passing of Mickey Nordell. Mickey had been with the program since its start, volunteering hundreds of hours and helping take new stewards under her wing. She is greatly missed.

Then came COVID-19 and the 'New Norm'. After discussions within FRCC a decision was made that a Steward Team would still be effective and help with outreach, even if the methods needed to adapt. The team ended up being smaller – 3 paid Assistant Stewards and volunteer help from Donna Bastrzycki. Other volunteers from the past, as well as interns were not available for the 2020 season.

The River Steward training day was held the last weekend of May. Outreach initially was done socially distant and 6 feet apart and outdoors. Increased focus was put on social media: Instagram, Facebook and Vimeo. As the summer went on, and we were able to get back to some more traditional methods of outreach like setting up a booth at the Satan's Kingdom stairs put-in, following safety guidelines.

#### Accomplishments of the 2020 Steward Team:

- Education and Outreach along the river
- User and license plate counts
- Invasive plant removal with Betsy Corrigan
- Flyer distribution to local businesses along the river
- Participation in the 4<sup>th</sup> of July traveling parade
- Participation in the Barkhamsted Family Fun Day
- Production of educational videos
- Show booth at Satan's Kingdom
- Social media postings
- Trash Pickups



#### What was noticeably different around the river in 2020?

As was the case all over the country, the number of users on the river and surrounding trails had dramatically increased. As indoor and travel options were limited, the outdoors was one of the few escapes people could still do. The overuse problem was compounded by certain nearby areas and access points being shut down due to safety reasons, including state owned inland beaches. Many river-users were new to the Farmington River and unfamiliar with river etiquette. It was often observed that overcrowding led to use of never before utilized areas, sometimes accidentally blocking trail access.

Farmington River Tubing (FRT) chose not to open for the 2020 summer. Their absence was noticeable. While a commercial tubing operation does bring crowds to the river, they do several positive things for that section of the river. FRT helps pick up trash, they provide lifeguards at the rapids, and educate people on good river practices. They also have periodically hired Environmental Conservation Police Officers on busy days. Without FRT's presence, that section of

river was overrun by independent tubers. The lack of a FRT shuttle back to the put-in parking area, created increased pressure on the much smaller parking area at the take-out in Canton. This created overcrowding and traffic congestion where parking is much more limited than at the put-in at Satan's Kingdom State Recreational Area. The result forced CT DEEP to shut down the put-in parking lot on multiple occasions to control the number of tubers entering the river.

The most common outreach topics included river and tubing safety, 'No Glass No Trash', 'Pack Out What You Pack In', and making people aware of the Steward Program. With Assistant River Steward Alyssa's interest and knowledge regarding fishing, she especially was able to help people with fishing regulations, fly fishing techniques, and places to access the river.

The Stewards spent considerable time gathering user counts on the river, mostly in Satan's Kingdom between the hours of 12 and 5 PM. They also counted license plates and noted how many CT versus out of state users were coming to the river. This was a good way to gather user data from the river in a year where face-to-face interviews, especially in the beginning of the summer, would not have been well received or safe. One interesting set of data shows on two separate days that closing the Satan's Kingdom put-in parking lot has little to no effect on tubers entering the river. On July 4<sup>th</sup> the lot was closed at 1:15 PM. Stewards positioned at the rapids counted 204 tubers from 1-2 PM, 174 tubers from 2-3 PM, and 145 tubers from 3-4 PM. The next day, July 5<sup>th</sup>, the lot was closed at 1 PM. On this day the Stewards counted users for the hour before the lot was closed. From 12-1 PM there were 122 tubers, 199 tubers from 1-2 PM, and 193 tubers from 2-3 PM. Tubers were simply putting in upriver at one of the multiple access sites available including by Michael Angelo's restaurant (where they were charging \$10 to park) or at the former Waring building where tubers would run across Route 44 creating an unsafe traffic situation.

Social media proved to be a good alternative platform for getting our messaging out during COVID times. We created five videos in the summer of 2020, more than in any other year – Meet the Stewards, River Safety, Fishing Regulations, Make Your Own Composting Bin, and Trout Identification. Links to all of them can be found on the Steward website under the 'Media' tab.

Without the lifeguards usually supplied by the concessionaire, the Stewards witnessed several instances when tubers and kayakers got in trouble in these rapids, and often seemed surprised by them. In no way does this suggest every outdoor feature in nature needs to be 'supervised' or even worse, closed. However, the situation in Satan's Kingdom maybe warrants some signage and/or education warning people of the class III rapids ahead since this area is very popular and people may have been used to seeing lifeguards there in prior years.



### 2020 Statistics and Data:

- Total paid hours for three Assistant Stewards: 576
- Total volunteer hours: 40
- Estimated # of people engaged: ~560
- Number of large garbage bags picked up with liter: 25 (limited trash pickup due to COVID)
- Areas with most litter: Satan's Kingdom Put-In and Take-Out, People's Forest, and Black Bridge



*River Steward Program continued from Page 5:*

2020 has been the most challenging season to date since the start of the River Steward Program in 2015. The river and surrounding area have seen a growth in users due to COVID-19. With limited activities, many are turning to the outdoors. This brings many new users to the area, many without an understanding of river and outdoor recreation etiquette. Litter, overuse, trespassing, and loud music were some of the major issues in 2020.

Despite the challenges, the Steward team had a very successful summer and was involved in many productive activities as already outlined. Stephan Bastrzycki was required to be involve more than any other year. However, as in years past, we were very lucky in the hiring process and again had three terrific representatives of the Steward Program.

As effective as our program and the outreach is, it cannot be done alone. Especially if the increased usage on the river is here to stay. We need help from our partners. FRCC hopes for increased partnership and collaboration from neighboring towns and our partner agencies to assist with messaging and enforcement. This is the only way we can continue to make the Farmington River 'A Fun and Safe Place to Recreate'!

Visit [farmingtonriversteward.org](http://farmingtonriversteward.org) for more information.

## FARMINGTON RIVER QUILT

Farmington River Quilt Project was presented **Dan Bowler**, Farmington River Coordinating Committee Chair and Curator of the Farmington River Quilt at the Simsbury Public Library on January 16th, 2020, in conjunction with a presentation on the newly designated Wild & Scenic Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook section by **Sally Rieger**, Lower Farmington River & Salmon Brook Committee Acting Chair (see photos, below). The Quilt was on display for the month of January. Due to COVID-19, the remainder of exhibits of the Quilt were postponed, and a video of the Quilt was shown and is available on the website.

To see the Quilt virtually, visit [farmingtonriverquilt.org](http://farmingtonriverquilt.org) where you will find photos, descriptions, and a video of the entire Farmington River Quilt.



## 2020 VIRTUAL EVENTS

The pandemic posed challenges for all, but FRCC was able to continue to sponsor the popular **Wild & Scenic Film Festival**, hosted by our partners the Farmington River Watershed Association. The virtual Film Festival had 250 viewers from the safety of their own homes, and we were able to celebrate and educate about the Wild & Scenic Farmington River and the role of FRCC, and bring attention to the River Steward Program.

Our Annual Open House turned into a virtual **Wild & Scenic Art Show** featuring the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the River from local artists Rita Bond, Dan Bowler, Tom Cameron, Jim DeCesare, Holly Hall, Fran Hoffnagle, Germaine Lemieux, Deborah Leonard, Jean Miller, and Robin Schofield. We sponsored an outdoor event following COVID-19 safety guidelines, **Raptors on the River** hosted by Christine's Critters, Inc., along with the FRCC River Steward, Stephan Bastrzycki. The event was well received and a great way for the public to learn about the wildlife that depend upon the Farmington River. Christine's Critters, Inc, is a non-profit organization, provides educational programs and care for their 24 non-releasable ambassador birds and provide care to rehabilitate the many injured birds of prey.



## SCHOLARSHIPS

It was FRCC's pleasure to award the Pat Keener and Nancy Johnson Scholarship to Victoria Duffy of New Hartford in 2020. Victoria is a hard-working student with many accolades. She has been involved in her local Envirothon Club, FFA, volunteered for the Winchester Land Trust, earned a 4.54 GPA from Northwest Regional High School - just to name a few of her accomplishments. Victoria plans to attend UCONN, majoring in Environmental Science.

An excerpt from Victoria's essay: *"I am interested in this scholarship because I plan to receive a BS in Environmental Science with a focus on sustainable farming and energy. I plan to dedicate my life to researching and developing healthier alternatives to energy, farming practices, plastic production, and so much more, and this scholarship would help me achieve my childhood mantra--to save the world."*

The Pat Keener and Nancy Johnson Scholarships (\$1,000) were awarded every year to a high school or college student from one of the five riverfront towns (Barkhamsted, Canton, Colebrook, Hartland and New Hartford) to study the field of environmental science. 2020 was the final year of the scholarship fund.



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020—OVERVIEW OF EXPENDITURES

## Resource Stewardship - \$36,479

- Invasive Plant Program
- Water Quality Monitoring Program
- Land Protection Assistance
- Stream Crossing Surveys
- Interns

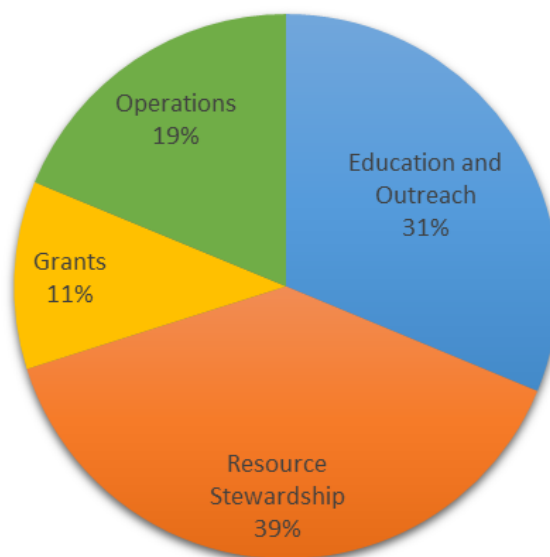
## Education and Outreach - \$29,405

- Publications and website
- River Steward Program
- Farmington River Quilt Project

## Grants - \$10,495

## Operations - \$17,620

- Operational Expenses
- Executive Expenses



Fiscal year 2020 Total \$93,999

## FARMINGTON RIVER COORDINATING COMMITTEE

The Farmington River Coordinating Committee is integral to the implementation of the Upper Farmington River Management Plan. The Committee comprises appointed representatives from the five riverfront towns, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), Metropolitan District Commission (MDC), National Park Service (NPS), Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA), and Farmington River Anglers Association (FRAA). Monthly meetings are typically held at the Committee's office at Squire's Tavern, just inside Peoples State Forest in Pleasant Valley. The Upper Farmington Wild & Scenic River designation extends from just below Goodwin/Hogback Dam in Hartland to the confluence of the Nepaug River in Canton for a total of 15.1 miles.

### FRCC's mission is to promote long-term protection of the Upper Farmington River by:

- Bringing interested parties together on a regular basis
- Stimulating cooperation and coordination among the parties
- Providing a forum to discuss and resolve issues
- Coordinating implementation of the Upper Farmington River Management Plan

### CONTACT

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### WEBSITES

[farmingtonriver.org](http://farmingtonriver.org)  
[farmingtonriverquilt.org](http://farmingtonriverquilt.org)  
[farmingtonriversteward.org](http://farmingtonriversteward.org)