



Wild & Scenic News

Volume 6, Issue 2

Spring 2010

The Aliens are Here! – FRCC battles Non-native Plants

Non-native plant species are a concern mainly because they crowd out native species which are sources of food and shelter for wildlife. In addition, you might be surprised to know that some of them can actually make the environment toxic to native species. If they are allowed to go unchecked, ultimately we could lose the biodiversity and unique character of our New England ecosystems.

Biologist Elizabeth Corrigan and FRCC Intern Tiffany Caisse spent several months last year surveying invasive non-native species along the 14 mile Wild & Scenic stretch of the Farmington River.

Corrigan and Caisse were particularly interested in locating adventive (not fully established) species; management efforts will be more likely to have an impact on these than on areas that are already heavily infested with established non-natives.

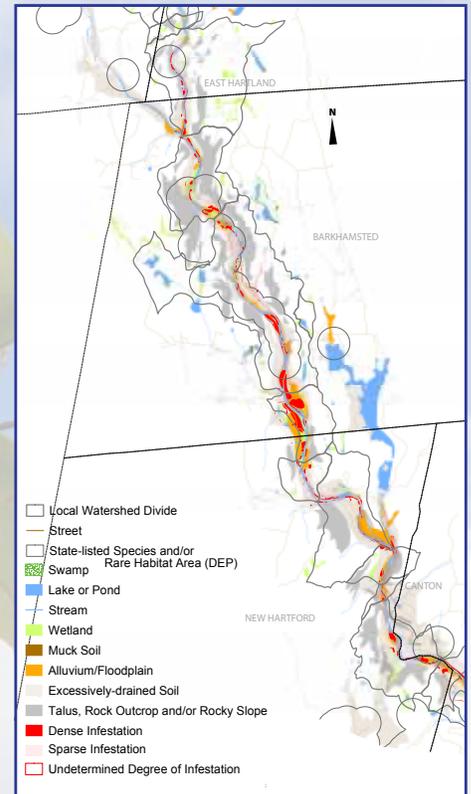
Areas surveyed included roadsides, river banks, shoreline, islands and

floodplains within immediate proximity to the river. Areas that were not deemed in imminent danger of invasion were saved until last, as time allowed.

Twenty site visits were made between April and November by Corrigan and Caisse. They collected data from more than 800 points during the course of the project. The unusually rainy conditions made it a daunting task.

The researchers identified thirty non-native invasive species. They made recommendations for action on the individual survey sites based on the number of species and the extent of the infestations, and identified high priority sites. You can view their complete report, along with links to Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group (CIPWG) and Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE) websites on our website: www.farmingtonriver.org

FRCC plans to begin implementing their recommendations in 2010. We will issue updates and let you know how you can help.



Screened in background: Japanese knotweed



Signs of Spring

By Nicki Hall

Skunk cabbage sprouts

Spring comes slowly to the Upper Farmington. Snow persists in the woods long after it has melted from the roadways and open fields. I watch the pile of snow next to my front door. It's a collection spot for snow shoveled off my front porch as well as part of the driveway. Right now it's only a foot or so high as we have had a lean snow year. But tomorrow a big storm is forecast. More shoveling and the pile will grow. I keep track of its melting. Last year, the last of it disappeared around April 4th. But it's been as late as the third week in April. Similarly, I check the ice on the local ponds. One April I went down to Howell's Pond in West Hartland on the opening day of the fishing season. The

crowds were there, but so was the ice, still thick and solid across much of the pond. Fishing spots were limited to just the perimeter where enough ice had melted for people to place their lines. No one seemed to mind and the festivities of the morning continued as spirited as ever.

I wait patiently for spring. By mid-February, I'm ready. Ready for the warmth of the sun. Ready to be outside all day. Ready to get into my garden. On my daily walks, I'm watching for those early signs of spring. They're there. You just have to look carefully. What I notice and feel first is the sun. By mid-February, it's casting a different shadow. Its rays feel warm on my face. On a sunny day, I can almost

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Canton's Wild and Scenic Assets

By Bill Roberts

Canton is home to the downstream limit of the Upper Farmington River Wild and Scenic (W&S) River designation. Despite being home to a large stretch of the river, only a small portion of the river is included in the W&S designation. In fact, the W&S designation stretches just barely over the New Hartford town line into Canton.

With a population just shy of 10,000 people, Canton is the largest of the five towns comprising the W&S area. It is the most developed of the five towns with a mix of commercial and industrial areas and suburban neighborhoods. Despite extensive development, Canton has managed to maintain considerable open space, with holdings by the Canton Land Trust, the MDC, Roaring Brook Nature Center, and the town composing the bulk of the open space lands. River access, bike trails and hiking trails provide ample outdoor opportunities. Small family farms also continue to operate in Canton, providing a steady supply of fresh and local produce.

Despite having only a small portion of the river designated Wild & Scenic, Canton and its residents have benefited greatly from being a part of the designation. The designation provided funding for a Trout in the Classroom project at Canton Intermediate School.

In 2009, Sophie Case of Canton was one two recipients of the FRCC's Keener and Johnson Scholarships. The designation also provided funding for a vernal pool study and survey in Canton. Most recently, FRCC awarded the Roaring Brook Nature Center \$10,000 towards the development of an educational display about the river, its wildlife, and its importance to our community. Funding continues to be available to the town, non-profit organizations, and other groups operating in Canton with a focus on environmental protection, open space, and environmental education, among other topics relating to the river and its watershed.

Canton may also see increased W&S benefits as the town sits at the upstream end of the proposed Lower Farmington River Wild

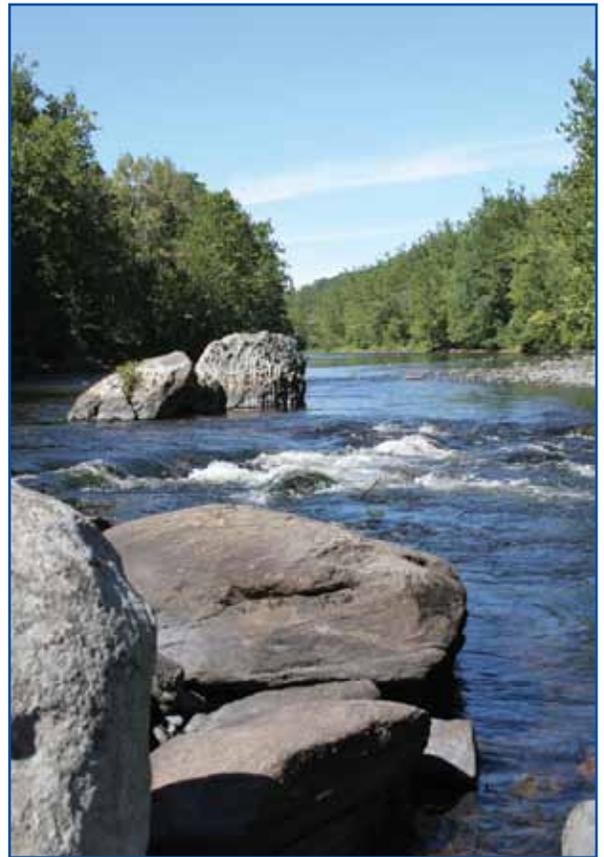


Photo by Fred Jones

Rooster Tail Rapids

and Scenic River designation, which, as currently proposed, would cover the river from downstream of Collinsville all the way to Windsor. Such a designation would likely bring additional federal technical and financial resources to help enhance and protect the river and Canton as a whole, including its open spaces, schools, and community organizations. Some studies have also shown that there is an economic benefit to communities that value their rivers and promote them as a recreational tourist destination.

Signs of Spring *Continued from page 1*

sit outside and eat lunch on a sheltered corner on my porch. The days are longer.

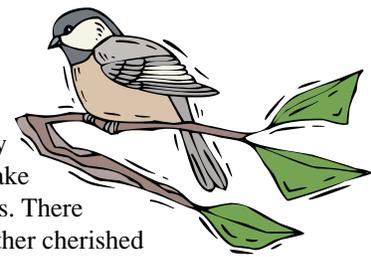
That shift in the sun stirs other changes. I go check the south side of my house and scrape away the lingering snow to see if any daffodils are pushing upwards. Amazingly, their pale green tips have broached the surface despite the still frozen ground. Similarly, in the swamps, the skunk cabbage has also begun to make its appearance.



Skunk cabbage is one of a very few thermogenic plants. Through a special respiration process, it can increase its surrounding ambient temperature by 15-35 degrees Celsius allowing it to melt its way through ice. This extra heat also helps to further disperse its "skunky" smell attracting pollinators to its sheath-protected flower. At my bird feeder, I hear the chickadees' song, that lyrical two note tune in place of their usual chick-a-dee chatter. These are just the first notes of the amazing dawn chorus that will follow in the months ahead, sounds

that make me throw open my windows to wake to the melodies. There are so many other cherished signs of spring. I could go on and on. Yippee for snowdrops, red-wing blackbirds, spring peepers.

I know I sometimes grumble about winter, but I can't imagine living in a place that didn't have the excitement of our slowly unfolding spring. And best yet as I write this article, it's all ahead.



The Farmington, a “Managed River” *by David Sinish*

The Farmington River has powered human industry and recreation since early Connecticut history. The Mills in Tariffville, the Collins Company, the factories in New Hartford, and the many grist and lumber mills are among the numerous beneficiaries. In our times the Farmington has been primarily a source of drinking water, water to drive the turbines in Windsor for the Farmington River Power Company and more recently to power the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) hydropower facilities at Colebrook and Goodwin Dam. But what legal agreements keep the water flowing and who determines what to store and what to release?

Representatives of the MDC, including Tim Anthony, an FRCC member, have been untangling that complicated question in several recent presentations. There are many agreements, some dating from well over one hundred years ago, among the MDC, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Farmington River Power Company, CT DEP and the Allied Connecticut Towns.

The MDC constructed the Goodwin Dam as a potential future water supply, and for regulation of the natural flow and storage. The Army Corps is concerned about flood control and built the Dam at Colebrook after the devastating flood of 1955. There is now water stored at both facilities in support of the regulations and agreements and to augment natural dry summer flows, for fisheries and natural habitat. Yet, there is not too much water

stored in event of high snowmelt and rainfall that should be contained in a flood control structure. The MDC uses the West Branch regulated releases for hydropower; the East Branch as a public water supply source, recreation at Lake McDonough

and protects the watershed lands. The Farmington River Power company has a call on 21.7 billion gallons of water a year to produce electricity at Rainbow Reservoir in Windsor. The DEP is

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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Jean Miller – FRCC’s Barkhamsted Representative

Living, caring, and sharing – Jean Miller shows us how it’s done. Jean, the long-time representative of Barkhamsted on the FRCC, has been a strong advocate for the people and natural resources of the area.

While being active in many outdoor activities, Jean has a particular fondness for water – both liquid and frozen. Growing up in New York, she and her family boated off of Long Island. Jean was a lifeguard and later taught canoeing at a Girl Scout camp.

She moved to Barkhamsted in 1977 and raised her two sons, Patrick (PJ) and Thomas, with her husband George. Over the years she has done some amazing things – kayaking in Ecuador,



climbing the White Mountain 4,000-footers, Mount Rainier, and Mount Kilimanjaro.

Sharing her knowledge of nature with others has continued to this day. Jean teaches kayaking and skiing locally, and is a Pinkham Notch information volunteer for the Appalachian Mountain Club. And that’s the small stuff. Jean has been a teacher at Simsbury High

School for the past 25 years, teaching Chemistry, Earth Science, and Math. Her students have learned the importance of water quality and some have even canoed to look at a sewage treatment plant.

The FRCC is fortunate to have Jean’s input on the many topics where she can share her firsthand knowledge.

Who is FRCC?

The Farmington River Coordinating Committee was established when fourteen miles of the upper Farmington River were designated as a National Wild & Scenic River on August 26, 1994. The FRCC comprises representatives from each of the five towns adjacent to the Farmington River and from groups noted below. The FRCC embodies an important partnership among the riverfront towns and others to provide stewardship of the Farmington River and its upper watershed. Visit us at www.FarmingtonRiver.org. Current representatives are:

- Barkhamsted** – Jean Miller; Mario Santoro, alt.
- Canton** – Bill Roberts; Cherie Robinson, alt.
- Colebrook** – Tom Stanton; Edna Travis, alt.
- Hartland** – Fred Jones; Nicki Hall and Sam Slater, alts.
- New Hartford** – Alison Murdock; Mark Lindquist, alt.
- CT DEP** – Susan Peterson; Maryann Nusom Haverstock, alt.
- Farmington River Anglers Association** – Rich Strolis; Tom Karpeichik, alt.
- Farmington River Watershed Association** – David Sinish; Eileen Fielding, alt.
- Metropolitan District Commission** – Tim Anthony; Carol Youell, alt.
- National Park Service** – Jamie Fosburgh; Liz Lacy, alt.





Farmington River Coordinating Committee
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www.farmingtonriver.org

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concerned about flows to support fish and natural habitats. The Allied Connecticut Towns have established minimum flows.

In 1981 the MDC wanted to continue their plans to construct a tunnel between the West Branch and East Branch in order to expand their water service potential. The Farmington River Watershed Association caught wind of these plans and asked difficult questions about what would happen to the resource if this water was moved. The referendum for funding this project, voted on by residents in MDC member towns, was defeated.

Out of the desire to protect the flow in the West Branch, at the Federal level, the notion of a Wild and Scenic River was hatched. After more than ten years of study (the Farmington holds the honor of being the most studied river), testimony, education, meetings and compromise the Bill for Designation was signed on August 26, 1994.

The Farmington River of today is very much a managed and controlled river.



Spillway at Hogback Reservoir

The Farmington River Coordinating Committee was established to implement the legislated “Upper Farmington Management Plan,” recognizing the values of the existing regulations and agreements.

We all benefit from this cooperative and open management. In its absence

the river could not support the many and sometimes conflicting uses for drinking water, the clean energy of hydropower, recreation and the protection and enhancement of wildlife habitat. No longer are there stories of being able to walk across the Farmington with dry feet in the low flows of summer.

Photo by Fred Jones