

FARMINGTON RIVER NEWS

SPRING 2026

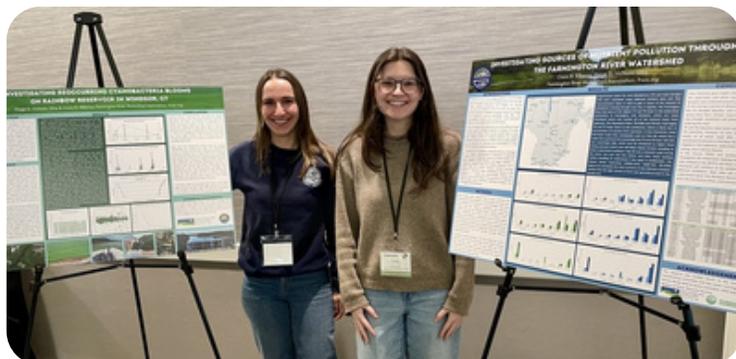


SPRINGING INTO THE NEW YEAR

EVENTS, RESEARCH FINDINGS, AND NEW PROJECTS TO KICK OFF 2026

It's March already, which means spring is just around the corner, and so is our Wild & Scenic Film Festival! This year, the festival will be on Friday, March 20th, at Miss Porter's School in Farmington, CT. We are so glad to be back on the Miss Porter's Campus after the removal of the Grist Mill (Winchell-Smith) Dam in September 2025. The Farmington River is now more free-flowing than ever! Turn to page 2 or visit frwa.org to buy tickets and learn more!

FRWA staff have been busy in the early days of 2026! Several staff members attended the NEIWPCCC Northeast Aquatic Biologists conference in February, where Paige Vichiola-Silva and Ciara Kilkenny presented posters on nutrient and cyanobacteria research. Several 2025 research reports have been published on our website (see page 6 for details and a link to our reports). FRWA Land Stewardship Coordinator Kaitlin Cole is now full-time, once again setting an FRWA record for staff time, so welcome Kaitlin! Also, stay tuned for our biggest-ever planting project with the City of Bristol to be implemented at Veteran's Memorial Park this May (learn more about this project on page 5).



Paige and Ciara displayed posters detailing nutrient and cyanobacteria research at the NEIWPCCC NAB conference

We are pleased to report that Save the Sound, along with FRWA and American Rivers, has filed a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) request for a jurisdictional determination at the Rainbow Dam. This is an important step toward getting a regulated Rainbow Dam. The public comment period flew by quickly, but we are pleased to report that several agency groups submitted requests for intervention in the process, including the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) and the US Department of Commerce. To read more, please visit FRWA's website at frwa.org/#News-events to learn more about FRWA's advocacy work on Rainbow Dam.

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WILD & SCENIC[®] FILM FESTIVAL

WHERE ACTIVISM GETS INSPIRED



A BENEFIT FOR FRWA

Friday, March 20, 2026

7:00–9:00 PM (Doors open at 6:30 PM)

Miss Porter's School – Hacker Theater

77 Garden Street, Farmington, CT

TICKETS

\$25 In-Person

\$10 Virtual Video-on-Demand



Visit frwa.org/news-events/wsff for information about the films, sponsors, raffle items, and more!



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Ciara Kilkenny

LAND STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR
Kaitlin Cole

SPRING EVENTS

Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association Annual Conference

Thursday, March 26, 2026 | 8:30am - 4pm

Indian Rock Nature Preserve, 501 Wolcott Road, Bristol, CT

The COEEA Conference brings opportunities to share with, learn from, and water the seeds of inspiration with outdoor and environmental education leaders and nature enthusiasts from across the state. This year's theme is "Reconnect & Re-imagine: Building Sustainable Communities and Solutions." FRWA staff will present a workshop at this conference about RiverSmart.org and our green infrastructure installations in Bristol. Scan or visit coeea.org/annual-conference to register.



Scan to register for the COEEA conference!

Farmington River Quilt Showings

American Quilter's Society QuiltWeek New England | April 8-11, 2026

Connecticut Convention Center, 100 Columbus Boulevard, Hartford, CT

Learn more and buy tickets at americanquilter.com/quiltweek/show/new-england-2026/

Simsbury Public Library | May 1-30, 2026

View the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook quilt in the Tariffville Room at the library this May.



Volunteers Needed for Invasive Water Chestnut Pulls

Friday, May 29 and Saturday, May 30 | 10am-12pm

Barber Pond, 107 Old Windsor Road, Bloomfield, CT

Help us remove Invasive Water Chestnuts before the Barber Pond dam comes down! Boats and PFDs supplied. Visit frwa.org/news-events in April for details.



EARTH WEEK EVENTS

Farmington River Anglers Association Earth Day Cleanup

Saturday, April 25, 2026 | 9am - 1pm

37 Greenwoods Road, New Hartford, CT

Registration information and details can be found at fraa.club



Natural Lawn Care Workshop

Saturday, April 25, 2026 | 1:30pm - 3pm

Winding Trails Nature's Porch, 50 Winding Trails Drive, Farmington, CT

FRWA Executive Director Aimee Petras will present this program that covers how to manage your lawn without chemical fertilizers and pesticides. We will outline the steps you need to take, including mowing techniques to manage weeds. Additionally, we will delve into common lawn problems such as grubs and thatch.

Learn more and register on the Winding Trails website: windingtrails.org/register?id=1823



Register today!



11th Annual Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival

Sunday, April 26, 2026 | 12:30pm - 5pm

Matthias Grove, People's State Forest, 106 East River Road, Barkhamsted, CT

Meet specialists in all things Nature, construct birdhouses and carve hiking sticks, Master Wildlife Conservationists will teach you about various animals in our forests, Master Gardeners will give you tips on gardening and caring for your yard naturally, and Christine's Critters will return with its Birds of Prey show.

Free food and fun. Open to all; no registration required.



STREAM SMART TRAINING WORKSHOPS

Education and capacity-building for municipal staff, officials, and roadway managers

Stream Smart is a training program and resource for anyone interested in planning, designing, or constructing road-stream crossings. First launched in 2011 through Maine Audubon, Stream Smart has been implemented in many states across the Northeast. The goal of Stream Smart is to connect fish and wildlife habitat while protecting roads and public safety, and to prepare for the large and frequent storm events that have been washing out roads throughout the Northeast. These full-day trainings will consist of lectures, a stream-table demonstration of how Stream Smart crossings work, and an optional field site visit to look at example crossings.



Stream Smart Workshop Topics Include:

- The value of Stream Smart crossings
- How to fund and construct a Stream Smart crossing
- How local regulations work with Stream Smart crossings

UPCOMING STREAM CROSSING TRAININGS

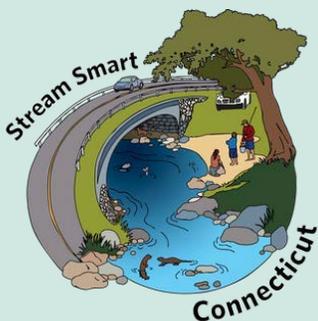


Stream Smart Berkshires

Hosted by the Berkshire Clean, Cold, and Connected Restoration Partnership

Wednesday, March 25, 2026 | 9am-4pm
Berkshire Community College Science Commons
1350 West Street, Pittsfield, MA

Space is limited! If you are interested in attending Stream Smart Berkshires, or if you would like to stay in the loop about upcoming trainings in MA, please email hgeist@frwa.org.



Stream Smart Connecticut

Hosted by the Long Island Sound River Restoration Network

Wednesday, May 27, 2026 | 9am-4pm
Earthplace
10 Woodside Lane, Westport, CT

Wednesday, June 17, 2026 | 9am-4pm
& Roaring Brook Nature Center
70 Gracey Road, Canton, CT

Stream Smart Connecticut registration opens soon. Check frwa.org for details

Stream Crossing Assessment Trainings

FRWA will be hosting field training sessions for Non-Tidal Aquatic Connectivity assessments per the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative protocol (NAACC). These training days will be scheduled in Spring and Summer 2026 and can be used to satisfy the field training or shadowing requirement for Lead Observer certification. If you are a NAACC L1 or L2 coordinator that is training Lead Observers this year, email hgeist@frwa.org to coordinate a training.

2026 LAND STEWARDSHIP GOALS

This Spring, we are working with the City of Bristol, CT, to install a 13,500 square foot buffer project along Veteran’s Memorial Boulevard! The buffer will be designed to deter geese from inhabiting the area without spoiling the view or blocking fishing access to the ponds. We’ll also be maintaining and enhancing our bioswales at Edgewood School in Bristol and at the boat launch at Highland Lake in Winsted, CT, and we’ll be expanding our gardens and buffers around Shaw Pond in Becket, MA. In addition, we look forward to scheduling several invasive plant removal workdays throughout our watershed with Farmington Valley land trusts and partner organizations.

We will be seeking volunteers to help us plant, prune, and water our gardens this year, and we’ll also need lots of help with invasive removals. If you are looking for stewardship events or volunteer opportunities, scan the codes below to sign up for the FRWA email list and view our Land Trust Stewardship Calendar !

**FRWA
EMAIL
LIST**



mailchi.mp/frwa/sign-up



**LAND TRUST
STEWARDSHIP
CALENDAR**



frwa.org/stewardship



Monarch caterpillars feed on butterfly milkweed at the Edgewood School bioswale in Bristol, CT.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT Sustainable CT

Sustainable CT aims to foster inclusive, resilient, and vibrant Connecticut municipalities that provide opportunities for all to thrive by: providing a menu of sustainability actions that build local economies, supporting equity and respecting the finite capacity of the environment; offering technical assistance to help advance sustainability initiatives; and recognizing and certifying municipalities for their achievements. Sustainable CT actions are designed with flexibility to meet the varying needs of all municipalities. Each action description includes action steps, certification points, and resources.

All Sustainable CT certified municipalities are eligible to access the Community Match Fund, which matches dollar for dollar up to \$6,000 for a total of \$12,000 for projects that align with the Sustainable CT action roadmap. The Environmental Fund supports projects that relate to environmental sustainability and/or address climate change.



FRWA teamed up with Sustainable CT in July 2025 to pull invasive water chestnuts on Barber Pond

Scan the code or visit sustainablect.org to learn more!



FRWA Can Provide Action Assistance for...

- Watershed education, protection, and restoration
- Watershed-based plan development
- Responsible water usage education
- Low-impact development implementation
- Drought and municipal water use management
- Woodlands and urban forest management
- Pollinator pathways enhancements
- Open space plan development
- Sustainable snow management education
- Invasive species education and management
- Natural resource and wildlife inventories
- ...And more!

Sustainable CT Certified Municipalities in the Farmington River Watershed

Avon	Harwinton
Bloomfield	Norfolk
Burlington	Plainville
Colebrook	Simsbury
Farmington	Windsor Locks



Barkhamsted
Granby
Suffield
Torrington
Winchester
Windsor







2026 RESEARCH GOALS

Many of our research and monitoring programs occur annually, but special research projects allow us to gather more information on certain locations or specific issues. In previous years, we completed special research projects on conductivity and chloride, cyanobacteria blooms in Rainbow Reservoir, a Cherry Brook investigation into sources of pollution, a watershed nutrient study in relation to cyanobacteria blooms, and an investigation into water level and flow for Rainbow Reservoir and downstream Rainbow Dam.

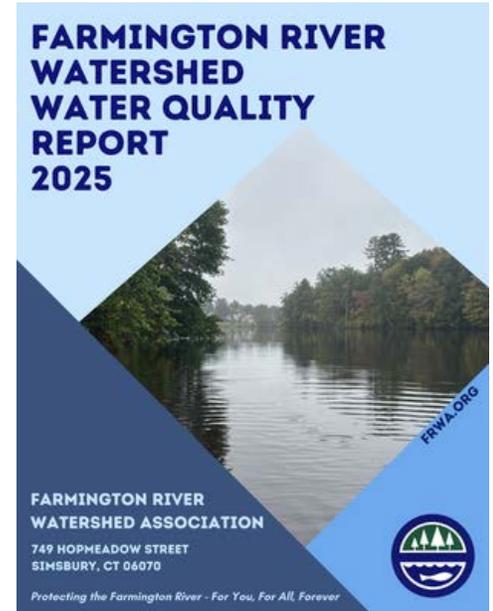


For 2026, FRWA aims to complete three research projects and initiate the process for a Watershed-Based Plan. We're aiming for another season of nutrient monitoring with a focus on tributary input into the Farmington River, to continue monitoring water level and flow in Rainbow Reservoir and downstream Rainbow Dam with the addition of an upstream location, and to start collecting data for and organizing a Watershed-Based Plan for the Mad and Still Rivers. Additionally, we will be piloting the use of eDNA to determine whether trout are present at a high-priority culvert replacement location, which could lead to further eDNA sampling at other locations in the future.

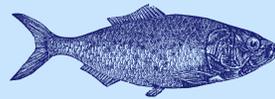
Several FRWA 2025 Research Reports Now Available!

- *2025 Cyanobacteria Report Summary*
- *2025 Farmington River Watershed Nutrient Report*
- *2025 Farmington River Watershed Water Quality Report*

All reports can be found on our website at frwa.org/resources



CREATURE FEATURE



AMERICAN SHAD, *Alosa sapidissima*

The American Shad is a large river herring with an iconic history. It's the State Fish of Connecticut, and has earned the nickname "poor man's salmon" for its propensity to put up a good fight on a fishing line. Like other anadromous fish, American shad spend their adult lives at sea and usually return to the river of their birth to spawn. Shad will swim farther upstream than any other herring to lay their roe, and they can be found in waters along the Atlantic Coast from New Brunswick to central Florida. Spring runs of shad occur in all major CT rivers, with the largest run occurring on the Connecticut River. The shad also has a significant impact on the cultural landscape of the Farmington River. The Farmington River once served as spawning grounds for shad, and every year the town of Windsor celebrates shad with a Shad Derby on the town green. Originally a fishing contest, Shad Derby has expanded in recent years to a weeks-long community festival.

American shad have historically supported some of the largest fisheries on the east coast, with commercial fisheries bringing in 50 million pounds of shad per year in the early 1900's. Several Connecticut rivers hosted commercial fisheries, but many of these collapsed due to the construction of dams that blocked upstream passage. The Connecticut River hosts the only remaining commercial shad fishery in CT. Although the Connecticut River run is at a fraction of its historical levels, it has recovered considerably during the past 50 years and is currently one of the largest runs on the East Coast.

The Farmington River once served as spawning grounds for shad, and it is the State's highest priority system for restoring self-sustaining populations of American Shad. American shad once used the Rainbow Dam fishway to enter the reservoir and spawn. However, Fisheries staff at CT DEEP determined the fishway ineffective because the most motivated spawners were encouraged to enter the fishway, and they often died or became injured before reaching the top of the fishway. Passage counts for American Shad never came close to the numbers that are capable of moving through the Farmington River, and the Rainbow Dam fishway operation was closed in 2023.

ADVOCACY CORNER

CLEAN WATER ACTION FOR CONNECTICUT RESIDENTS

Right now, the Connecticut General Assembly is in session reviewing an extensive list of proposed bills for the State that could affect our freshwater resources. These bills will be open for public comment soon, and they will have public hearings scheduled during this session. Some of the bills up for review include acts that cover topics such as:

- An Act Concerning Riparian Areas
- An Act Concerning Pesticide Reporting Modernization
- The Metropolitan District of Hartford County
- Fish Passages & Fishways
- The Sewage Right-To-Know Act
- A Rapid Response Program for Invasive Aquatic Species
- Requiring Municipalities to Report Wastewater Capacity



Scan for Action Alerts from the Rivers Alliance of Connecticut



Learn more about these bills and submit comments at riversalliance.org/priorities-actions/action-alerts/.

CLEAN WATER ACTION FOR MASSACHUSETTS RESIDENTS

Governor Healey recently released a FY27 budget proposal that includes cuts to multiple state agencies that support healthy rivers and clean water across the state, including the Department of Environmental Protection and the Division of Ecological Restoration. You can support clean water protections by contacting your State Representative and State Senator and asking them to preserve funding to these organizations. Visit massriversalliance.org/advocacy today to find your legislator and tell them why water quality deserves to be protected.

SUPPORT FRWA TODAY!

JOIN OUR
EMAIL LIST



mailchi.mp/frwa/sign-up

DONATE TO
OUR
PROGRAMS



frwa.org/donations page

FRWA
Saltiest Streams

CONTEST WINNERS

FRWA held a contest this winter for those who participated in the Izaak Walton League of America's Salt Watch program which allows volunteers to collect chloride data using test strips.

Thanks to all our volunteers **92** samples were taken - a record for our Salt Watch volunteers!

The winner of the raffle for those who completed a Salt Watch kit is **Eric G!**

The winner who found the Saltiest Stream is **Anna C!**

Congratulations to our winners on their prize packages, including tickets to our Wild & Scenic Film Fest!

Prefer to mail your gift? Just send this slip to FRWA in the enclosed envelope.

Name: _____

Email: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone number: _____

Amount: \$50 \$75 \$100 \$125

\$150 Other amount \$_____

I enclosed my check payable to FRWA **OR**

Charge my: Mastercard Visa
Discover AMEX

Card #: _____

Expires: _____ CVV: _____

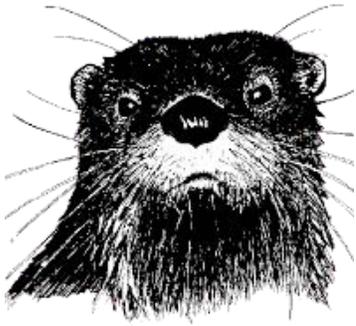
Amount: \$_____

Name on Card: _____

Signature: _____



The Farmington River Watershed Association
749 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, CT 06070



Protecting the Farmington River - For You, For All, Forever

FRWA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and protection of the Farmington River and its Watershed through research, education, stewardship, and advocacy

SPRING 2026 EVENTS

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| MARCH 20 | FRWA Wild & Scenic Film Festival |
| MARCH 25 | Stream Smart Berkshires Training Workshop |
| MARCH 26 | Connecticut Outdoor & Environmental Education Association Conference |
| APRIL 1-8 | Farmington River Quilt Display at QuiltWeek New England |
| APRIL 25 | FRAA Earth Day Cleanup |
| APRIL 26 | Barkhamsted Earth Day Nature Festival |
| MAY 1-30 | Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Quilt Display |
| MAY 27 | Stream Smart Connecticut Training Workshop |
| MAY 29 & 30 | FRWA Invasive Water Chestnut Pulls |
| JUNE 17 | Stream Smart Connecticut Training Workshop |

Look inside for details about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and more!

FOLLOW US  @frwa_org  Farmington River Watershed Association

If you would like to go paperless and receive our newsletter by email only, send a message to hgeist@frwa.org
Learn more about our work and upcoming events on frwa.org.

No generative AI was used in the writing of this newsletter.