



# Winter Newsletter

Save the River-Save the Hills, Inc., is dedicated to preserving the health of the Niantic River Estuary, its watershed and the natural beauty of the Oswegatchie Hills.

[www.SavetheRiverSavetheHills.org](http://www.SavetheRiverSavetheHills.org)

## A Message from our Founder & President

Thank you all for your continued support! Your financial donations, volunteer hours and ongoing attention to saving the river and the surrounding hills is what keeps this organization capable of doing all we are doing. Here's an overview of what you have enabled us to do this past year:

- 1) Pumpout Program—we finished 16 summers of pumpout service on the Niantic River pumping 13,025 gallons of holding tank contents into town sewers so it can be treated. It should be noted that this sewage is 8 to 10 times more concentrated than municipal sewage. We also dealt with many problems with the new pumpout boat which finally seems to be working well.
- 2) #SmartSolar—see page 3 for news of our latest crusade. Deb Moshier-Dunn, Don Danila and Steve Trinkaus, PE, are doing a great job of working with the CT Siting Council & DEEP to prevent runoff pollution from this proposed project in Waterford from fouling the Niantic River.
- 3) 5 Year Plan—the STR-STH board is working on a long term program to address the problems within the Niantic River Watershed. Runoff from the watershed is the main source of pollution for the river and the Long Island Sound from this area. We must focus on the whole Watershed if we are to combat the polluted runoff problem.
- 4) Stay tuned for updates on the ongoing battle to save the Oswegatchie Hills. We may need you to show up to new hearings or otherwise show your continued support for preserving the waterfront acres of the Hills. A great way to stay up-to-date is to send in your email when you renew your membership. Our new email list will only be used to alert you to important updates and calls to action.

Yours in Saving the River and the Hills, *Fred Grimsey*



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Join us at Earth Day 2019 on May 4th 10am-4pm, McCooks Park in Niantic



Looking forward to warmer days, getting our pumpout boat in the water and enjoying the Kayak Regatta!

## Upcoming Events:

- ☺ Earth Day 2019! May 4, 10am-4pm @ McCook Park –Stop by STR-STH Display!
- ☺ STR-STH Annual Meeting Cinco de Mayo @ Perennial Harmony! May 5, late afternoon—stay tuned for details
- ☺ STR-STH 16th Annual Kayak Regatta - August 17, 10am-2pm



“LIKE” our Facebook page or go out to our website at [SavetheRiverSavetheHills.org](http://SavetheRiverSavetheHills.org) and click the Facebook icon on right side of the Home page to stay up-to-date on what’s going on. (You don’t have to have a Facebook account to see our Facebook page!)



## Our New Spring Raffle!

Roll Up Inflatable Boat with brand new Yamaha 2.5 hp, four-stroke motor.

Donated by Boats Inc. in Niantic

Watch our website, mail, Facebook page and emails for places and dates to purchase your tickets!

## Legal Defense Fund – Help Us Save Oswegatchie Hills!

CT Fund for the Environment (CFE) continues to represent us in ongoing legal battles to protect and preserve the remaining 236 acres of undeveloped, unprotected Oswegatchie Hills adjoining the existing Nature Preserve. Here's the latest:

**Zoning Appeal to Superior Court**—Although the judge decided against our argument to dismiss Landmark's Appeal of the zoning decision on the 840 unit application for zoning change, there has been discussion about the merits of the dismissal argument—namely that the Appeal is based on a conceptual design or “lines on paper” as Landmark's attorney called it. The judge has been having phone meetings with the lawyers for all parties involved. We will keep you posted on where the judge ends up on this Appeal.

**Please remember our Legal Defense Fund when you send in your membership renewal this year!** Each of these phone calls, briefs that need to be researched and written, etc., creates legal fees. We would LOVE to be spending all of our donations on water quality testing or education programs, but the reality is that environmental defenses are decided in courts.



## Watershed Education

The education work we are doing with students in High Schools within the Niantic River Watershed is ongoing. We have achieved about 75% of the program and anticipate completing our final workshops in the Spring.

## Thank You to Dec. Fundraiser Donors and Sponsors!

Three Belles Outfitters & Marina	Boats Inc., Niantic CT	Flanders Fish Market & Restaurant	Water Color Salon
Eileen & Ken O'Pasek	Fred & Cordette Grimsey	Dominion Foundation	Café Sol
Lynn Schlachter	Liz Caruso	Garde Arts Center	Smith's Acres
Mike Dunn & Deb Moshier-Dunn	Joann Moore	Pequot Golf Club	Dave Robinson
Alcamo Family	Florence Griswold Museum	Artisan Framing & Gallery	Holly Cheesman
Robert & PJ Brewer	Connecticut River Museum	Saybrook Point Inn	When Pigs Fly
Denis & Joann Dixon	Arthur Murray Dance Studio	Leona Wasniewski	Kur Recovery Spa
Marilyn Lohrs	Lyme Shores Tennis & Fitness	Paw Print Pantry LLC	Saltwater Shaman
Kathryn & Ted Jablkowski	Denali Old Saybrook	Niantic Acupuncture & Wellness	Lani Nail & Spa
Bruce Kolowsky	RiverQuest	(Maggie Barili, Carlos Sepulveda & Stephanie Roers)	Illiano's Grill East Lyme
Kathleen Pavelcak	Hammond Iles Wealth Advisors	Filomena's Restaurant	Himalaya Restaurant
Daniel Sullivan	Divine Wine Emporium	That Look Salon	Book Barn Niantic
Durien & Nancy Way	Sound Marine LLC	The Parcel Centre	East Lyme Pizza
Niantic Plumbing & Appl. Co.	Eastern Connecticut Orchestra	Children's Museum of SECT	Wild Birds Unlimited
Maritime Education Network	Bay Styles	Village Wines	The Shack
Liz Paganetti	Patti Clancy Art	Heidi's VT Christmas Trees	Ivy's Simply Homemade
ABC Gymnastics	Perennial Harmony	Past To Present Antiques	String Theory
APC Driving School	Kathleen McCarty	Mark Spery	Annette Montoya
Boathouse Blues Band	Kris Lambert	Pat Sea	Anytime Fitness
Petie Reed & Rich Oliver	Stephanie Hughes	Suzanne Thompson	Paul Formica
Niantic Nail Salon	Shannon Aiello	BJ's and Walmart	Lyme Shores Tennis & Fitness
Joan and Rob Walworth			

# #SmartSolar Update—A Win for the Environment!

It was a busy Fall for the #SmartSolar team of STR-STH! We first want to say that STR-STH is very much in support of solar energy— just not at the expense of water quality in our watershed. The following is an overview of our intervention in a ill-conceived solar installation and the unexpected, very positive environmental outcome:

Early August Don Danila of the Niantic River Watershed Committee notified STR-STH that a Petition by Greenskies, LLC, a local solar company, for a proposed 55,000 solar panel array was already in the final days of public comment time. Deb Moshier-Dunn quickly checked with the STR-STH Board and hired Steve Trinkaus, a Professional Engineer with a degree in forestry and expertise in Low Impact Development, to review the developer's plans. She also contacted the CT Siting Council (CSC)—the governing body that reviews Petitions for electric generating and storage as well as other facilities. According to their website homepage, "The Council is responsible for balancing the need for adequate and reliable public utility services at the lowest reasonable cost to consumers with the need to protect the environment and ecology of the state." The Petition was for a Declaratory Ruling (that there would be no adverse impact on the environment) for a 16.5 megawatt solar installation in an area currently covered by a core forest. A check of the CT law passed in 2017 to prevent solar installations from being built on core forest land found it did not apply to this particular Petition. So we went to work!

On the last possible day of the very tight CSC timeline for this Petition, we submitted our comments with a request to become intervenors on behalf of the Niantic River Watershed. Our request was granted by the Council and we were invited to enter the process of "Interrogatories" with Greenskies. As interacting with the CSC was totally new to STR-STH, we also contracted attorney Bruce McDermott of Murtha & Cullina to represent us in our new capacity as an intervenor with the CSC. After reviewing the documents submitted by the developer, our team created a list of environmentally focused questions that we submitted to the CSC for the developer to answer. In turn, Greenskies was allowed to create a list of questions for us that we would have to answer. The questions were all due on September 21, the answers on Oct 12. The CSC would make its decision on October 25. Our questions focused mostly on the water quality issues caused by taking down a forest and replacing it with 55,000 solar panels. This same company had created a smaller solar installation in East Lyme on another tributary to the Niantic River and the stormwater plans had failed miserably causing so much damage that they are currently dealing with a lawsuit from a downstream property owner. Upon reviewing their plans, we noted they had not learned at all from their mistakes and their stormwater management plans for Waterford—a site 3 times larger and between TWO tributaries to the Niantic River a mere 4,000 feet from the river itself— were wholly inadequate. Steve dove deep into the engineering issues and Don focused on the effects the stormwater runoff would have to the two streams. Deb was focused on the process, timelines and managing the flow of information to the attorneys who were reviewing it and getting it into the proper format to be submitted to the CSC.

Meanwhile, Greenskies was bought by the national solar company Clean Focus and its executives reached out to us. We met with the CEO and a local manager at Fred's house in September and then with the project manager and his team a few days before the CSC Oct 25th decision. They seemed genuinely concerned about the water quality issues we raised. We offered to work with them to make the stormwater plan acceptable if the CSC approved their Petition, which was the expected outcome based on other similar solar Petition decisions.

Don and Deb went to the CSC decision meeting to see our government at work. We were impressed with the quality of the discussion. We were genuinely surprised as the discussion went towards a denial based on some of the issues that we brought up in our interrogatory questions. We were shocked and pleased when the decision was made to "deny without prejudice" which means that the developer can come back under the same Petition if they fix what the CSC put in the denial letter. We walked away amazed. The attorney for Greenskies walked away angry.

The denial letter came from the CSC with only one request—that the petitioner do a wildlife study of the property. It seemed odd given the amount of discussion that the council members had about water quality and the lack of geotechnical testing done by the petitioner. The attorney for Greenskies submitted a Request for Reconsideration. That allowed us to respond. With the use of Don's detailed notes from the CSC discussion and Steve's in-depth knowledge of forests and engineering, our team laid out ALL the reasons that taking down a core forest to put up a solar array on a granite hillside between 2 trout streams was a bad idea. Our response was followed by a similar letter from DEEP supporting our arguments and adding some of their own. The CSC met on December 6th—the day before our annual fundraiser— and once again denied it without prejudice. It remains an open question if the solar company will continue to try to build there. We will stay vigilant!

If you are interested in the documentation for this Petition, search online for **CT Siting Council Petition 1347**.  
*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world..." - Margaret Mead*

Save the River – Save the Hills, Inc. is a non-profit 501(c)(3) grassroots environmental organization based on the Niantic River Estuary in Waterford & East Lyme. We are dedicated to abating and preventing pollution of the river, its Watershed and advocating for the preservation of Oswegatchie Hills.

To donate or become a member, clip and mail the form below, or call Eileen O’Pasek @ 860-439-1687

**Volunteer Opportunities:**

- ☺ Help with our events (STR-STH Annual Meeting or STR-STH Kayak Regatta!)
- ☺ Help get the Pumpout boat in the water in Spring
- ☺ Help with the Education Program — call Deb 444-9247 to borrow the Enviroscape
- ☺ Help with our mailings—stuffing & stamping

Join us in any way you feel comfortable and take action to Save the River and the Hills!

**Membership News**

Happy & Healthy New Year to you and yours! Please renew your membership. Always remember our members are the backbone of this organization. Please add your email printed clearly on the below form so we can send you time sensitive & important updates. The battle for the Hills is ongoing!

Thank you to all who attended, donated or sponsored our annual fundraiser in December! Thank you for being willing to try something new with us. We like to try to make the fundraiser fresh & fun each year. Let us know what you thought of the changes—we are open to feedback and new ideas!

We would also like to remind members to consider their Corporate Matching Programs which would be used to help support the Save the River–Save the Hills mission. Thank you all for your Generous Support!

Sincerely, *Eileen O’Pasek*, Membership and Fundraising Chair

**Membership & Other Contributions:**

New     Renewal

Basic Family \$20

River Keeper \$50

River Saver \$100

River Protector \$250

River Neptune \$500

River Champion \$1000+

Matching Member \_\_\_\_\_ Company \_\_\_\_\_

All members receive our quarterly newsletters.

Note: first \$20.00 of any membership category goes to the general fund and is used as required for all programs.

Additional amounts may be directed as below:

Water Quality (testing, education, pumpout programs)

Legal Defense Fund (including #SmartSolar initiative)

**Please make checks payable to:**

**Save the River-Save the Hills, Inc.**

**P.O. Box 505**

**Waterford, CT 06385**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**

(email will be used for Action Alerts for STR-STH issues)

**Referred by:**