



Conservation Group Hires New Coordinator

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By Suzanne Thompson

The Eastern Connecticut Conservation District (ECCD) has hired Sarah Lamagna as a natural resources specialist and Niantic River Watershed coordinator.

Portions of East Lyme, Montville, Salem, and Waterford are in the 20,000-acre watershed.

The ECCD is a local nonprofit organization dedicated to helping the towns and citizens of Eastern Connecticut with their conservation needs. It is one of five soil and water conservation services for the state, each organized by watershed. The ECCD service area, covering Windham and New London counties and part of Tolland County, encompasses 36 municipalities.

The Niantic River Watershed Protection Plan, called for by the federal Clean Water Act, is funded in part by the Department of Environmental Protection and prepared by the ECCD. Its objective is to bring together elected leaders of the towns with sources of technical support and information to collectively address water issues. The management plan outlines goals, as well as steps each of the communities are doing or will take to improve water quality.

Volunteers from the four communities and the region serve on the Niantic River Watershed Working Group. Current priorities are monitoring of data to determine water quality trends and developing public outreach and education programs. The working group, which meets monthly, usually on the second Tuesday from 4 to 6 p.m. at the Waterford Town Hall, welcomes public participation.

This is one of several grant-funded conservation plans and activities that Lamagna will be working on with communities and individuals. Others include retrofitting of storm-water filter systems in the Gold Spur area of East Lyme, tracking surveys at Baker Cove in Groton, and a water quality improvement plan for Spaulding Pond in Norwich. As a member of the steering committee for Connecticut Envirothon, a high-school-level, natural-resource-based education program that promotes environmental awareness,

knowledge, and stewardship through education and team competition, she hopes to increase local participation in the program. The top school team from each state gets to compete in a national competition each summer.

"Soils are my passion," said Lamagna, who grew up in this region. She completed her undergraduate degree in forest management at the State University of New York. Volunteer work in Ireland for the Ireland Geographical Society, studying the impact of livestock grazing on soil quality, led to her master's thesis. She earned her MS in soil science for the University of British Columbia, conducting grazing studies there. Lamagna replaces Pat Young, who was hired as Eightmile Wild & Scenic Study coordinator. Lamagna rounds out an office of three technical professionals: Scott Gravatt, executive director, Jean Pillo, watershed conservation coordinator, and Kate Johnson, administrator. She is based in the ECCD Norwich office. Contact her at Sarah.Lamagna@ConserveCT.org, or 860-877-4163, ext. 401.