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Autumn 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



Save Oswegatchie Hills Update—a Legal Victory

We are pleased to finally update you on the long-awaited decision by CT Superior Court/Land Court Judge Marshall Berger on our 2015 case against Landmark Development, LLC.

On October 22, Judge Berger rejected the developer's challenge to East Lyme Zoning Commission's decision to re-zone only 36 out of a requested 126 acres and to require the developer to provide all of the environmental information the Commission was requesting before seeking a final decision. The developer was ordered to supply the necessary environmental and other information for the commission to adequately consider a final site plan and rezoning as our three organizations, the Friends of OHNP, Save the River-Save the Hills, and Save the Sound, had requested.

Save the Sound has provided legal representation to all three organization since 2015. The three organizations issued a joint news release on October 25, expressed our pleasure with the outcome. (<https://www.savethesound.org/2021/10/25/press-release-legal-victory-for-oswegatchie-hills/>)

The ruling represents a significant turning point in the decades of efforts to protect the Oswegatchie Hills and the Niantic River estuary. While Judge Berger stated in his decision that it should not be interpreted as a permanent victory for the (East Lyme Zoning) commission or a defeat for the developer, the Judge did rule in our favor on the issues that were before the court and granted our request to remand the matter to the Commission for a full consideration of environmental issues.

It is not our position to speculate what the developer may do next. The options open to him include: a) continuing to try to sell the property to another developer without obtaining necessary zoning or wetlands approvals for specific development plans; b) submitting a plan conforming to the conditionally-approved Preliminary Site Plan on the 36 acres that fall within East Lyme's sewer service district; c) submitting a new plan of development which extends outside the 36 acres, either affordable housing or not; or d) agreeing to a conservation sale of the land to us or others.

It has always been our position that preservation is the best use of the remaining undeveloped 236 acres, the northern one-third of the Oswegatchie Hills. We stand firm in our commitment and our goal of seeing this land added to the adjoining Oswegatchie Hills Nature Preserve.

While we await the developer's next actions, we will continue to stay in contact with the Town of East Lyme through our Save Oswegatchie Hills Coalition to achieve our long-term goal. We thank you for your continued support and we will keep you posted as events unfold.

~ Roger Reynolds, Legal Counsel - Save the Sound

"Gratefulness" – VP's Message by Deb Moshier-Dunn

One of the best decisions STR-STH ever made was to join with Save the Sound and Friends of the Oswegatchie Hill Nature Preserve to create the Save Oswegatchie Hills coalition. Save the Sound has brought us the legal expertise that has allowed us to go toe-to-toe with the developer's well-paid legal team. This has proven invaluable as shown in our latest court win. We are grateful for Roger Reynolds and Chris Kelly, our attorneys at Save the Sound!

We are also grateful for Jim Paganetti who took over the administration of the Pumpout Program this year. Jim hit the ground running last Spring and got the boats ready while writing the grant for next year's operations. Jim has the added project of finding the new Pumpout Boat for which DEEP has just awarded us a 75% grant. We are currently trying to secure the other 25% match through both the towns of Waterford and East Lyme and private donations. Please remember STR-STH in your end of year donations!

We are also grateful for Professor Jamie Vaudrey for running our Water Quality Program. She is testing the upper River after substantial rain events. We are seeing high bacterial counts in the River for a couple of days after rain storms. (More on this in the Winter newsletter.)

Lastly, we are grateful for YOU! Thank you for all you do to Save the River and the Hills.

All of us on the STR-STH Board wish you Peace & Joy during this Holiday Season!

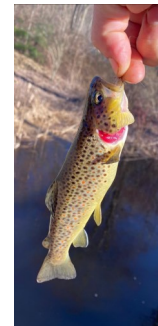


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2021 Kayak Regatta
Participants arrive at Grimsey Beach to enjoy the music, food and company!



Brown Trout caught in Latimer Brook (left) and Stony Brook (right) by Board member Lillian Glynos. She gets to fish as part of her DEEP position! See her article for more on Page 3.

Niantic River Appreciation Day—2021 Kayak Regatta in Pics!

(See our Facebook and Website Kayak Regatta page for more)



Thank you to all of our wonderful volunteers and participants! Music, Yoga, Races and Food—what a day!
(Pics by Amanda Alcamo & David Robinson)

Pumpout Program Update

The pumpout boat program had another successful season. Many thanks to our stellar crew, Aiden Grimsey, Nick Caruso, alternates Mike Marelli and Nick Maksim. We were able to begin and finish the season with our back-up, 20-year-old boat, designed and built by Fred Grimsey. Thanks to Fred's Yankee ingenuity, this boat held up to the rigors of the program's demands. Despite many multiple rainy weekends, the program pumped over 13,000 gallons of highly concentrated waste out of local boats—keeping it out of the Niantic River and Bay! Great job and kudos to all boaters who participated.

More good news, we were able to secure a grant through the Clean Vessel Act to purchase a new pumpout boat. The new boat will cost about \$100,000 and the grant will provide 75%, or \$75,000 toward this much-needed boat. The new boat will comply with all safety and environmental standards for many years to come.

Save the River-Save the Hills writes a grant each year to help fund the operations and maintenance of this program through the EPA's Clean Vessel Act. Seventy-five percent of our program budget comes through this grant. The funding for other 25% comes from the generosity of our membership and the towns of Waterford and East Lyme. Thank you all for your generous support and we look forward to serving you all again next year!

~ Jim Paganetti, Pumpout Program Administrator

Fishing for DEEP's Fisheries Program by Lillian Glynos

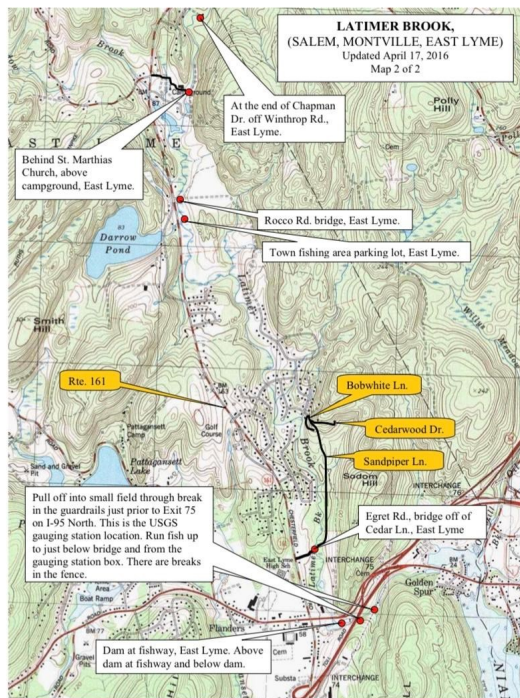
The Niantic River has always been part of my home and an inspiration for my passion. In 1996, my parents and I moved from Massachusetts to Waterford. We rented a house on Point Comfort near the Grimseys' and quickly realized that we nested somewhere very special. One of my fondest memories was when our neighbor and good friend, Mark McDowell, taught me how to catch my very first fish on what is now called Grimsey Beach. I was only 4 years old, it was mid-September and schools of snapper bluefish were bursting out from the surface of the Niantic River. Within seconds, I had a bite! "FISH ON!" Mark yelled with excitement. I smiled ear to ear when I finally landed it and held it's slimy, squirmy body in my hands. Once I learned how to cast on my own, I was hooked.

Fast forward to July 25, 2020, I was offered and accepted a full-time position with DEEP's CT Inland Fisheries as an EP Resources Technician. As part of my work, I help stock and

monitor populations of freshwater fish in lakes, ponds, and tributaries all over the State of CT. This includes Brook Trout and Brown Trout populations in the unique and beautiful tributaries of the Niantic River.



Lillian holding a rare Tiger trout (cross breed between Brook trout and Brown trout) caught in Oil Mill Brook



Map of Latimer Brook with areas where DEEP stocks trout marked with Red Dot

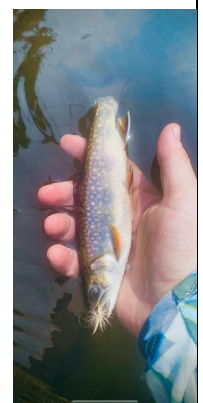
stream. This is accomplished by releasing a non-lethal amount of electricity into the water with probes on mobile backpack shockers. This temporarily stuns the fish long enough for us to net them and place into a livewell bucket. We then quickly identify the species, check the fish over for any parasites, judge overall condition, determine whether it is wild or hatchery raised, measure total length, and occasionally determine the sex. Once our data is collected, the fish are then safely released into the stream. We also closely monitor water temperatures during the early spring and fall seasons to determine best ideal conditions for when to stock the trout. The CT DEEP Fisheries Division, in cooperation with the Bureau of Water Protection and Land Reuse, monitor and electrofish more than 200 CT streams each year.

I love my job. I love the Niantic River and its unique tributaries. I will always do my best to positively educate others to help maintain a healthy watershed, so that many other children can catch their first fish for generations to come. Who knows, maybe that first fish will ignite a passion towards environmental protection and sustainable fishing just like my first fish from the Niantic River did for me.

For more info Google "CT DEEP Wild Trout Management Plan."

There are three main freshwater tributaries that feed into the Niantic River: Latimer Brook, Oil Mill Brook, and Stony Brook. All three of these streams are particularly special because they all are some of the few tributaries in CT that support both sea-run Brown Trout and native wild Brook Trout populations. They are so abundant in these tributaries, we can even bring a few trout home (see CT Trout regulations). The presence of self-sustaining wild trout populations indicates that we have some healthy freshwater streams, which allow CT anglers the opportunity to fish for some beautiful, world-class trout. However, many wild trout populations in CT cannot withstand the increased harvest. Therefore, a number of these streams are being managed for catch and release angling, with little to no stocking of hatchery-raised fish to help maintain healthy wild populations. An exception is Latimer Brook in East Lyme which is stocked yearly with CT hatchery-raised brook trout and brown trout for all anglers to enjoy. (See CT Trout Stocking Map)

In order to monitor trout populations, the Inland Fisheries team and I visit streams and conduct electrofishing surveys. Our goal is to consistently and accurately collect 'all of the fish' in a



A wild Brook Trout (Salvelinus fontinalis) caught in Oil Mill Brook

“STR-STH Cherishes our Members—Please Stay Safe!”

~ End of Year Appeal ~

We are Counting on Your Help

Dear Members,

We want to thank you for supporting us through the last two Covid years, and for your help with some of the Fundraising challenges we have experienced. Unfortunately, we had to cancel our December 2021 Fundraiser for the 2nd year, but we are looking forward to planning and enjoying a “Spring Fling” with you in 2022.

We need your Membership and Donations to help us keep the engine of our organization operating—fueling our programs, fundraisers, and our legal costs. Our members are the Heart and Backbone of this wonderful organization. PLEASE think of Save the River-Save the Hills when making your end of year donations.

Invite your neighbors and friends to join us! It’s easy: go to our Website, Facebook Page, or call Eileen O’Pasek 860-439-1687. Also, please add your email address below to receive our short news emails to stay up-to-date!

Thank you for all you do for Save The River-Save The Hills! See you all in the New Year.

Sincerely, *Eileen O’Pasek*, Membership Chair

Membership & Other Contributions:

☐ New ☐ Renewal

☐ Basic Family \$25

☐ River Keeper \$50

☐ River Saver \$100

☐ River Protector \$250

☐ River Neptune \$500

☐ River Champion \$1000

All members receive our quarterly newsletters. Note: first \$25.00 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

☐ General Fund



Please make checks payable to:

STR-STH, Inc.

and mail to

Save the River-Save the Hills

P.O. Box 505

Waterford, CT 06385

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

(We will use your email only for STR-STH Action Alerts and updates, we will never give it out to others.)

Referred by: