



“Source to Sea” Clean-up, Saturday September 29th, Marks Half Century of River Rehabilitation Success

By Dan Nesbett

Flowing past our shores in Essex is what only can be described as a miracle in modern ecology: the recovery of the Connecticut River, which not so coincidentally started back in the 1960's political aura of flower children and environmental reawakening.



The river's improved quality has been so unique and exemplary that this year, on May 29th, the 412-mile long Connecticut River became the first U.S. river to be designated a “National Blueway.” (Inland trails are sometimes known as “Greenways.”)

U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar made the presentation at a Hartford riverside ceremony. The citation applauded the many organizations in the watershed's four New England states working together for over 50 years to serve as a model for other watersheds. (The Connecticut's progress is even more impressive when compared to the daunting and costly cleanup still facing other rivers in the Northeast, such as the Passaic, the Hudson, and the Housatonic.)

The Big Picture, “Source to Sea”

Spearheading the annual cleanup effort by local volunteers for fourteen years now has been the Connecticut River Watershed Council, headquartered in Greenfield, Massachusetts. Since its founding in 1952 it has been serving the entire watershed, from the river's headwaters in northern Vermont and New Hampshire on the Canadian

border, to its estuary on Long Island Sound. According to Andy Fisk, the council's executive director, the annual cleanup event this year on September 29th is expected to include over 50 organizations along its route, including the Essex Land Trust.

Of course there is nothing new about ELT volunteers helping to clean up along the river. David Hyde recalls working with Al Macgregor, Jenifer Grant, Chet Arnold and other members in hauling debris by boat across South Cove from Thatched Island to dumpsters in the Essex Yacht Club's parking lot. That was almost a decade ago.



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Meanwhile the Land Trust’s haul of junk from the riverbanks has grown every year. As chief steward last year Macgregor recalls over 40 volunteers working on the shores not only of Thatchbed, along South Cove including Turtle Creek but also Great Meadow. The collected litter included upwards of 1,000 glass and plastic beverage bottles, cans and lids, plus almost 2,000 Styrofoam items, not to mention six 55-gallon drums and 16 automobile tires.

From Kate to Congress

The river’s comeback, however, certainly took time. Back in that enlightened environment of the sixties Ellsworth Grant, a resident of Hartford and Old Saybrook’s Fenwick, wrote, photographed and produced the thirty-minute documentary film “The Long Tidal River.” The film is narrated in lilting patrician tones by Grant’s sister-in-law, none other than Katherine Hepburn, whose own high profile undoubtedly helped the cause. In the film the river’s scenic, historic and recreational virtues are extolled in words and pictures, while man’s abuses to it are decried:

“Fair, noble, glorious river has now become labeled ‘the world’s most beautifully landscaped cesspool.’”



The film was first telecast August 2, 1965 on WTIC, Hartford, and was shown at numerous locations throughout the state. Senator Abraham Ribicoff then had the text entered into the Congressional Record. That same

year Connecticut passed its own Clean Water Act.

Then in 1972 the Congress overrode a presidential veto to pass the federal Clean Water Act. For the Connecticut River alone this meant almost \$900 million in federal funding for the construction or upgrading of 125 sewage treatment plants. Along with elimination of other sources of pollution, such as manufacturing runoff and waste, and with the passage of additional state and federal regulations, water quality in the river improved to the point that soon it was upgraded by the EPA from Class D to Class B. Most of the river again was swimmable and fishable (large shad and salmon populations had returned), and its wetlands protected in perpetuity.



But at the same time the question remained regarding protection of the river’s esthetic and historic integrity. As a result in 1973 the Gateway Commission Compact was established largely to take a regional leadership role in response to the federal government’s proposed establishment of three national parks recreation zones on the river. The one planned to be at bucolic Selden Creek just south of East Haddam alone was destined to bring thousands of visitors annually to the area. While having its detractors over the years, the compact has arguably served more than any other legislative vehicle to preserve the pristine beauty of the lower river.

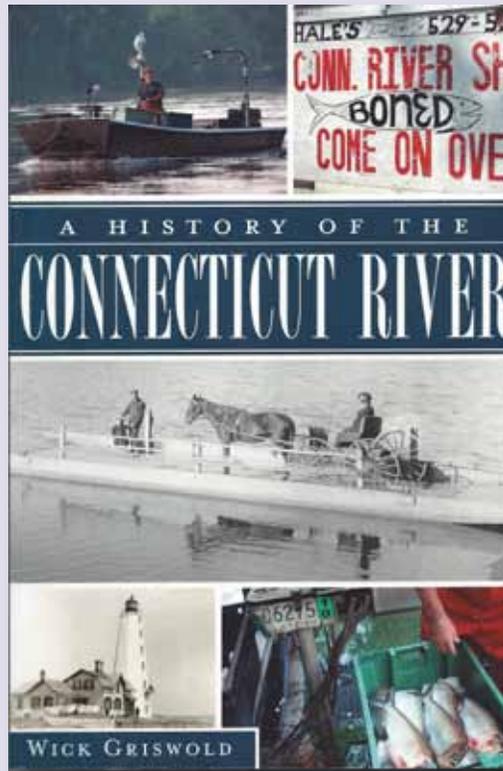
The eight towns involved in the Gateway Compact are Haddam, East Haddam, Chester, Deep River, Lyme, Old Lyme, Old Saybrook, and of course, Essex. The commission monitors local zoning regulations and insures compliance, particularly with regard to standards for erecting or modifying structures along the river. To this same end, the commission also has the right to limit the cutting of timber, the excavation of earth materials, and to acquire scenic easements, such as those protecting

Connecticut River History - A Review

By Jim Denham

As an Essex resident, I continue to marvel at the natural beauty and quality of life, which the Connecticut River provides our community. Therefore, I was interested to pick up *A History of the Connecticut River* by Wick Griswold.

Published this year by the History Press, *A History of the Connecticut River* is a timely and informative contribution to our knowledge of this iconic river. In this brief (117 pages) easy read, the author takes us through time starting with what he calls “the early days” and leads to the present up to and including the recent Haddam land swap controversy. The book focuses on the 60 miles between the Enfield Rapids and



Long Island Sound, which the author describes as “rich in history” and “a lesson in time and timelessness.”

Mr. Griswold shares with us highlights of the colonial period, the river’s commercial history, its unique natural ecology and some of its legends. One learns a number of tidbits of history such as that Mark Twain considered Hartford the finest city in the world, that the river played an important role in the underground railroad and that, among the many who stayed at William Gillette’s Castle, were Helen Hayes, Charlie Chaplin and Albert Einstein. The book is a pleasure to read and in the process one learns a great deal about our ever-present partner.

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the views in part of Hamburg Cove and of Joshua’s Rock overlooking the river.

The Task At Hand

Meanwhile, getting back to more immediate priorities, Essex Land Trust Chief Steward Tom Rutherford tells us it is time once again to take out the trash, that is the cleanup, coordinated with the Watershed Council’s “Source to Sea” event. ELT’s concentration this year, Tom explains, is on Great Meadow, where the trust has just acquired 25 acres, increasing its holding to 79 of the parcel’s 174 acres. Since the river curves and narrows here, Great Meadow’s mile-long shoreline catches and holds more than its share of debris.

Volunteers of all ages and abilities are most welcome, and will meet at 8:30 am. Meet at Essex Boat Club; take the unpaved drive off River Road, Essex, right after



#143. Bringing tools is not necessary. But this is serious business, so wearing work gloves is advised. Rain or shine. Refreshments served. For more information just call Tom Rutherford at 860-767-9474.

Property Stewards Needed

By Jim Denham

The Essex Land Trust currently owns or is involved in managing 18 different properties. Totalling nearly 700 acres, these properties range from dense woodlands to park-like settings to shoreline marshes. As can be expected, the demands for managing these properties can be varied. Some properties have modest stewardship requirements; others need more than one steward. The current veteran steward team plays a fundamental role in preserving these spaces so that our community can access these beautiful natural areas.

Chief Steward Tom Rutherford is eagerly looking for new stewards to assume responsibility for two vacant positions: Tiley-Pratt Pond and Windswept Ridge. Tiley-Pratt Pond is featured in the On The Trail article (see page 5). While both properties have limited stewardship responsibilities, they do need someone to care for them. Anyone who thinks he or she might be interested is encouraged to contact Tom at 860-767-9474.

Also worth noting is that the Land Trust is actively engaged in adding to its property. We anticipate increasing acreage under management and will therefore need more stewards and volunteers. Please consider

signing up even if it is to help out on occasions.

Steward Responsibilities

- Walk boundaries periodically;
- Look for dumping, unauthorized cutting, trimming, use by vehicles;
- Check entry and border identification markers;
- Keep trails well-marked and cleared of fallen trees and other debris;
- Note and try to prevent litter, fires, use of motor vehicles or bikes, removal or destruction of plants, pollution in streams or pools;
- Depending on nature of property, arrange for mowing and periodic cleanups;
- Report and arrange to correct exceptional weather damage and blights or insect harm and damage to bridges, trails or other improvements;
- Establish and mark new trails;
- Develop natural history records and descriptions, providing labels along trails or other informative materials where appropriate;
- Note invasive species (e.g., bittersweet, Phragmites, swans, etc.) and consider their removal;
- Recruit neighbor support.



Hard at work: Chief Steward Tom Rutherford (right) with ELT President Bob Nussbaum

Properties Owned or Managed by the Essex Land Trust

	Acreage	Steward
Bushy Hill Nature Preserve	107	Ron Nelson, Essex Conservation Commission
Canfield-Meadow Woods	300	Dana Hill, Essex Conservation Commission
Cross Lots	16	Al Macgregor, Fred Szufnarowski
Falls River Park	1	Keith Rustemeyer
Falls River Preserve	41	John Matthiessen
Farm Hill Estates	8	Jeff Hutchinson
Fern Ledge	10	Adrienne Brochu, Steve Bancroft
Great Meadow	79	George Rambeau
Heron Pond Preserve	29	Nick Fomenko
James Glen	4	Gene Meacham
Jean's Island	7	Keith Rustemeyer
The Millrace	6	Steve Knauth
Osage Trails	8	Jerry & Lisa Baczewski
Platt Preserve	30	Ron Nelson
Stanley Park	1	Bill Grover
Thatchbed Island	3	Paul Greenberg
Tiley-Pratt Pond	8	Open
Windswept Ridge	30	Open
Total	688	



By Steve Knauth

Walking through Tiley-Pratt Pond preserve is taking a walk through Essex history. From this idyllic 8-acre park on Dennison Road, with its single loop trail, grew one of the town's most influential families, a multi-generational clan which helped shape the Essex we know today.

The Tileys came into prominence in the post-Civil War years of the 19th century, taking over Ezra Williams' 25-year-old manufacturing business on Dennison Road. In 1845, Williams had dammed a pond out in the Meadow Woods section of Potopaug, quarrying stone from "Stone-pit" Hill, and set up a successful factory making combs and the like from ivory and horn.

In 1870, Essex dentist Charles Tiley and his brother, Richard, took over the factory, founding Tiley-Pratt Co. The firm's letterhead lists its products thusly: "fancy bone, steel novelties, crochet hooks, shoe horns and workbox fittings." For the next 30 years, the family expanded their business (they added bicycle and then automobile spokes) and their influence.

Prior to 1900, they purchased and developed both the Laurel Road and Grandview Terrace neighborhoods, which included today's Tiley-Pratt Pond. (Grandview refers to the spectacular views from Stone-pit, or 'Stumpit', Hill, back in the days when the town was mostly treeless! 'Taken from Stumpit Hill' is a common notation on old panoramas.) A son, Morton Tiley, founded Essex Boat Works, Essex Machine Works and the old Essex Square movie theater. (Where I saw 'Bridge on the River Kwai' and 'Moby Dick'.)

The company also built Essex's only automobile. The 'Tiley' was manufactured from 1904 through 1913, in 4-or 6-cylinder models, powered by a Rutenber engine, the standard for early automakers. The autos came with a sliding gear transmission and shaft drive (at a time when

some autos still used chain drive.)

They were ordered on a custom basis, and about two dozen were built. (None are believed to have survived.)



Tiley "Factory Lot" between Grove St., Dennison Road bordered by North Main – the pond at today's Tiley-Pratt Preserve is evident at the left

"They were used around Essex for a number of years," recalled David Brooks, son of Jarvis Brooks, a Saybrook florist. "Father had a panel truck that was originally a [Tiley] passenger car. H.D. Robinson, the Essex undertaker, bought a used Tiley and put a hearse body on it."

The autos were built at a new complex out on the Middlesex Turnpike, which is still standing. The old factory site was turned into the home where sculptor Henry Kreis and his family lived. "One building,"

Henry Kreis Jr., writes, "[originally] positioned to use the dam's waterpower, became the family home, filled with the rhythm of water rushing over the dam – and down the stone raceway. The other ... was renovated ... into an artist's studio."

It was a place of artistic creativity and the ideal place for a young boy to grow up. I took a walk through his childhood idyllic "backyard," now the Land Trust's Tiley-Pratt Pond, with his descriptions in mind. One could almost hear the sounds of summer-time children. A deep part of the pond was called "bare-ass" creek, great for swimming, he recalled. On the flanks of Stonepit Hill, rising up from the pond, there was a place where grapevine flourished, creating a jungle-like setting. A rock cliff with a cave-like indentation had a "magnetic attraction." And there was the old rock quarry, created when the 1845 dam was built.

Vestiges of all this remain, though the land is much given over to nature now. When the property was acquired by the Land Trust, Henry Kreis Jr., writing for the family, said they hoped to provide "the opportunity to enjoy ... the land and pond" as they did.

"How fortunate to have the Falls River and Tiley-Pratt

Coming Events – Mark Your Calendar!



'Source to Sea' Annual River Clean-up

Saturday, September 29, 8:30 am - 12 pm

Join us for the 16th annual Source to Sea Clean-up of the rivers, streams and banks that make up the vast Connecticut River system from the Canadian border to Long Island Sound. This annual event, involving over 70 groups and organizations, is coordinated by the **Connecticut River Watershed Council**. All ages and abilities are welcome. Meet at Essex Boat Club; take the unpaved drive off River Road, Essex, right after #143. Rain or shine. Refreshments served.

Talk: Preserving Our Trees

Monday, October 1, 2:00 pm at Essex Town Hall

Essex Tree Warden, Augie Pampel, and other leading conservationists will discuss trees in general and Essex trees in particular. Topics covered will include the role and responsibility of the Essex Tree Committee, Essex Tree Warden, Park & Recreation and the Essex Land Trust, town ordinances affecting trees and helpful hints for pest control, tree preservation and tree planting. A question and answer period will follow. Co-sponsored by the Essex Garden Club. Refreshments served.

3rd Annual Run Local/Read Local

Saturday, October 20, 7:30 am

Register at Ivoryton Village Green

The Ivoryton 5k Run/Walk benefitting the Ivoryton Library begins near the library and meanders through beautiful Ivoryton and into the Land Trust's Falls River Preserve. This is an Essex Great Outdoors Pursuit event in conjunction with the Essex Park & Recreation Department. Prizes will be awarded in many categories. All runners ages 8 and under will be given medals and pumpkins to paint. Park in designated lots. Rain or shine.

2nd Annual Family Turkey Tromp & Plunge

Saturday, November 17, 10 - 11:30 am

at Viney Hill Brook Park

Take a guided hike along the trails of the beautiful 92-acre town park starting at 10 am. The walk will last approximately 45 minutes. At 11 am, be part of or just watch the wacky folks plunge into the pond. Participants in the plunge must sign waivers. This event is the last of the 2012 Essex Great Outdoors Pursuit. The park is accessed off Hillside Drive in Essex. Ample parking is available in the park, near the pond. Rain or shine. Refreshments served.

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Pond right there in [the] backyard."

Standing under a canopy of young maples, oaks and beeches, with the pond, once busy with manufacturing, now home to lazy painted turtles and tranquil herons, I could only agree with him.

Tiley-Pratt Pond is located on Kreis Lane, marked by a Land Trust sign, off Laurel Rd. There are two parking lots, an upper and lower parking lot. Please respect the privacy of neighboring property.

Volunteers Needed: The Land Trust continues to rely on our membership and the community to support our efforts with their most valuable asset, their time. We have many tasks including helping plan events, sitting on committees, hospitality and greeting at events, trail maintenance, office assistance, and mailings. Please contact Nancy Rambeau at 860-767-1523 or email volunteering@essexlandtrust.org if you would like to become a more active part of our team.

Essex Woods & Waters is published in January, May & September. Jim Denham & Steve Knauth, Editors - Kathy LaBella, Photography - A.C. Proctor (Essex Printing). Funding for the publication is provided by the **Essex Savings Bank & Essex Financial Services**.

Board Members: Bob Nussbaum (President); Jim Denham (Vice President, Communications); Nancy Rambeau (Secretary); Mike Carlucci (Treasurer); Bill Grover (Past President); Paul Greenberg (Land Acquisition); Tom Rutherford (Chief Steward); Linda Levene (Membership); Peter Prichard (Development); Peggy Tuttle and Gudrun LeLash (Programs & Events); Vacant (Nominations and Volunteers).

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Essex Woods & Waters is published with the generous support of Essex Savings Bank and Essex Financial Services..

Essex Printing

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