The Still River Watershed

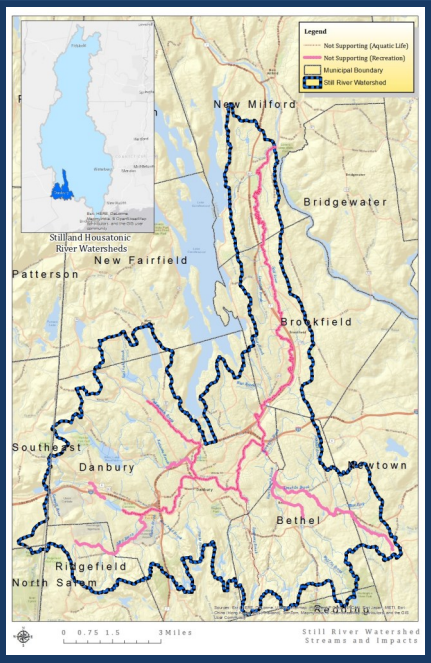
For more information about the Still River Watershed, visit
stillriveralliance.wix.com/stillriverwatershed

What is a Watershed?

A watershed is an area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off it flows into the same place, be it a stream, lake, estuary, wetland, or ultimately the ocean. Watersheds can also be called catchments or drainage basins. The Still River Watershed in western Connecticut consists of the land that drains into the Still River, a tributary of the Housatonic River. Watersheds come in all shapes and sizes: the Still River Watershed is one of many within the Housatonic River Watershed.

About the Still River Watershed

The Still River was formed several million years ago by the movement of ice sheets during the Pleistocene Age. The entire Housatonic region used to be underwater, covered by a large glacial lake called Lake Danbury. As the last remaining glacier in the are retreated and melted, the meltwater carved new outlets to Lake Danbury, and one of these channels became what we know today as the Still River. The bedrock below the river is predominately inwood marble overlain by glacial till deposits. Unlike most rivers, the Still River flows north instead of south. The river's source is at Sanford's Pond near the New York-Connecticut border and it ends where it flows into the Housatonic River in southern New Milford. The topography of the Still River Valley is relatively flat, causing the characteristic "sluggish" flow of the River.

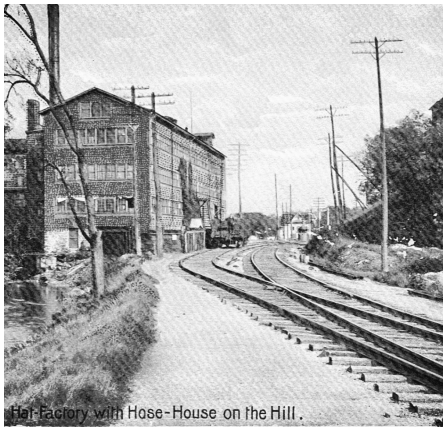


Still River

The Still River Watershed falls within the Connecticut towns of Danbury, Bethel, Brookfield, New Milford, New Fairfield, Newtown, Ridgefield, and Redding, and the New York towns of Southeast and North Salem.

Humans and the Still River

Like many New England rivers, the Still's history is not only one of geology, but of industry. Industrial enterprises along the Still since the late 1700s have included hatting, textile manufacturing, and wood processing, and the necessary proximity to the river has inextricably linked the Still to the people working and living on its banks for more than 200 years. While many have turned the Still River's power into profits over the last two centuries, the River's history is not without disaster. Many towns have experienced severe flooding and have invested in civil engineering projects to try to prevent future problems. In addition to flooding, pollution has also been a significant issue in the Still River Watershed that dates back to industrial times when the River was utilized as a sewer. Water quality began to improve after the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972. While many point sources of pollution have been addressed, the River still remains impaired due to nonpoint sources, especially polluted runoff. Today, there is still much work to be done so that the River so that it may be enjoyed in all its capacities.



Water Quality in the Still River Watershed

Which one is impaired?

Both of the sections of the Still River shown above are classified as impaired. Significant progress has been made to clean up the Still River, but according to state assessments, there is still more work to be done to ensure that the Still River can live up to its full biological, ecological, and recreational potential. Source: CT DEEP (2014)

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) assesses water quality by asking the following question:

Do the biological, chemical, and physical conditions of the river support specific uses like swimming, fishing, and recreation?

If *not,* the river or body of water will be classified as "impaired" and put on a pollution "diet," called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL).

In the Still River Watershed:

- Impaired sections are often associated with impervious surfaces like roads and parking lots, which transport polluted runoff
- The majority of the 13 segments of the River and its tributaries that have been assessed do not support aquatic life or recreation
- Sources of pollution include industrial and illicit discharges, remediation sites, stormwater, and groundwater contamination.

The focus for future water quality improvement will be addressing nonpoint sources of pollution through a watershed-based plan.

Managing the Watershed for the Future

Much work has already been done to improve the health of the Still River. To catalyze future water quality improvement, a Watershed Plan is being developed. A Watershed Plan is a document that provides assessment and management information for a specific watershed. The general goals of the plan are to:

⇒ Develop a framework for collaboration
⇒ Gather and interpret existing science
⇒ Identify projects and programs to improve water quality, prevent flood damage, and enhance recreation

Improving water quality in the Still River not only requires watershed-scale collaboration, but individual action. If you own land in the Still River Watershed or beyond, visit **www.riversmartct.org** to learn 9 easy steps you can take to stop polluted runoff from entering the Still River and take the River Smart Pledge today.

Think Green, Stay Blue: Clean Water Starts With You!

Still River Watershed Plan Partners and Funders

Western Connecticut Council of Governments

Fairfield County Regional Conservation Partnership