



STILL RIVER WATERSHED PLAN

PARTNERS MEETING

3/26/2015

DANBURY CITY HALL, ROOM 3C
155 DEER HILL AVENUE ~ DANBURY, CT
1:00 PM

MEETING NOTES

Attendees: Ray Sullivan, Town of Brookfield; Sean Haydon, Northwest Conservation District; Mike Zarba, Town of New Milford; Dennis Elpern, City of Danbury; George Benson, Town of Newtown; Ed Siergiej, Still River Alliance Commission; Michael T. Smith, Still River Alliance Commission and Angry Beavers; Rebekah White, Friends of the Lake; Michael W. Smith, Still River Alliance Commission; Dennis Regan, HVA; Harry Rosvally, Danbury Public Schools; Elaine LaBella, HVA; Kitsey Snow, Town of Ridgefield; David Hannon, Western CT Council of Governments; Marcia Wilkins, Sierra Club Connecticut; Jon Morrison, USGS CT Water Science Center; Ryan Williams, HVA; Ryan Boggan, City of Danbury; Mike Jastremski, HVA; Susan Peterson, CT-DEEP

Planning process overview:

After a brief welcome and introductions, Mike Jastremski outlined the scope of work and watershed planning process and how the Still River plan must address nine criteria required by the EPA. Two handouts were distributed (attached).

Susan Peterson discussed how the Clean Water Act, Section 319 funding program is administered. The program's goal is to address and implement projects that remedy water quality impairments. Watershed plans, which must include nine required elements and six steps, are the roadmaps to address impairments. The Still River project contract should be done in a month. No work can be charged to the 319 grant until the contract is signed. She also discussed what constitutes a match for the 319 funding. Once the watershed plan is in place the towns can apply for 319 funding for implementation funding.

Still River Partnership:

Mike Jastremski led a discussion of the group's role in the planning process.

Elements discussed included:

- Working together to craft a mission statement and set overarching goals based on existing information and new information;
- Members serving as connections between towns/organizations and the planning process;
- Developing the request for proposals for consultant(s);
- Helping select consultant(s); and
- Selection of priority projects and programs

Susan Peterson outlined current measures protecting the Still River:

- Improvements to the Danbury wastewater treatment facility;
- DEEP will be working with towns to lower phosphorus in discharges;
- Smaller towns will now be required to meet MS4 standards; and
- DEEP is updating the MS4 general permit.

Because the EPA defines stormwater that has been captured by a stormwater collection system as a point-source discharge under the MS4 program, this planning process must address stormwater before it reaches the collection system.

A numbers of members shared ideas for the group to consider. Among the suggestions were:

- Reach out to the Danbury Fair Mall to examine its stormwater system;
- Develop a strategy to encourage large commercial properties to become engaged with the watershed planning process;
- Show the sub basins on the Still River watershed map; and
- Look for ways to help reduce impervious surface in parking areas, such as the grass pavers in the Westfarms Mall overflow parking area.

Collecting and analyzing existing information

Mike Jastremski spoke briefly about the need to aggregate and assess existing information relevant to watershed management as an early step in the planning process.

Jon Morrison from USGS talked about the current data collection for the Still River. The USGS has been collecting instant and daily streamflow from the Still River stream gauging station, precipitation data and water quality data. The data show that the total nitrogen levels in the Still River have been dropping since 1992. Total dissolved copper and zinc has also declined since 1992. Most recent water quality sampling shows increased turbidity. The river channel in flux and sediment occasionally buries the sampling device. Mr. Morrison distributed handouts showing some of the trends he discussed graphically; they are attached.

Susan Peterson described the DEEP water quality monitoring and assessment. The DEEP staff monitor each basin on a five-year cycle, taking biological, chemical and physical data. Their report also incorporates volunteer macroinvertebrate sampling as well as data from the Fisheries Division. If the waterbody does not meet state water quality standards and cannot fully support aquatic life and recreational use it is listed as impaired and the DEEP has to fix the causes of the impairments. In 2010 the DEEP developed a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for indicator bacteria in the Still River.

Representatives from Brookfield, Newtown and Danbury gave updates on municipal water quality monitoring:

Ryan Boggan, from Danbury Health Department, explained how his department tests the beaches at Kenosia and Candlewood Lakes using the Connecticut Department of Health (DPH) protocol. Before the summer his department does a survey of the beach areas to identify any new pollution sources and take pre-season samples. Danbury previously completed a Still River Watershed Plan in 1989.

Ray Sullivan from Brookfield Health Department discussed Brookfield's efforts to protect public water supplies and to extend sewer lines. The Department is working with businesses to encourage to hook up to municipal water and sewer services. The Town is also studying tributary streams to identify water quality problems, particularly bacteria.

George Benson, from Newtown Land Use Department talked about Newtown's nine-year monitoring program. Town staff do riverwalks to identify pipe locations and identify other sources of pollution. The Town also has macroinvertebrate sampling reports.

Collecting new information

Mike Jastremski outlined plans to collect new information about the river, including a field assessment of 40 impaired stream miles as well as adjacent upland areas. Mr. Jastremski referenced a map put together by HVA showing impaired stream reaches; it is attached. A Quality Assurance Project Plan, or QAPP, must be completed and approved before fieldwork may begin. The stream corridor and upland assessments will be conducted using an EPA-approved protocol and will result in a report to guide further investigations. Sean Hayden of the Northwest Conservation District spoke briefly about his experience using the Center for Watershed Protection's Unified Stream Assessment for similar projects, and spoke to the suitability of this protocol to urban watersheds.

Consultant Selection

Mike Jastremski asked the committee to help further define role of the consultant and asked the members to form a consultant selection sub-committee. The group will determine the skill set the consultant should have and define the tasks to be done. Concern was expressed by some members about the potential for a consultant to draw down grant funds very rapidly; it was agreed that the sub-committee needed to develop a very specific set of tasks

Public Outreach

Public outreach is an important component of the project. Mike Jastremski explained that outreach would be conducted at two key times during the planning process at minimum- when the draft Existing Conditions Report is completed, and when the draft Watershed Plan is completed. Further outreach will be necessary, but is not currently funded through CWA Sec. 319. HVA will be developing an outreach strategy this spring and seeking additional funding. Rebekah White suggested that the schools could become involved, particularly volunteering or course credit work. Outreach to businesses is also important.

The next committee meeting will be scheduled for June. A conference call may be scheduled before June if necessary.