



The Quinnehtukqut Connecticut Chapter

The Monthly Newsletter for Events, Information, and Action

WELCOME TO THE SUMMER 2017 ISSUE

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REQUEST FOR CONTENT

All Connecticut Sierra Club members are invited to contribute to the *Quinnehtukqut*. We accept articles, book reviews, puzzles, events, photos, poems, etc. Articles, limited to 500 words, should be on a subject of local or national interest to the Connecticut Chapter membership. The goal of the newsletter is to inform, educate, motivate and involve our members.

If you post information to the website and want it in the newsletter as well, you must submit those postings separately to the newsletter.

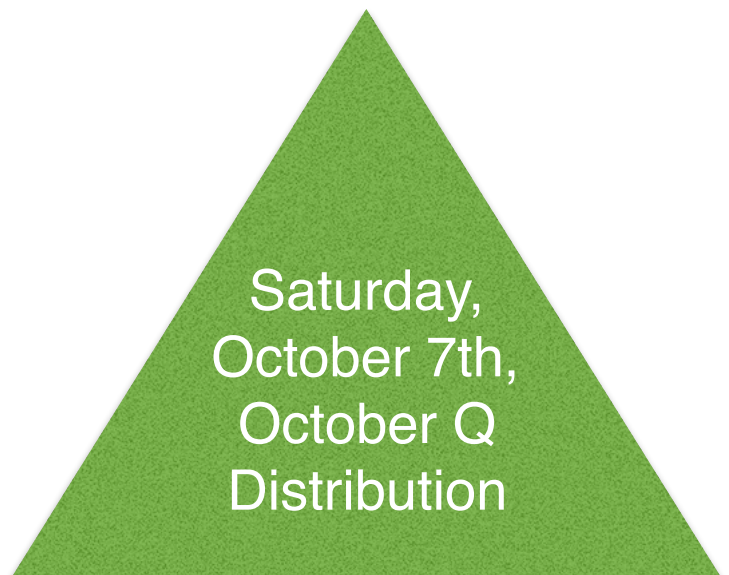
We have developed a newsletter calendar for the next two 2017 submission dates. Please read dates carefully. The calendar is intended to make it easier for you to plan your *Quinnehtukqut* contributions for publication.

The *Quinnehtukqut* is distributed at the beginning of the month. Comments, letters to the editor and all submissions may be sent to ctsierraq3@gmail.com for inclusion in future newsletters.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER CALENDAR:



OCTOBER CALENDAR:



All decisions regarding use are made by the Communications Committee.

JULY/AUGUST OUTDOOR EVENTS

Kayaking 1

Location: Coventry Lake



Coventry Lake

Description: 373 acre lake formed when the last glacier to cover Coventry receded, leaving cobbles and boulders that characterize the lake shore and help protect the disturbance of the lake bottom. More information: [Coventry, CT](#)

Sponsor: Greater Hartford Group
Connecticut Sierra Club

Date: Monday, July 24th

Time: 6:00pm

Meet/GPS: 30 Cross Street, Coventry, DEEP boat launch

Directions: Head south on Lake Street, launch is ahead on right.

RSVP: Yes, only by Friday, July 21st. Email Renee at mchawigirl@yahoo.com Please leave cell phone number in case weather or winds require site change or outing cancellation.

Leader: Renee Taylor, Certified Chapter Outings Leader

Free event open to Club members and the public

Safety: *All kayakers must wear safety vests at all times and sign a liability waiver. You may review the waiver by clicking the attachment here.*

Sierra Club Outings [Waiver](#)

Restrictions: No cell phones or smoking on the water.

Kayaking 2

Location: Great Island Wildlife Area, Old Lyme, CT

Description: Explore secluded back channels, side rivers, and coves that parallel the lower Connecticut River near the mouth on the east side, winding through 10-foot-tall marsh reeds in one of Connecticut's largest brackish tidal marshes and a barrier beach that teems with birdlife. Access a guide to this area at: [Access Guide](#)



Great Island Wildlife Area, Old Lyme

Date: Saturday, August 5th

Time: 11:00am

Meet/GPS: Great Island state boat launch, Smith Neck Road, Old Lyme.

Directions: *From the East:* Take I-95 South to Exit 70. At the end of the exit ramp, turn left onto Lyme Street and proceed .8 miles. Next, turn onto Ferry Road, and continue 0.3 miles. Turn left onto Route 156/Shore Road and proceed 1.3 miles. Turn right onto Smith Neck Road and follow .7 miles (to its end).

From the West: Take I-95 North to Exit 70. At the end of the exit ramp, turn right onto Route 156/Shore Road and continue 1.7 miles. Next, turn right onto Smith Neck Road, and proceed .7 miles (to its end).

Lunch: Bring lunch to enjoy in boat and/or we can hit the town for supper at Black Hall Grille, 100 Shore Road, Old Lyme.

RSVP: Yes, only by Friday, August 4th. Email Renee at mchawigirl@yahoo.com Please leave cell phone number in case weather or winds require site change or outing cancellation

Leader: Renee Taylor, Certified Chapter Outings Leader

Free event open to Club members and the public

Safety: *All kayakers must wear safety vests at all times and sign a liability waiver. You may review the waiver by clicking the attachment here.*

Sierra Club Outings [Waiver](#)

Restrictions: No cell phones or smoking on the water.

OUTDOOR EVENTS REVISITED

Potluck Barbecue 2017

by Renee Taylor

Two dozen Greater Hartford Group Connecticut Sierra Club members and guests enjoyed a shady, breezy afternoon potluck barbecue at the picnic pavilion in Northwest Park in Windsor on June 10th.

A nearby charcoal grill's white coals cooked everything perfectly as the cook intended. The Group expects to make the barbecue an annual event on the second Saturday of June. Mark your calendars for 2018. It's June 9th.

We discussed meeting programs, new kayak and hike outings (decided we need bicycle outing and camping leaders), but also just enjoyed each other's company and good food on a perfect summer day.

Program meetings for Greater Hartford Group will resume in September. Any ideas for speakers or if willing to lead hikes, bicycle outings or camping trips, please contact Renee at mchawigirl@yahoo.com

Have a good summer and hope to see you on our outings.



Sierra Club members and guests having fun at the bbq

A Kayak Experience

by Renee Taylor

Despite off and on grey skies Saturday, May 27th, mild temperatures and light winds buoyed our spirits on our first paddle of the season. From River Park in Mansfield, to avoid an area north where currents are stronger, we savored Willimantic River and Eagleville Lake for a couple of hours with only other kayakers, some angling for bass, pickerel and trout.

A light current pushed us south towards the lake along lush marshes flooded by all the recent rain. Honeysuckle and a great blue heron greeted us as soon as we launched. Later we spotted red winged black birds chased by a yellow warbler in a flat mid-river bed. In the same area small

box turtles were sunning themselves. Along the shore mallard ducks waded and preened as almost open yellow lotus flowers floated nearby.

Kayakers have to take great care on the return trip to avoid many side channels, but by following the current coming at you, eventually the tiny curved bay hiding the launch is spotted.

Afterwards we had a relaxing lunch on the long deck of Coventry Lakeside Restaurant.



CHAPTER REPORT

In June, 2017, Your Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club accomplished the following:

- On the WPLR radio program “For the People,” host John Voket discussed methane gas leak in the pipeline infrastructure of Hartford, a study funded by your Chapter. Voket interviewed Chapter Chair, Martha Klein regarding residents’ money going up in the air and methane gas raining down into our environment. Listen to the podcast online on our website, sierraclub.org/Connecticut. Click on Issues and scroll down to Gas Pipelines. Follow directions.
- Facilitated a preview screening of the documentary “From the Ashes” in New Milford at the Public Library. “From the Ashes” explores the reality of coal’s role in climate change and offers strategies to help revive dying mine towns without endangering the environment.
- Organized and successfully gathered one percent of New Milford’s registered voters to request the Town Council pass a resolution banning fracking waste from their community. Worked in tandem with leaders from Food and Water Watch.
- Led the season’s first kayaking outing.
- An Acid Rain permit hearing at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) headquarters drew Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club members and activists on June 29th. We submitted testimony protesting DEEP’s planned approval of an Acid Rain permit for the CPV-Towantic 805 MW gas fired power plant that is under construction in Oxford, Connecticut.

CPV-Towantic is allowed to purchase pollution credits from other dirty power plants to "offset" the emissions the new power plant will release. Purchasing offsets has regional benefits but local pollution is released and has real impacts. The emission of NOx and SOx contribute to acid rain, which cause acidification of water bodies, making them uninhabitable for aquatic life as well as other negative effects.

Since the new power plant is not needed and delays the transition to 100% renewable energy, we oppose it as we are opposing all the fracked gas infrastructure expansion, including the Enbridge and Kinder Morgan interstate pipeline expansions, the new power plants and the state gas conversion goals.

To volunteer or renew your Connecticut Chapter membership in Sierra Club, contact John Calandrelli at: connecticut.chapter@sierraclub.org

2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Connecticut Towns Move Forward on Fracking Waste Bans

by Jen Siskind

The movement to ban toxic, radioactive fracking waste has spread across Connecticut. This local action is needed, as the legislative session ended in June without passing a state-wide ban (HB 6329).

On the last night of the session, as the state Senate failed to take action, Pomfret residents passed an ordinance to protect their community by a vote of 120+ to 2. And leaders in another town voted to place the same ordinance on their annual town meeting agenda. This later passed by a vote of about 100 to 1 and Willington became the 20th Connecticut town to ban toxic, radioactive fracking waste.

State Regulations – This Summer or Next?

When it comes to inaction at the state capitol, we have been here before. This is the third time in five years that state legislators decided not to take action banning fracking waste.

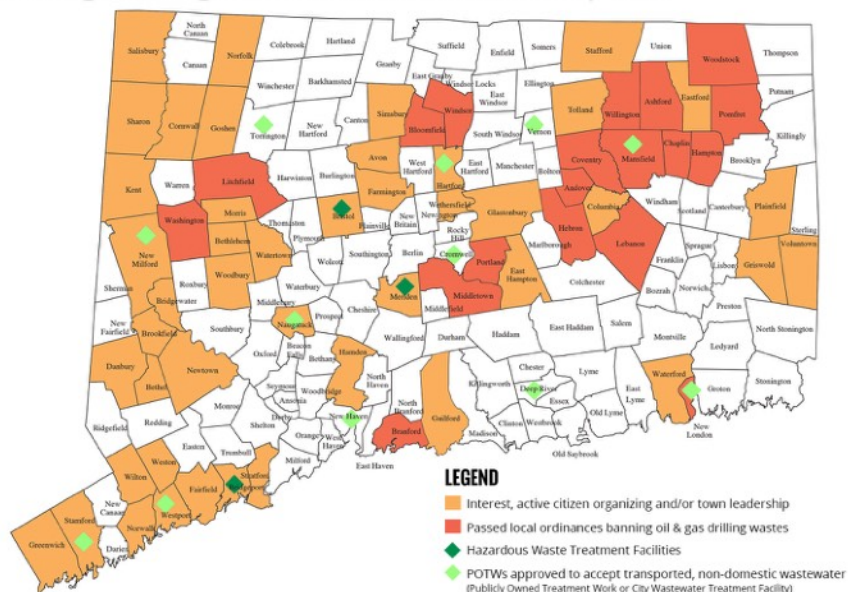
While there were problems with HB 6329, it came at a crucial moment. Current state law requires that regulations be submitted as early as this summer, and not later than July 1, 2018. In coming months, the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) is mandated to submit rules for handling hydraulic fracturing waste in our state. Fourteen legislators on the Regulations Review Committee can ask for edits and second drafts, but they do not have the authority to say, "No, we don't want fracking waste brought to Connecticut."

The Issues – Hazards and Risks

Chemicals used for fracking are known to cause cancers, birth defects, multiple organ damage, developmental and neurological problems. Radium 226 in fracking wastes has a radioactive half-life of 1,600 years, is known to cause breast, bone and liver cancers, and is associated with leukemia. Future regulations mean fracking wastes may be moved by thousands of tanker trucks and dump trucks on Connecticut roadways—raising the real risk of spills and accidents on the way to waste treatment plants, and at sites where storage and transfer occurs.

Towns risk receiving contaminated fill products used for construction, road base or capping products for brownfield remediation, and potential road spreading of salt products derived from oil and gas well brines.

Banning Fracking Waste in Connecticut, Town by Town



Chemical and radioactive contamination has already spread in other states due to accidents, spills and leaks, leaching into groundwater, and discharge into surface waters after treatment efforts. DEEP regulations for Connecticut cannot prevent the same from happening here.

Power to the People

After passage in the House, the Senate missed a huge opportunity. Voters know that toxic, radioactive fracking waste poses huge risks to their health, property values and clean water. We've seen residents in 20 towns rise up and pass local ordinances. The grassroots movement is stronger than ever, and we're going to keep fighting until we ban fracking waste statewide.

This summer, Connecticut citizens are acting to pass more local protections. Large crowds at outdoor events, summer music series and farmer's markets make it easy. Dozens of towns follow laws allowing a special Legal Petition to be used, many with only 50 certified signatures needed. These petitions require local officials to call a special town meeting where citizens attend and vote. This puts the power in the voter's hands, with large numbers turning out to protect their towns.

Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club members and newly-awakened democracy groups are encouraged to take action now in your town, joining others interested or already moving a fracking waste ban forward. For Legal Petitions and ordinance edited for your town, please contact jsiskind@fwwlocal.org. Free materials and presentations are available.

In the words of Margaret Mead: "*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.*"

Jen Siskind is the Local Coordinator for Food & Water Watch and a CT Chapter Sierra Club member.

That's Pretty Much a Wrap, Now What?

by Roberta Paro

Disclaimer: *As of the first week of July, when this article went to "press," the legislature had not passed a budget, but is expected to meet in the near future to do so and consider other items we cannot predict.*

Our elected state leaders focused almost all their 2017 General Assembly attention trying to create a state budget. The budget contributed to a broken legislative session that did little to advance protections for the environment.

While trying to create a state budget, some legislative leaders are looking to take money from our Energy Efficiency and Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) program funds. Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club is opposed to this "money grab" as these funds have created over 12,000 jobs in Connecticut, and saved lives by helping to clean our air and protect our climate. If these funds are raided, it will be a very short-sighted action doing more long-term damage than good.

Priority Bills Update

Whatever happened to the priority bills we asked you to talk to your legislators about? SB 630 sought to expand and extend Connecticut's renewable energy portfolio, but it never made it out of the Energy and Technology Committee.

A timid increase in Connecticut's renewable portfolio standard was offered in SB 106, but it was also paired with support for nuclear energy from Millstone.

Because of the long term toxic waste created by using nuclear power, the Sierra Club has long opposed nuclear energy as a way to power our electricity grid. SB 106 passed out of Energy and Technology and Appropriations but died in the Senate. Support for Millstone was then placed in SB 778. That passed the Senate but died in the House. Connecticut's problem is that Millstone provides about 40% of our electricity. We need it until we have far more renewable energy, but our state is moving very slowly towards that goal. Thank you for your telephone calls, emails and letters that worked to defeat the bill.

SJ 39 would have put a proposed amendment to Connecticut's constitution on the 2018 ballot. The proposed amendment would ensure that any proposed sale of state land have a public hearing. It would help to restore public trust in the process that the state uses to convey public land. The bill died in the Senate without a vote. Your CT Chapter Sierra Club supports SJ 39.



Millstone Nuclear Plant

Led by Chapter Chair, Martha Klein, Connecticut Sierra Club and allied organizations fought valiantly to stop the expansion of natural gas in its various forms. We sought to have the "gas tax" that consumers pay to support expanded pipelines removed from electric bills. Though there was an amendment offered to end this practice of subsidizing a fossil fuel, it died early on without even a hearing.

The Chapter Conservation Committee tried to help allied organizations expand the bottle bill and defeat a bill that would have ended the current version of the bottle bill. Thankfully the bill we wanted to defeat never came to the floor for a vote, and your efforts opposing it were instrumental in its defeat. Unfortunately, the expansion of the bottle bill died in the House..

Become an Activist

If you are thinking, "What can I do?" consider the following. If you took action on any of these issues, take a moment to be proud of participating in our democracy and know that we welcome your continued advocacy. We appreciate our members who take action and are the kind of people we want to volunteer as district leaders. If you have not yet begun to take action, join our efforts. We will move forward by organizing our efforts through small geographic districts. We believe working in our own backyards will help us get the wins that will protect our air, water, climate, jobs and health.

Please contact John Calandrelli at Connecticut.chapter@sierraclub.org to let him know you are interested in volunteering in your area. And ask him any questions you may have.

Roberta Paro is co-chair CT Chapter Sierra Club Legislative Committee and former Chair, CT Chapter Sierra Club.

Citizen Lobbying 101; Barks from HSUS Director

by Annie Hornish

“The Art of War,” written in the 6th century BC, focuses on the importance of knowing those with whom you are engaged in battle. Author Sun Tzu wrote: “If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.”

Making meaningful laws are always a battle. Lawmaking is a messy, constant push and pull of interest groups. Very few bills make it into law: at both the state and federal level, about 80 percent of bills die. The key for any bill to join the ranks of the elite few that make it to law lies in knowing how to lobby effectively, and that necessitates knowing what motivates elected officials.

Elected Officials’ Goal is Re-Election

The primary motivation of elected officials is getting re-elected. This is reasonable, as they must, fundamentally, be present in order to get anything done. What this means is that they will care most about people who have the power to put them into office, i.e., constituents who vote. Elected officials are keenly aware of the fact that many people do not show up to vote. (A sad illustration is Hartford’s 2013 municipal race, with a 5% voter turnout.) An elected official will know whether you vote or not -- this public information is fundamental to the campaign strategy.

How to Fight for a Bill

With this in mind, when fighting for a bill, it is vital that animal advocates not only vote, but mobilize ranks in a strategic, politically organized fashion, with constituents contacting only their own elected officials. When contacting those in appointed positions, advocates should always focus on their elected official who made the appointment. This showcases advocates’ understanding that although they have virtually no leverage over those in appointed positions, they still have power to hold someone accountable.



Governor Malloy signs an animal-friendly bill into law.
Photo credit: Annie Hornish



Annie's dog, Tofu

Although it cannot hurt to build personal relationships with your elected officials, we must always remember that the policies are ultimately driven by their impact on elections, and not the merits of the issue at hand. Understanding the lawmaking process is less important, as

there is much trickery in lawmaking (e.g., rules governing process are “suspended” with great regularity; further of the 244 laws passed in 2014, the content of 115 bills that died in the process were later incorporated into other legislation that became law). Power in the lawmaking arena is directly proportional to the strength of the voting bloc for any particular issue, and little else. Photo caption:

Lobbying and Activism Rules

This is why, when lobbying elected officials, it’s vital that advocates identify themselves as a constituent who votes. Mentioning your community involvement and affiliations with other groups serves to let elected officials know that you might influence other constituents of theirs who are also likely to vote. Mobilizing likely voters, including building strategic coalitions with other groups of likely voters, is the most efficient strategy for influencing elected officials to pass meaningful laws.

Sun Tzu’s advice retains its relevancy today. Knowing what motivates elected officials is fundamental to whether we pass strong laws, or get the runaround, from politicians.

Annie Hornish is the Connecticut Senior State Director for The Humane Society of the United States. She is also a former state representative for Connecticut’s 62nd District (2009-10) and a supporting member of CT Chapter Sierra Club.

PIPELINE NEWS

Access Northeast Pipeline on Hold for Now

by Clark Devoto

Access Northeast is a \$3.2 billion (or more) expansion of the Algonquin Natural Gas Pipeline, proposed by owners Eversource, National Grid and Enbridge. It has been opposed due to its costs, lack of necessity and the delay it creates in moving toward 100% renewable energy.

The expansion which would stretch from New York to Massachusetts, crossing Connecticut and Rhode Island was set to start construction in 2019. The pipeline companies planned to have electricity ratepayers bear the cost of the pipeline’s construction, which is legal in Connecticut but not yet in Massachusetts.

After the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts as well as regulators in New Hampshire decided not to allow the proposed “pipeline tax,” and Connecticut realized that it would have to bear almost all of the costs, the economics of the project became clearly unsustainable for the states.

Enbridge withdrew their applications from FERC soon after, although spokesman Arthur Diestel said the company “looks forward to restarting the pre-filing process as soon as possible.” It is expected they will resume the project if they can figure out another way to finance it.

Access Northeast is the second interstate pipeline to be cancelled after the Kinder Morgan Northeast Energy Direct (NED) pipeline withdrew its application in 2016, two small victories against fossil fuels in New England. However, it is still likely that the Access Northeast project could come back in the future, and we need to keep on guard.

Clark Devoto is a student and a CT Chapter Sierra Club volunteer.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Show Off in Your Electric Vehicle

by Jeff Gross and Philip Huerter

This Summer, as you head out to a sunny Connecticut beach, a shaded woodlands trail, or a city excursion, the trip will likely involve an automobile. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you, and everybody else on the road, were silently cruising along in a quiet, powerful, clean and non-polluting Electric Vehicle (EV)?

Although the choice of electric vehicles from mainstream manufacturers is rapidly expanding, and sales exhibit year-over-year growth rates in the high double digits, the growth, and increasing awareness, are coming off low baselines. With about one percent of overall vehicle sales in Connecticut, one could entertain the stereotype that battery EVs are a niche product only enjoyed by early adopters.

There may have been some truth in that stereotype up until the present moment, mid-2017. There are, in fact, a number of lower cost, higher-range EVs that will soon be available to consumers. When the Chevrolet Bolt arrived in California showrooms early this year, battery EV sales increased 91 percent, approaching three percent of overall vehicle sales.



EV parking space at Avery Point, UConn

Other exciting, comparable models are scheduled for release in 2017 as well. For those who need more range than the 238 miles provided by the Bolt, manufacturers are also launching a wide range of plug-in hybrids. These models can operate in pure electric mode for shorter trips, switching to gasoline only when the battery is depleted.

The Future Frontier

It seems that the future is almost here! The final frontier is affordability. Electric cars already have a theoretical head start because they contain fewer moving parts than a gasoline car and enjoy lower fuel costs. The problem has been the cost of the

battery, which needs both technical advances as well as industrial scale to achieve lower unit costs. Both objectives are being achieved. Analysts from UBS predict Electric Vehicles (EVs) will reach full purchase price parity as early as 2018 in some markets. Read more at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/neilwinton/2017/05/22/electric-car-price-parity-expected-next-year-report/#715b1d6d7922>

Meanwhile, keep in mind that Connecticut has a well-structured EV rebate program (CHEAPER). See: <http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?a=2684&q=561424> to learn about EV batteries and rebates available. The federal \$7,500 credit is also still in effect for all manufacturers.

Why are EVs important? First, they completely eliminate street emissions that directly impact health (such as NOx and particulate matter). They also dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as long as the local electric grid is green or becoming greener. Connecticut's grid ranks above-average on the green spectrum. If you have solar power to feed your automobile you are in fact driving on sunshine. See:

<http://blog.ucsusa.org/dave-reichmuth/new-numbers-are-in-and-evs-are-cleaner-than-ever>

Volunteer to Raise EV Awareness

How can you help? The Sierra Connecticut EV Committee supports EV-related events in an effort to increase awareness. We also have an initiative to encourage solar installers to install EV chargers. You are invited to join us in these and future actions. But more importantly – make your next car an EV, and take it on vacation!

Jeff Gross and Philip Huerter are co-chairs of the Connecticut Sierra Club EV Committee

OUR NATURAL WORLD

Aquatic Invasive Plant Management in Candlewood Lake, Chapter 2

by Emily Van Vlack

The Triploid Grass Carp (TGC) program implemented in Candlewood Lake has received new attention in the wake of the decision by the Town of New Fairfield on May 30th against the application of herbicides to the town's portion of Candlewood Lake.

Chemical Additions to New Fairfield Considered

The Town Board of Selectmen originally proposed the plan to introduce both an herbicide to reduce the amount of Eurasian Watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), and copper sulfate to control cyanobacterial blooms in January 2017. The proposed chemical treatment plan would have been implemented in about 60 out of the 5,100 total acres of the lake and added to the New Fairfield Town Park cove, as well to Shelter Harbor Cove in New Fairfield's Sail Harbor community.



Eurasian Watermilfoil growth in Candlewood Lake in June 2017
Photo credit: Emily Van Vlack

While the chemical treatment plan was strongly supported by New Fairfield Town Selectwoman Susan Chapman and other elected town leaders, most citizens of New Fairfield and the four other towns surrounding the lake were outraged. Thankfully, due to the involvement and political activism of many individuals within New Fairfield, the decision to add chemicals to Candlewood Lake was overturned.

In 2015, approximately 3,800 Triploid Grass Carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*) were introduced into Candlewood Lake as a non-chemical but rather as a biological management option to address the population of Eurasian Watermilfoil. With an additional 4,450 fish added to the lake

in June 2017, the carp program should be able to reduce the amount of Eurasian Watermilfoil in Candlewood Lake without chemical treatment over the next couple of years.

Radio Tagged Fish Tell Story

In addition to the over 8,000 TGC that have been stocked over the past two years, 48 radio tagged individual fish were released at four different sites around the lake in the summer of 2016. Since release, these 48 fish are tracked by the Candlewood Lake Authority and Western Connecticut State University using a three element yagi (an antenna), as well as an Advanced Telemetry Systems R410 scanning receiver. Each of the 48 carp has a surgically implanted radio tag that emits a unique frequency that can be detected using the antenna and receiver.

Originally, 12 of these radio tagged carp were released at the New Fairfield Town Park. Tracking data from both 2016 and May and June of this year shows that four of the tagged fish remain in the New Fairfield Town Beach cove. Four other fish are in Shelter Harbor Cove. The signals of all eight carp were received around the large milfoil beds that populate both coves. The carp also exhibit schooling behavior, so it is likely that other, untagged carp are also located in these regions.



ATS radio telemetry system showing the three element yagi and the R410 scanning receiver.
Photo credit: Emily Van Vlack

From data collected, we learn the TGC program is working as expected, as fish are remaining around, and eating in the large milfoil beds surrounding their release sites. Not only would the addition of New Fairfield's proposed chemical treatments possibly harm the fish, but herbicides would seem unnecessary with the TGC program in place. The fish are at work in the most heavily weeded areas of the New Fairfield portion of the lake, and while the use of herbicides would provide a faster solution, they are not economically sound on a lake-wide basis. The herbicides would have to be applied annually or biannually, and in the case of Candlewood Lake do not have public support.

For more information on this year's tracking of the carp, or to contact me with questions, please refer to my blog at: <https://emilyvanvlack.wixsite.com/candlewood-carp>

Emily Van Vlack is a student at Boston University majoring in Cell, Molecular and Genetic Biology. She grew up around Candlewood Lake and takes pleasure in giving back to the lake to help preserve it for the future.

Summer Adventure Destination—Your Backyard

by Michele MacKinnon

You need not travel far to occupy bored kids during summer vacation. Consider the possibilities outside your backdoor.

Grow a vegetable garden

The freshest, most nutritious vegetables anywhere are those grown in your garden. Set a personal tomato challenge. Pick up a seedling or two at a garden center, plant them in soil enriched with aged compost and organic fertilizer, such as Espoma's Garden-tone Organic 3-4-4 formula and water regularly. Prepare to swoon. Most gardeners impose a lifetime ban on store-bought tomatoes after tasting the unsurpassed flavor of homegrown varieties.

If preparing an in-ground or raised garden bed seems daunting there are other options. Tuck plants into ornamental gardens or experiment with container growing. Read plant tags or consult with garden center staff to determine a vegetable's ultimate size, especially when selecting varieties for containers. Seed companies offer a wealth of information for new gardeners. Find reputable advice at [Johnny's Seeds](#) or John Scheepers [Kitchen Garden Seeds](#) from Bantam, Connecticut. Search UConn's [Home & Garden Center](#) site for detailed vegetable "Fact Sheets."

Friend or foe?

Don't panic if striped caterpillars munch parsley or dill plants. Celebrate creating an environment allowing Black Swallowtail butterfly larvae to complete their lifecycle. Offer protection to the caterpillars from hungry birds, if possible. One of these beauties captivated me recently, unfurling and pumping its wings after emerging from its cocoon nearby. Despite the title, [Butterflies of North Texas](#) includes many species seen in Connecticut, as well as their larvae forms and host plants.

Black Swallowtail Butterfly Cocoon



Black Swallowtail Butterfly



Photo credit: Michele MacKinnon

Become an insect explorer

Insects fascinate children, so encourage their interest. Purchase a durable handheld magnifying glass for close-up views. Take pictures with a smart phone, then search the Internet to identify the species. A good place to start is [Big Bug Hunt](#). Site features include pictures of common beneficial and pest insects, the ability to upload photos for identification and a regular

newsletter. Only three percent of insects are harmful. Attempt to identify an insect before acting to eliminate it. Many pesticide products harm beneficial insects that control populations of problem species. Another handy resource is [Mac's Field Guide, Northeast edition](#), a double-sided card with illustrations of insects in our region. These tools raise awareness which encourages others to forgo sprays and focus on protecting the other 97% of beneficial insects in our midst.

Ticked off by ticks

Unfortunately, a mild winter plus abundant animal host populations equal extremely high tick populations this year. Lyme disease-carrying ticks are being picked up in grassy backyards as well as their more common habitat, woodland settings. Take precautions. Prepare for outdoor activities by dressing with care and using safe, effective tick repellent products. Download [The Prevention of Tick Bite and Tick-Borne Disease: Tick Checks and the Use of Insect Repellents](#), written by Dr. Kirby C. Stafford III from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. This report separates tick fact from fiction and provides an overview of various repellent products' effectiveness for specific durations. Try DEET free repellents such as "Extreme Buzz Away" from [Quantum Health](#). Experienced gardeners on this newsletter's staff prefer it.

Ready for a backyard adventure? Send me an email and share your exploration ideas.

Michele MacKinnon, is a UCONN Certified Advanced Master Gardener, garden educator and speaker.

To contact MacKinnon for speaking engagements, or to ask gardening questions, email beehappygardener@gmail.com. We'll publish answers in the next edition of the newsletter.

Roadside Vegetation and the Environment

by Mary Gaudet-Wilson

DOT Report Recommendations

In response to the State Pollinator Health Act of 2015, the Department of Transportation (DOT) has issued an extensive report concerning replacement of non-native grasses with native plants along highways to create model pollinator habitat. The report contains valuable information for local highway departments and others to begin this process. See over 100 pages of pictures and specifications for native plants: <http://nenativeplants.uconn.edu/references.php>.

DOT Policy Changes Enhance Pollinator Habitat

More recently, despite the failure of Bill 6123 in the 2017 legislature which specifically required the DOT to "consider the environmental impact of vegetation management and tree removal," the DOT has issued three important policies to address pollinator habitat along roadsides. Those policies include reduced mowing, plant replacement plots and establishment of native plants at new construction sites.

Along highways in Connecticut, medians which are 60 feet or wider will be cut only 15 feet along the roadside and will be cut only once or twice during the season. Spot treatment of herbicides will be used for invasives (mugwort, black swallow-wort, etc.) only as needed. In general, mowing will be reduced to one major cut at the end of the season.

Creating Pollinator Habitats

Plant replacement plots are being developed to create pollinator habitat areas. Each of the four DOT districts will have two plots, one naturalized and one planted. In District 4 there is one naturalized plot (over an acre at Exit 10, westbound shoulder, Newtown) and one planted plot (Torrington, Route 8, Exit 46 center median.)

At new transportation sites DOT will prioritize with native plants beneficial to native insects and birds.



Roadside Vegetation
Photo credit: UConn

Already, there are visible signs that these changes are making an impact. Drive along I-84 to see the emergence of wildflowers such as crown vetch, flea bane, birdfoot trefoil and daisies. Reduced mowing (which assumes reduced costs as well), has allowed Nature to rebound to a more natural state, certainly pleasing to the human eye as well as to the eye of the pollinator.

Roadside Land Supports Diversity and Connects Fragmented Patches

With 10,000 miles of state highways these linear corridors of improved habitat could make a significant difference to our bees, insects, birds and other wildlife. Roadside lands provide shelter, food and breeding opportunities for many species, representing one of the most widespread networks of linear habitats on earth. They are corridors for species distribution because they connect fragmented existing landscape patches.

DOT's efforts to improve and create more pollinator habitat is a positive example of what can be done to align our cultural practices with what we know makes environmental sense.

Celebrate these changes and encourage state agencies to continue this shift in a more natural way of doing things. Take a cue from the State and take steps in your own yards and communities to support practices that recognize we are part of an ecosystem that needs thoughtful care. Understanding the importance of pollinators and their difficulties may well be the tipping point to better stewardship of our land.

Mary Gaudet Wilson is a founding member of Protect Our Pollinators (POP), a non profit group that advocates for pollinators and their habitats www.propollinators.org. In addition, she sits on a Newtown committee for meadow restoration. Wilson holds a BS in education, a BA in chemistry and an MBA in management.

DOCUMENTARY FILM REVIEW

Coal Industry Documentary

Review by J. Roger Guilfoyle

“From the Ashes” is a film of riveting images, from the decaying hulks of rusting collieries to the angry gash of the Rosebud Mine in the Powder River Basin in southern Montana. In addition to these desolate images of modern coal mining, there are dozens of voices, those of local officials, industry representatives, Native Americans, scientists, environmentalists; but the most compelling voices are the miners themselves and other victims of our quest for “cheap” energy. Among these are Deborah Graham of Salisbury, NC, who became an activist when her drinking water was no longer potable, and Misti O’Quinn of Dallas whose family is on respirators because of the air quality. The human price is anything but cheap.



“From the Ashes” is an earnest, densely fact-packed documentary. Its treatment of the economic and ecological real costs of coal mining is chilling, particularly in light of the Trump Administration’s explicit promise of reviving the coal industry and withdrawing the U.S. from the Paris Accords.

“From the Ashes” would have benefited from sharper editing. The aspirations of the director to allow so many voices to speak contributes to the length of the film and the recurring use of some same images ultimately diffuses their power. The deadening layers of so many familiar unpalatable facts, depressing images are pervasive. There are no miners living in McMansions in Colstrip, Montana.

This film had its premiere at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City on April 26th. I had the opportunity to see it at on June 17th at an event hosted by the Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club at the New Milford Public Library. “From the Ashes” directed by Michael Bonfiglio. Produced by RadicalMedia in partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies and produced by Sydney Beaumont. For RadicalMedia, Jon Kamon, Joe Berlinger and Justin Walker serve as executive producers. For Bloomberg Philanthropies, Katherine Oliver serves as executive producer. 2017. 82 minutes. Available now on National Geographic channel.

J. Roger Guilfoyle is a writer, poet, educator and critic. He worked under grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities at WNET Channel 13. He is a professor in the MFA program of Graduate Communications Department at Pratt Institute and a CT Chapter Sierra Club member.

POETRY

Coogan Farm

Mountain Laurel lines dirt trails. Autumn leaves yet to decay crackle under my well-worn boots. I've come to commune with the best of myself. I'd rather here, overlooking wild deer from the rock overlook, look at them leap! Under the canopy of a large solid maple tree, limbs outstretched like large protecting fingers. I believe in no devil but the itch of poison ivy and the army of ants underfoot, the thorns of a rose, the briar of the reeds. I can hear God the most when out in the air, in the woods, on a hilltop, on a grassy knoll. I have no religion but my Keen boots, tucked in socks and tea tree oil for mosquito repellent. I am complete and pure joy and this is balm to my soul.



*Geneva Renegar is a Connecticut Chapter Sierra Club Certified Chapter Outings Leader.
Coogan Farm is a Nature and Heritage Center in Stonington, CT.*



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The Q is brought to you by:

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The flyer features the Sierra Club logo at the top, followed by the tagline "Explore, enjoy and protect the planet". The main title "Create a Lasting Legacy" is prominently displayed. Below the title, a paragraph explains the benefits of creating a charitable bequest. At the bottom, contact information for the Sierra Club Gift Planning Program is provided, including a phone number and an email address. The background of the flyer is a scenic photograph of a lake with snow-capped mountains in the distance.

SIERRA CLUB
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Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

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By creating a charitable bequest to benefit Sierra Club or your favorite Sierra Club Chapter, you remain in control of your assets during your lifetime and help protect the environment in years to come.

For confidential assistance, contact:
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gift.planning@sierraclub.org
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