



CONNECTICUT RIVER WATCH PROGRAM

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Visual Inspection Program To Continue – Volunteers Needed To Expand Network!

In 2006, Connecticut River Watch Program (CRWP) initiated a new Visual Inspection Program (VIP) that utilizes volunteers to “adopt” sites on local streams, and monitor them for physical characteristics that are signs of possible water quality problems and sources. This activity is an outgrowth of CRWP’s long-term monitoring program in the Mattabesset River watershed, and is designed to fill the need for periodic visual inspection to quickly identify and address active water quality concerns.

Volunteers adopt one or more sites on streams in the watershed, and make an initial visit to record baseline conditions of the stream, streambank and adjacent land. Thereafter, volunteers make periodic inspections at regular monthly intervals and following rainstorms, and report information to program staff. Inspections include tracking possible pollutants upstream, investigating public access points and road crossings for the presence or absence of similar observed conditions. If warranted, program staff follow-up immediately in coordination with local agencies.

In 2006 the VIP focused on five Mattabesset streams where high bacteria counts had been measured over the years, and where District staff and local residents were concerned about potential impacts from development. They include Coles Brook and Willow Brook, both in Cromwell; Little Brook in Berlin and Rocky Hill; Belcher Brook in Berlin; and Spruce Brook in Middletown and East Berlin.

Plans are to continue our VIP effort—and expand it—after our successful pilot launch last year. Several of our volunteers from last year will continue conducting visual inspections this year. Currently, we have volunteers for Willow Brook in Cromwell, Belcher and Hatchery Brooks in Berlin, Little Brook in Berlin, and Spruce Brook in Middletown/Berlin.

We are looking for a new volunteer for Coles Brook in Cromwell, along with volunteers for new locations. Possible new streams to add to our network include Stockings Brook in Berlin; Willow Brook in New Britain/Berlin; Webster Brook in Newington/Berlin; Sawmill and Bradley Brooks in Middletown; Chestnut Brook in Cromwell; and Ellen Doyle Brook in Middlefield. Suggestions for additional streams that should be monitored due to potential impacts are welcome!

Anyone interested in joining the effort and monitoring a nearby Mattabesset/Coginchaug watershed stream in the Middletown, Berlin, New Britain, Newington, Cromwell, Durham, Middlefield area, should contact Eric Mosher by phone (346-3282) or email (emosher@conservect.org).

CRWP is the District’s citizen monitoring program for the CT River and tributaries. Mattabesset River watershed monitoring has documented bacteria counts exceeding the state’s allowable limits, phosphorus levels indicative of excess nutrients, and even higher levels of pollutants following heavy rains, pointing toward polluted runoff. Results have been used to investigate potential sources of pollution, and in developing a management plan for the watershed, with the goal of restoring the Mattabesset and its tributaries to swimmable and fishable conditions. Actions called for in the plan include continued monitoring through CRWP.

For more information, please contact the Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District, (860) 346-3282.