



Connecticut News



Willimantic River Water Trail

PROJECTS AND PARTNERS 2012

CURRENT PROJECTS

1. Last Green Valley Water Trails
The Last Green Valley, Inc.
2. Red Mountain Trail Development
City of Torrington Conservation Commission and Torrington Trails Network
3. New England National Scenic Trail
Connecticut Forest & Park Association and Appalachian Mountain Club
4. Norwalk River Valley Trail
Friends of Norwalk River Valley Trail, Inc.
5. Steele Brook Greenway
Town of Watertown & Steele Brook Rangers

Find out more about each project starting on page 2.

ABOUT US

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program is the community assistance arm of the National Park Service. RTCA staff provides technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies working to protect natural areas and water resources and enhance close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities. We help communities plan, organize partnerships, and achieve on-the-ground success on projects they initiate.

Recent Successes

Last Green Valley Water Trails

Since its creation in 1994, the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Heritage Corridor has mobilized many partners to highlight agricultural, recreational, and tourism assets in what is known as The Last Green Valley of northeastern Connecticut. In 2009, staff and hundreds of volunteers turned the spotlight on the rivers themselves, paddling canoes and kayaks from Massachusetts to Long Island Sound.

Inspired by the momentum of Source to Sea, a Water Trail Steering Committee took up the challenge of “What’s next?” Answering that question last year, NPS worked with paddlers of the Willimantic River Alliance to research and publish a Willimantic River Paddle Guide (available at www.tlgv.org).

Moving to the next watershed in 2011, even more volunteers worked to produce the Quinebaug River Paddle Guide (available in early 2012 at www.tlgv.org).

What’s it take to write a paddle guide? On a river dotted with hydro, flood control, and old breached dams, it takes a lot of legwork and a lot of paddling. Volunteers assessed every put-in, take-out, and portage, considered paddling conditions at a range of flows and researched historical and cultural stories.

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Current Projects

1. Last Green Valley Water Trails

Project Partner: The Last Green Valley, Inc.

RTCA Contact: John Monroe

Location: Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers National Heritage Corridor, Connecticut and Massachusetts

Congressional Districts: CT-2, MA-2

Project Goal

A network of water trails in the upper Thames Basin (Willimantic, Shetucket, Quinebaug, Five Mile and the French) that are designated National Recreation Trails. Included will be Paddle Guides, on-the-ground stewardship improvements, celebration events, and a River Ranger volunteer program.

RTCA Role

Advise the water trail steering committee, assist with National Recreation Trail nominations and help to mobilize River Ranger volunteers.

2. Red Mountain Trail Development

Project Partner: City of Torrington Conservation Commission and Torrington Trails Network

RTCA Contact: John Monroe

Location: Torrington, Connecticut
Congressional District: CT-5

Project Goal

A 0.6 mile multi-use trail on an abandoned rail corridor, providing an alternative walking route for residents of the North End and a gateway to other trails.

RTCA Role

Help the fledgling town-wide trail committee to open their first new segment of trail and build their capacity to take on additional projects.



To organize a 27-mile trail effort across five municipalities in the Norwalk River Valley, it takes a village of generous neighbors and volunteers to figure out the route and connections to train stations, schools, and downtown areas.

3. New England National Scenic Trail

Project Partner: Connecticut Forest & Park Association and Appalachian Mountain Club

RTCA Contact: Charles Tracy

Location: 39 communities in central Connecticut and Massachusetts
Congressional Districts: CT-1, 2, 3, 5

Project Goal

Create connector trails with communities, construct trail shelters and reach out to area college students.

RTCA Role

Assist the Trail Stewardship Council in implementing trail corridor land conservation, natural and cultural resource interpretation, public outreach, and trail management.

4. Norwalk River Valley Trail

Project Partner: Friends of Norwalk River Valley Trail, Inc.

RTCA Contact: John Monroe

Location: Norwalk River Valley, Fairfield County, Connecticut
Congressional Districts: CT-4, 5

Project Goal

A 27-mile multi-use trail from Long Island Sound along the Norwalk River to the hills of Danbury. The trail will provide a scenic route for cyclists, hikers, and walkers connecting rail stations, schools, offices and Weir Farm National Historic Site.

RTCA Role

While a routing study is completed by consultants, help the Steering Committee to prepare early actions for implementation on release of the completed study.

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“We want to make Torrington a place for everybody to love and want to stay here; to be proud that you came from Torrington.”

- Chris Bayus and Tomasz Kalinowski
Two teenage boys who launched the Red Mountain Trail Development effort.

We're Here For You.

Could your project benefit from RTCA Staff Assistance? Contact us to find out.



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2011 Nationwide Partnership Success

1,991 Miles of Trail Developed

1,925 Miles of River Conserved

33,230 Acres of Open Space and Parkland Protected

94% Percentage of Community Partners Satisfied

Find more information online at
www.nps.gov/rtca



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Recent Successes cont.

Throughout this process, John Monroe of the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program has served as advisor, managing editor of the paddle guides and liaison to the national water trail movement. Using the paddle guide information, he has worked with volunteers to assemble National Recreation Trail nominations for the Quinebaug and the Willimantic Rivers – 55 miles in all.

Next, as paddle guides are written for the Shetucket, Five Mile, and French Rivers, the Steering Committee will mobilize dozens of volunteers, to be known as River Rangers, to monitor water trail conditions and organize work parties to control erosion at launches and replace invasive vegetation with native plants.

Current Projects cont.

5. Steele Brook Greenway

Project Partner: Town of Watertown and Steele Brook Rangers
RTCA Contact: John Monroe
Location: Watertown, Connecticut
Congressional District: CT-5

Project Goal

A community greenway connecting the downtown, a major employer (the Siemon Company), the high school and ultimately the Naugatuck River Greenway.

RTCA Role

Advise the Town Engineer and Steele Brook Rangers, a fledgling volunteer group that is complementing town staff by organizing public events and mobilizing citizens who want to help.



Sometimes, scouting a new greenway is just plain beautiful. The Naugatuck River valley is better known for its industrial history, but the future will be shaped by nature and recreation.