



The Pomperaug River Watershed News

Protecting Water Resources for Generations

2025 Annual Appeal

WATER: The Most Basic Human Need, and it Needs Our Help

Water is life. It sustains our bodies, nourishes our food, and shapes the beauty of where we live. Yet we rarely think about where it comes from or who protects it.

At the **Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition (PRWC)**, **WATER** is our client. For more than 26 years, we have worked to safeguard the natural systems that make clean water possible for everyone who lives, works, and plays here.

The Watershed covers 90 square miles across **Woodbury, Southbury, and Bethlehem**, and touches the 6 towns of **Washington, Roxbury, Morris, Watertown, Oxford, and Middlebury** - with rivers that flow through farms, forests, and neighborhoods before joining the Housatonic River at Lake Zoar. Beneath that landscape lies a vital stratified drift aquifer, a natural underground reservoir that provides drinking water to thousands of residents. This aquifer helps filter and purify water, but it is not limitless. As population growth, land development, and pollution increase, so does the pressure on our shared water resources.

This year, PRWC must raise \$175,000 to protect and restore this essential system.

- **\$16,000 will support the eradication of the invasive Water Chestnut** plant threatening Lake Zoar, Lake Stibbs and connected waterways.
- **\$96,000 will fund rain garden repairs and new installations** at three locations within the Watershed to trap and filter polluted storm water before it reaches our rivers and streams.
- **The remaining funds will sustain education, outreach, monitoring and operating expenses** that allow our small but mighty team to continue assessing stream health, engaging volunteers and responding to emerging environmental needs.

Federal and state funding has become increasingly competitive and uncertain. We need people who live within the Watershed, you, to take part in our mission to protect our shared water resources.

Whether you give your **time, talent, or treasure**, every contribution matters. **A \$5 gift will supply a plant, provide clean-up materials, or support community education.**

You are part of this fragile and incredible ecosystem.

Your actions protect clean water today and for generations to come. Together, we can ensure our watershed and all who depend on it continue to thrive.

PRWC in Action



Support our Mission

Scan the QR code to make a donation or sign up to volunteer. Help us protect the Pomperaug Watershed!



Inside the Coalition

A letter from Carol Haskins, Executive Director

This year, our watershed needs us more than ever. The 2024 flood left lasting scars across the region, damaging key stormwater infrastructure and altering natural habitats. At the same time, the rapid spread of the invasive European Water Chestnut plant (*Trapa natans*) threatens to disrupt the delicate ecological balance of Lake Zoar and the waterways connected to it.



These challenges remind us that protecting clean water requires vigilance, collaboration, and resources.

Our goal is to raise \$175,000 to fund critical restoration and protection initiatives, including the removal of invasive species and the rebuilding of rain gardens that help filter pollutants before they reach our rivers.

PRWC is entering an exciting new phase of growth. Our three-year strategic plan lays out a path to expand staff capacity, increase community impact, expand our strategic partnerships, and secure a permanent property where we can host programs, research, and events dedicated to watershed health.

Our mission remains clear: to protect, sustain, and restore the water resources of the Pomperaug Watershed through community engagement, education, advocacy, and science-based action. Our vision is a thriving and resilient watershed where our community engages to safeguard clean water and healthy habitats for all.

Your support makes this vision possible. Every contribution helps us continue to serve as the voice and the steward for the waters that sustain our lives, our environment, and our future.

Please consider supporting our mission. Together, we can ensure that clean, safe water continues to flow through our communities for generations to come.

With deep gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol Haskins".

Carol Haskins
Executive Director

*"A river is a report card for
its watershed."*

Alan Levere, CT DEEP

THE NUMBERS...

Following are the estimated expenditures for three rain garden builds, the water chestnut eradication process as well as some of our general operating expenses that need your support.

Rain Gardens

Heritage Village - Southbury

Rain garden installation 750 sq ft
\$19,504

Community House - Southbury

Rain garden restoration 1,000 sq ft
\$10,451

Post Office Green - Woodbury

Rain garden and vegetative swale installation with curb cut 1,510 sq ft
\$66,000

Water Chestnut Eradication

Lake Stibbs - Southbury

Treatment and hand pulling
\$13,784

Pomperaug River & Lake Zoar

Early detection and tracking
\$2,000

Programming

Paddling Adventures

Paddles, life jackets, whistles and seats
\$2,500

Stream Assessments

Thermal Monitoring **\$6,957**

Ambient Water Quality **\$16,882**

Macroinvertebrate Surveys **\$6,482**

Our Wish List

Fulfill our current needs and send us one of the items on our "Wish List" at Amazon.com.

PRWC Amazon Wish List



Race Against the Spread

*Stopping **Trapa natans** before it's too late*

Across New England, invasive plant species have taken over lakes and rivers, leaving environmental damage that can never be fully reversed. Here in our own backyard, we still have a chance to stop one particular invader before it's too late.

The **European Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*)** has spread rapidly through parts of the Pomperaug River Watershed, forming dense mats that block sunlight, deplete oxygen, and suffocate native plants and fish. Within the Watershed, the plant was first detected at Lake Stibbs on the grounds of the Southbury Training School. It is now the most established population in the Watershed with additional populations appearing each season in nearby water ways.



"The Water Chestnut issue was critical," says James Evans, Facilities Maintenance Director at the Southbury Training School. ***"PRWC was instrumental in helping us secure grant funding for an initial herbicidal treatment, which was far more effective than manual pulling, but was also expensive."***

Volunteers from the **Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition** have spent countless hours on the water in kayaks and canoes hand-pulling plants before they can seed. But to truly eradicate Water Chestnut at its source, we must continue and be even more aggressive in the integrative treatments and sustained monitoring.

"If we can reclaim Lake Stibbs, we can protect the connected waterways, including Lake Zoar and nearby ponds and streams. But time is running out. Each season that passes allows the plant to spread farther, making control more difficult and costly," says Olivia DiPalermo, PRWC Watershed Programs Manager.



This year's goal is to raise the funds needed to stay ahead of the invasion and secure a healthy future for our watershed. Your gift will directly support the removal, monitoring, and restoration efforts needed to stop the spread. **Together, we can win this fight while there is still time.**

"PRWC's leadership ensures we are not just reacting, but anticipating and preventing future outbreaks."

James Evans, Southbury Training School

Community Connection

Protecting a Piece of Woodbury: How PRWC Helped One Couple Safeguard Their Pond and Their Community

When **Donna Gentilozzi** and her husband, **James Mecca**, first found their home on Flanders Road in Woodbury, they were captivated by its natural charm - including a rustic pond surrounded by trees, native plants, and visiting wildlife. Before the closing, however, Donna noticed something that didn't seem quite right. The pond's culvert appeared too small to handle heavy rains and would likely require ongoing inspection and maintenance.



Rather than walk away or panic, Donna began researching how to manage the situation responsibly. That search led her to the **Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition** - and to two of its dedicated team members, Carol and Olivia. From the start, Donna found herself in capable, caring hands.

“PRWC was instrumental in helping us maneuver the issues we faced,” Donna said. “We were educated on algae, erosion, water flow, and the importance of the vegetation around the pond.”

With PRWC's guidance, Donna and James learned how to maintain a healthy pond ecosystems while ensuring adequate outflow. They discussed strategies for managing invasive plants and erosion, improving water quality, and encouraging the balance of wildlife that naturally calls the pond home - turtles, ducks, and a resident heron among them.

Recently, with a state permit in hand, they introduced several grass carp to help control excess vegetation in a sustainable, environmentally-friendly way.

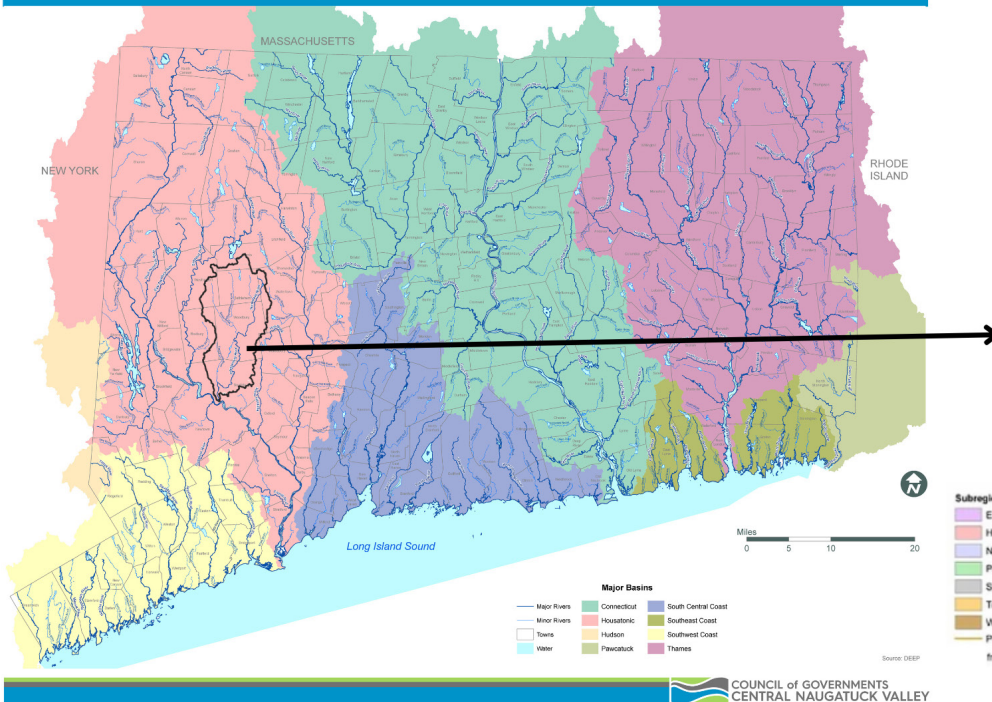
“Every time we have a question, the PRWC team is there to help us navigate the next step,” Donna said. “They don’t just give you answers - they connect you with the people and resources that make real solutions possible.”

The experience left a lasting impression. Inspired by PRWC's expertise and collaborative spirit, Donna decided to get involved herself. She joined PRWC's Development Committee to help spread the word about how vital the organization's work is to local residents and to the entire watershed community.

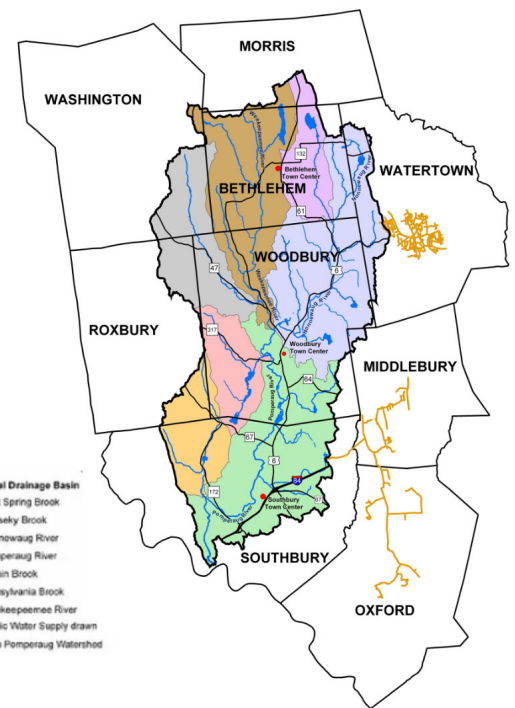
“I believe that when you live in a small town, everyone needs to work together,” Donna said. “PRWC brings people together to protect what we all share - our land, our water, and our quality of life.”

What began as a potential problem has become a story of partnership, education, and environmental stewardship. Thanks to PRWC, the pond on Flanders Road is not only thriving - it's a living example of how collaboration and care can protect the natural beauty that defines the Pomperaug River Watershed.

Connecticut's Watersheds



Pomperaug River Watershed



"Water connects us all."
Dr. Marc Taylor

Become a River Steward!

It takes a village and at PRWC we are forever grateful for volunteers like Donna Gentilozzi who graciously give of their time, talents and treasures to help keep our watershed healthy.

If you would like to join our **River Steward** program (and get a cool T-shirt!) we would love to have you!

Whether you are ready to put on waders and help clean our rivers and ponds, or like Donna join a committee to further our mission or support PRWC financially - we welcome you with open arms (and kayaks)!

You can scan the QR code for more information or reach out to our office at 203-263-0076.



Forward Thinking



Pomperaug River Fund for the Future *Honoring Founder Dr. Marc Taylor's Vision and Legacy*

More than two decades ago, Dr. Marc Taylor looked out over the Pomperaug River and saw both beauty and responsibility. He understood that clean, safe water does not take care of itself. It takes people who are willing to protect it. His vision and persistence along with co-founders Dick Leavenworth and Larry Pond led to the creation of the Pomperaug River Watershed Coalition (PRWC), and his belief in science, education, and community collaboration still guide our mission today.

PRWC has established the **Pomperaug River Fund for the Future**, a donor-advised fund designed to ensure that Dr. Taylor's vision continues to thrive for generations to come. The Fund for the Future supports long-term growth, sustainability, and innovation - the essential elements that will allow PRWC to expand from a small but mighty nonprofit into a regional environmental leader with lasting impact.

For 26 years, PRWC has worked tirelessly to protect and restore the 90-square-mile Pomperaug River Watershed. Our dedicated team conducts water quality research, leads community education programs, manages invasive species removal, and partners with towns and organizations to safeguard clean water. Every year, we prove that size does not define strength. Yet as the challenges facing our Watershed grow, so too must our capacity to meet them.



Looking towards the future



The **Fund for the Future, managed by the Connecticut Community Foundation**, is the next step in that growth. It will help PRWC build the foundation for larger dreams - a home base where we can host community events, and educational workshops; a van to transport kayaks, cleanup gear, and volunteers without relying on rentals; and one day, perhaps, a dedicated water lab where scientists, students, and residents can study and protect the lifeblood of our region. The Coalition wishes to express its sincere thanks to the late Benton and Dorothy Leach who created the fund through a generous initial donation in 2007.

Creation of the Pomperaug River Fund for the Future (L to R)

Ann Merriam Feinberg, Benton Leach,
Marc Taylor and Cris Schaefer



"I know Marc would truly love the idea of his legacy carrying on for generations to come," says Carol Haskins, PRWC's Executive Director.

"Growth can be scary and intimidating, but I know if he were still here, he would be encouraging us to think bigger and broader. The Fund for the Future will allow us to sustain and expand upon Marc's vision."

These are not distant dreams. They are milestones on the path toward a stronger, more resilient organization that can respond quickly to environmental threats and lead proactive conservation across our watershed.

Just as Dr. Taylor's work began with a simple idea - **that water connects us all** - the **Fund for the Future** begins with collective action. Every gift to this fund, large or small, helps ensure that PRWC can continue to lead with science, inspire with education, and act with purpose.

To designate your donation to the Fund for the Future simply check the box on the enclosed remittance envelope. By contributing you help secure the next generation of clean water protection. You help turn vision into reality. You help ensure that when people look out over the Pomperaug River decades from now, they will see what Dr. Taylor saw - not just beauty, but shared responsibility.



PRWC Founders

(L to R)

Dr. Marc Taylor, Larry Pond
and
Dick Leavenworth

PRWC Leadership



Board of Directors

(Pictured L to R)

Robert Travers
Chair

Jeff Davis
Vice-Chair

Anne Westerman
Treasurer

Lisa Turoczi
Secretary

Diane Fountas, MD
Andie Greene
Jesse Langer
John McDonald
Matthew McGlynn
John Pittari
Bonnie Sherman

Staff

Carol Haskins
Executive Director

Olivia DiPalermo
Watershed Programs Manager

Cindy Donaldson
Development and Communications Specialist

Amanda Kopec
Bookkeeper

Upcoming Events & Programs

Join the fun and be a part of our mission!

We welcome you to join our **River Steward Volunteer** program to help with salt and bacteria monitoring and water chestnut removal, join us for any of our educational programs, a paddle on one of our waterways and of course support us at our annual spring gala. Check our website for more details and added events and programs: www.pomperaug.org/events

2026 Events & Programs

World Water Day Forum

Sunday, March 22, 2026 1-4 PM. Free and open to the public.
Southbury Public Library, 100 Poverty Rd, Southbury, CT

A Toast to the Watershed PRWC Gala May 2026

Paddling Adventures May-October 2026

Lower Pomperaug River, Lake Zoar, Long Meadow Pond
Dates to be announced

2026 Stream Monitoring Schedule

Road Salt Monitoring 10AM-11:30AM

Saturday December 6, 2025
Saturday January 10, 2026
Saturday February 7, 2026
Saturday March 7, 2026

Bacteria & Nitrate Monitoring 8:30AM -11:30AM

Wednesday April 8, 2026 Wednesday August 12, 2026
Wednesday May 13, 2026 Wednesday September 9, 2026
Wednesday June 10, 2026 Wednesday October 14, 2026
Wednesday July 8, 2026

Thermal Monitoring 1PM-4PM

Launch: Thursday May 14 & 21, 2026
Retrieval: Friday October 2 & 9, 2026
Spot checks to be determined

Macroinvertebrate (river bug) Survey 9AM-12PM & 1PM-4PM

Saturday September 19 & Sunday September 20, 2026
Saturday October 17 & Sunday October 18, 2026

Water Chestnut Removal May-August 2026

Lake Stibbs, Southbury Training School, Southbury
Dates to be announced



Stay in the know, join our e-mail list!

www.pomperaug.org/subscribe or scan QR Code

