

FARM RIVER WATERSHED - LEARNING & ACTION

Our group was convened by the Friends of the Farm River in February 2023 - and open to anyone in the Farm River watershed region. We are educating ourselves to act upon information compiled in the “Farm River Watershed Management Plan” of August 2021, prepared by Fuss & O'Neill under the leadership of Chris Sullivan, Executive Director, Southwest Conservation District with help from local and regional stakeholders. We hope to build a coalition of watershed stakeholders to develop and implement a watershed management plan to serve as a road map to achieve the overarching goals highlighted in the report (below).

Major watershed stakeholders – SWCD, Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation, NRCS, RWA, all the watershed's municipalities, Save the Sound, CT DEEP, and others – recognize the need to address water quality issues in the Farm River watershed and address issues affecting the health of our communities, wildlife and their habitats.

Overview of Issues facing Farm River Watershed

Like many coastal and urbanized watersheds in Connecticut, the Farm River has been impacted by historical development and land use activities in its watershed. Surface water quality along much of the river and some of its tributaries is degraded due to elevated levels of fecal indicator bacteria (e.g., *Enterococci*, *Escherichia coli*, fecal coliform) and excess nutrients (phosphorus and nitrogen), which result from storm water runoff, agriculture, failing septic systems, illicit discharges, nuisance wildlife/pets (primarily in urban areas), and other sources. In addition, stream flow in portions of the Farm River and its tributaries has been reduced during certain periods of the year due to water diversions and reduced recharge resulting from development. This has resulted in water quality “impairments,” in which waterbodies cannot support certain types of uses such as recreation or sustaining habitat for aquatic life. Because the Farm River flows into Long Island Sound, the excess nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants carried by the river influence the water quality of the Sound and nearby embayments. Given the watershed's location in the region, there is potential for significant future development to further impact water quality and environmental resources in the watershed.

Our Goals: (outlined in: “Farm River Watershed Management Plan,” August 2021)

- Help return impaired waters to swimmable and fishable conditions
- Protect high quality waters including drinking water supplies
- Reduce downstream water quality impacts to Long Island Sound
- Address both urban and agricultural nonpoint sources of pollution
- Identify management measures that provide related benefits such as habitat restoration, flood protection, and climate resilience .
- Characterize current baseline water quality & land use conditions
- Evaluate contributing factors & pollutant sources in areas of known impairments
- Identify & prioritize actions over 10 years to reduce pollutant inputs to impaired

waters & protect quality waters including drinking water supplies

- Identify water quality monitoring needs to support plan implementation
- Raise public awareness of water quality and related projects/programs
- Increase community involvement, strengthen stakeholder partnerships
- Satisfy NRCS National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) requirements for watershed assessments, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's (CT DEEP) requirements for watershed-based plans

Farm River Watershed Management Plan *(Full report)*

<https://friendsoffarmriver.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/farm-river-watershed-management-plan-august-2021-fuss-oneill-2.pdf>