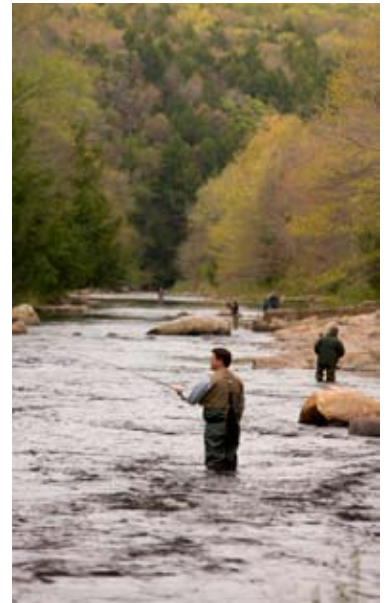


PROTECTING THE Salmon River Watershed

The Salmon River and the waters that flow into it have been part of the history and culture of central Connecticut for centuries. They have been a source of jobs and recreation, and have provided a peaceful retreat when the need came to escape the multitudes.

The Salmon River and its streams formed the backbone of the economy in villages throughout its watershed. Streams and ponds were dammed to furnish power for mills and tanneries in the early 1700s. Today, when you cross the covered bridge near Route 16 you follow in the footsteps of farmers who crossed the Salmon here to take their corn and wheat to be ground at the nearby mill. And today these waters are considered among the finest trout streams in New England. Anglers come from all over the Northeast to fish the Blackledge and Jeremy Rivers, Dickinson Creek and Fawn Brook, all of which enter the Salmon upstream of the covered bridge.

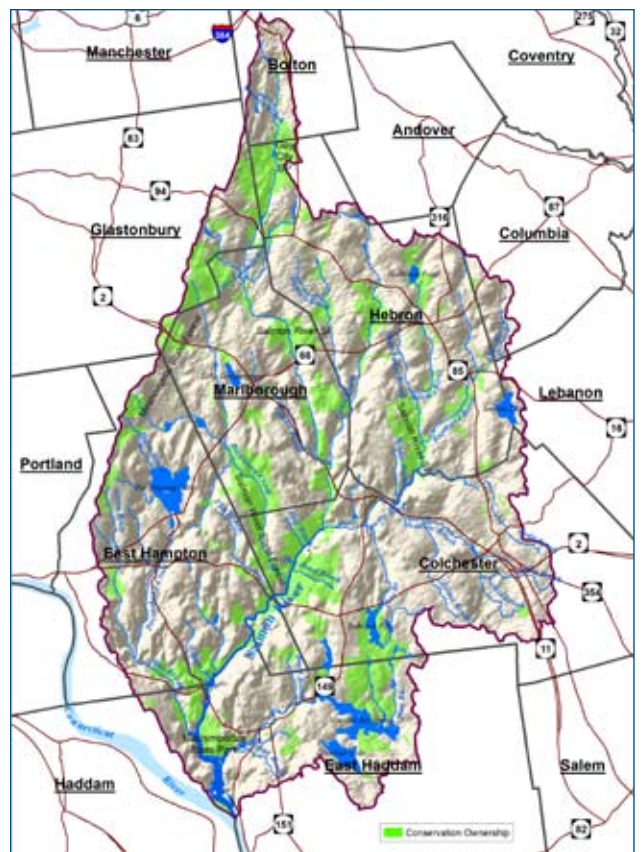


Fly fishing on Salmon River in Colchester
© Jerry and Marcy Monkman



Comstock Covered Bridge in East Hampton
© Ethan Nedea

People who love these rivers cherish their memories of them, just like longtime friends and relatives. Perhaps it was a fishing trip with Grandpa, or the first trout on a fly rod, a canoe trip through the rich tidal marshes at Salmon Cove, or a memorable bike ride on the Airline Trail with its expansive view. For generations the Salmon River has been a constant, loyal and undemanding companion.





Forested riparian buffer on Salmon River in Colchester
© Shelley Green

A Partnership for Protection

We have come to learn more about the Salmon River and have begun to recognize the River's needs. Today, the greatest challenge is managing growth in the fastest developing region of the state while protecting the integrity of this vital resource for future generations.

The key to success is to plan well today. In 2007 The Nature Conservancy galvanized the formation of the Salmon River Watershed Partnership among the towns of Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, Marlborough, Bolton, Columbia, East Haddam, Glastonbury, Haddam and Lebanon. Working with stakeholders, the Partnership developed a regional action plan to collaboratively conserve the Salmon River system and to support the long term social and economic vitality of the communities in the watershed.

The Partnership recognizes that throughout the country, three land use strategies have proven to effectively protect the health and integrity of rivers, streams and wetlands. These science-based strategies provide a foundation that local partners can use to accommodate economic growth while protecting a natural resource that is of great importance to the region.



Example of low impact development: Jordan Cove in Waterford, CT
© University of Connecticut

1. Low Impact Development

Through better site design — sometimes called low impact development or LID — communities can preserve natural areas, protect water quality and reduce sprawl. For example, instead of building conventional residential subdivisions, towns can build clustered subdivisions that preserve natural areas, reduce the size of streets and parking areas and provide green space for communities' enjoyment. Such design reduces infrastructure burdens, enhances property values, builds local character and can be less expensive for the developer to build. Designs that minimize street width, eliminate unnecessary cul-de-sacs and limit the size of parking lots all help protect water quality by reducing impervious surfaces.

Design practices that allow rainwater runoff from roads, roofs and parking areas to filter through the ground can protect water quality by removing pollutants and sediments. For example, vegetated open channels alongside roads can be used to convey and treat stormwater runoff.

Better site design on a larger scale means that community leaders must make sound, informed decisions regarding how and where growth occurs in the region. The health of the Salmon River and its tributaries can best be maintained by focusing development in areas where the potential for negative impacts is the least.



Pine Brook in East Hampton
© Jerry and Marcy Monkman

2. Minimizing Impervious Surfaces

The greatest threat to the Salmon River watershed comes from the proliferation of hardened (impervious) surfaces such as roads, roofs, driveways and parking lots. Impervious surfaces prevent rain water from filtering through the ground and cause contaminants and sediments to wash quickly into streams and rivers, often leading to flooding and stream bank erosion. Many studies have shown that water quality in our rivers and lakes is directly linked to the extent of impervious surface within the watershed.

Improved site design, discussed above, can mitigate impacts caused by impervious surfaces. Effective solutions include revising regulations to manage the amount of impervious surface, working with developers to encourage use of porous surfaces (e.g., porous asphalt, paving stones) and designing landscaped wetland detention basins that filter stormwater into the ground rather than direct it into the nearest stream. Also, landscaping plans can minimize runoff by designing planted buffers along hardened surfaces and can reduce the size of grass lawns by incorporating native plants and shrubs.

3. Conserving Streamside Forests

Forested riparian buffers — trees and shrubs growing along streams — minimize flooding impacts and protect water quality by trapping sediments and harmful pollutants before they can enter rivers. They stabilize banks, shade streams and provide food and habitat for wildlife as they move throughout the landscape. Depending on their width and intactness, buffers may absorb up to 100% of sediments.

Fortunately, riparian areas in the Salmon River watershed are generally intact, so we will strive to conserve what's there, perhaps through riparian buffers as part of towns' zoning provisions. Voluntary restoration projects could help landowners replant streamside trees and shrubs in key areas where they have been removed.



Eastern pearlshell mussel, found in small rivers with trout and salmon
© Ethan Nedeau



© Jerry and Marcy Monkman

Planning for a Healthy Future



© Jerry and Marcy Monkman

The health of the Salmon River watershed is a crucial part of the vitality of the human and natural communities that share it. The three land use strategies outlined here provide a practical approach to protecting these clean and peaceful rivers, streams and wetlands that people of the region value so much. After all, the Salmon River watershed is a natural bequest, and now is our opportunity to ensure that it continues to create cherished memories for generations to come.

For more information, contact:
Shelley Green
Lower Connecticut River Program Director
The Nature Conservancy
203.568.6288
sgreen@tnc.org



*Salmon River
Watershed Partnership*

Funded by a Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and by participating Towns.

Waters of the Salmon River watershed:

Amston Lake

Babcock Pond

Blackledge River

Dickinson Creek

Fawn Brook

Jeremy River

Judd Brook

Lake Pocotopaug

Lake Terramuggus

Raymond Brook

Pine Brook

Moodus River

Moodus Reservoir

Meadow Brook