

Recreation-Related Projects for the lower Farmington River, Salmon Brook and Their Corridors

At the request of the Management and Protection Subcommittee, the ten study towns provided brief descriptions of recreation-related projects to provide examples of desired projects that the Management Committee can consider for funding, technical assistance, or volunteer support following designation. The lists provided were not intended to be all-inclusive. None of the suggested projects has been approved for funding or support at this time. If Wild and Scenic River designation is obtained, then the future Committee will be responsible for considering how funds will be dispersed and volunteer efforts directed.

The towns are listed in alphabetical order below for ease of reference, and the individuals who provided the information on behalf of the towns are shown. Three common themes emerged: increasing public access, promoting education through recreation, and protecting the resources.

Avon (Glenn Marston, CPRP, Director, Recreation and Park Department, (860) 409 – 4332)

Avon has a Natural Resources Inventory & Management Plan, which was done for the town by Ferrucci & Walicki. With respect to recreation-related projects, Avon would like support implementing some of the Plan recommendations for Alsop Meadows and Fisher Meadows. Below are brief excerpts from the Plan:

“Alsop Meadows is a somewhat active recreational area, due in part to the array of activities available. During the course of site visitations for this plan, observed activities included hiking (several people and dogs), lunchtime walking from nearby offices, canoe launching, informal swimming, gardening, and lacrosse practice. In addition to continuing these activities, it is generally recommended that efforts to restarted to develop and use Alsop Meadows as an environmental education/demonstration park.”

Specific Plan recommendations include adding and improving signage, adding two new trails to the eastern portion of the property, developing an interpretative nature trail (from existing/new trails) with appropriate signage and printed guides, implementing erosion control measures at the canoe launch, revitalizing a previously established arboretum, and possible renovation of a barn on the property as a nature center.

“Fisher Meadows is a very active recreational area with an array of activities available. It is generally recommended that this wide mix of activities be continued, and enhanced ...”

Specific recommendations for Fisher Meadows include erosion control measures at the property’s canoe launch and fishing areas, better signage, printed trail guides/maps, repair and maintenance of trail bridges, improvement of trail blazes/markers, creation of a formal canoe launch along the Farmington River, and continued use of the property by groups for research or educational programs.

Bloomfield (David Melesko, Director of Leisure Services, (860) 243 - 2923)

Bloomfield's #1 priority would be to get some funding support to engage a Consultant for a Needs Assessment for both the Farmington River Park and Wilcox Park. This would be followed by developing an explicit plan for both parks.

Another project would include support of the Bloomfield portion of the East Coast Greenway, which will connect with the trail systems of neighboring towns (Windsor, Tariffville, and East Granby).

Burlington (Catherine Bergstrom, First Selectman, 860-673-6789)

Since Burlington is completing the rails-to-trails section that connects with Unionville, the town would like funding for an educational project. In particular, they would like to put historical wood framed placards along the trail. There is a lot of history associated with the Farmington River and Burlington could do something very similar to the information placards that Collinsville has. This could be done in conjunction with the town Historical Society, Land Trust, and Public Library.

Other items include: (1) a short video production promoting the rails-to-trails and the river specifically for Burlington, (2) invasive species removal and (3) educational field trips for Region 10 children.

Canton (Neil Pade, AICP, Director, Planning & Community Development, (860) 693 – 7891)

1. Develop a public access point for canoe/ kayak launching. This will require consideration of public storage of vessels on rented slips (possibly to be managed by the town). Sufficient parking also would need to be provided.
2. Increase town park amenities along rail trail/ river portion in Bicentennial Park.
3. Increase informational and educational signage around public access points, fishing information, natural habitat and ecosystem information, etc.
4. (Similar to #1 & #2) Develop the Town Garage site into a riverside park, including the provision of public river access. River access for boats should be limited to car-topped boats only. A ramp access of about 15' in width would suffice. There may also be the need to deepen the river along its banks for accommodation. (The river bend upstream from and opposite of Collinsville Lube is very shallow, however this area would most likely be deepened if flashboards are installed at the dam.
5. Develop the cobble beach by Town Bridge.
6. Acquire and preserve riparian land along the corridor. Of particular interest is the parcel opposite the corner of River Road and Town Bridge, and the parcel opposite Atwater Road.
7. Clean up of the area where the Cherry Brook meets the Farmington River. There is indication of a listed plant (Riverweed) in that area. Projects to maintain or enhance the appropriate habitat for this plant should be considered. There is also a lot of fishing interest in this area so perhaps a project that balances the recreational needs and the habitat needs of certain river species in this area could be developed.
8. A self guided nature trail throughout the river corridor.
9. A self guided nature trail on the rails to trails.
10. Develop a day long, town wide Earth Day that would include guided hikes in town and along the river. Consider possible coordination with local organizations that have recycling or energy saving themes or an environmentally friendly twist. The focus of the event would be to celebrate our wild and scenic resources for which every town along the Farmington River could participate.
11. Create a college scholarship for a student within a wild and scenic town that plans on studying environmental science.

East Granby (Gary Haynes, CZEO, Director of Community Development, (860) 653 - 3444)

1. Reestablish swimming as recreation at Granbrook Park.
2. Develop projects that support white water kayaking.
3. Develop projects that protect the renowned trout fishing (fish passage, water monitoring, etc).
4. Develop trails along the River.
5. Develop marketing material to support recreational use of river.
6. Establish Stream and River Clean up projects.

7. Support acquisition and easements of land adjacent to River to provide corridor protection.
8. Develop Master Concept plans for publicly owned land along river.
9. Develop erosion protection along banks where needed.
10. Dredge silt deposits where needed.

Farmington (Liz Dolphin, Assistant Town Planner, (860) 675 - 2325)

Below is a list of recreation-related projects for the Town of Farmington on or adjacent to the Farmington River. These projects have only been discussed or proposed preliminarily. Several, however, were included in the final report from the Town Council's Tunxis Mead and River Access Sub-Committee on Accessibility. The list is not in order of priority, nor is this necessarily a complete list.

1. Hiking trail to Farmington Aqueduct abutment and connection with river walk in the Town of Avon to the north.
2. Access and picnic improvements to Little League park off Wannowmassa Lane along Farmington River to allow further access and enjoyment of the river.
3. Canoe & Kayak launch to Farmington River from Rails-to-Trail parking along Collinsville Road.
4. River walk and foot bridges to connect open space along Farmington River in Unionville Center.
5. Canoe & Kayak launch from parking along River Road and foot bridge to access Town open space on the other side of the Farmington River.
6. Improved access to Farmington River at Yodkin-Morin Park for picnicking, fishing and canoe/kayak launch.
7. Canoe/Kayak launch south of Route 4 Farmington River Bridge in Farmington Village.
8. Additional parking for access to trail system along Farmington River and the historic Farmington aqueduct.
9. Canoe/Kayak launch on Farmington River north of Meadow Road.
10. Hiking trail along river on north side of the Farmington River bend.
11. General accessibility improvements to river access points, trails and picnic areas as outlined by the Tunxis Mead and River Access Sub-Committee on Accessibility Recommendations for Site Improvements.

Granby (James Klase, Public Works Director, (860) 653 - 8960)

The Town of Granby is always interested in improving the quality of the rivers and streams passing through town as well as providing new recreational opportunities for its residents. Some potential projects for improving the Salmon Brook and its tributaries under the Wild and Scenic program are:

- Additional hiking trails from Salmon Brook Park to the McLean game Sanctuary.
- Way finding signage indicating the Wild and Scenic designation of the brook.
- Additional parking areas for access to the Brook for fishing, hiking, etc.

Hartland (Jennifer Abalan, Chair, Hartland Recreation Commission, (860) 978 - 1876)

A high priority for Hartland is to connect Camp Alice Merritt, Berg Field and Hartland Elementary School (K-8) with a series of trails. Berg Field contains the baseball field for the school and little league, and hosts the annual fireman's carnival, music festivals, tag sales, etc. Information on Camp Alice Merritt is provided below. Work on the trails has been ongoing, and mostly every organization in town has volunteered over time to help. Hartland would like funding to help complete these trails, but is always looking for volunteers to work too.

Here is some additional background from Hartland's Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD):

"The Hartland Recreation Committee oversees the baseball, soccer and basketball youth programs. The Committee maintains the swimming area at Camp Alice Merritt, a forty-seven acre parcel bought by the Town in 1992 from the Connecticut Valley Girl Scout Council and available to residents for recreational use. Hartland residents have access to Hartland Pond through a right-of-way. The Town also offers a four-week summer camp program available to children eligible to attend kindergarten through sixth grade.

The beautiful natural environment of Hartland lends itself to active and passive recreation from roadside walking to off-road hiking trails. Prime activities include hiking along miles of wooded trails, swimming, canoeing and fishing (the Farmington River and Salmon Brook offer pristine waters for some of the best fishing in the State), hunting, mountain biking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, horseback riding, swimming, bird watching, wildflower identification, and stargazing...."

Simsbury (Gerard Toner, Director, Culture, Parks and Recreation, (860) 658-3255)

A priority for Simsbury would be a handicapped access boat launch at Curtiss Park.

Another project would improve access to a birding area for birders. The project idea is to build steps and an elevated viewing platform on the mound on the east side of the grassy lot used for overflow parking of cars for Simsbury Meadow concerts. The steps would improve access over bumpy terrain and the elevated platform would provide a much improved view of a large wetland area without intruding on it. The site is used by independent birders and by guided birding field trips sponsored by the Simsbury Senior Center.

Windsor (Paul Norris, CPRP, Director, Recreation and Leisure Services, (860) 285 - 1997)

The Town of Windsor has been formulizing ideas on river projects that include redesign of the Farmington river boat launch (off Pleasant Street) and greenway trails along the river. Below is a concept of the boat launch.

"The Pleasant Street Boat Launch was built in the 1990's and services small boats launching into the Farmington River. At times of the year, it is filled to parking capacity due to its popularity. Presently, the paved launch area, sufficient for one boat at a time, has been eroded by the river action. Temporary repairs have been done to allow continued usage of the launch. Permanent repairs are required, and as part of this effort, it is desirable to upgrade the launch area to withstand the river erosion forces and to reduce future maintenance and repair costs. It is proposed to demolish the present launch area and reconstruct the launch using precast concrete slab sections. Excavation and realignment of the launch and parking area will be required."

Acknowledgements: In addition to the town contacts listed above, the Management and Protection Subcommittee would like to thank the individuals below who helped compile the above lists. We apologize to any contributors we have inadvertently omitted.

John McCahill (Avon), Kevin Gough (Bloomfield), Paul Rochford (Burlington), Alis Ohlheiser (Canton), Sue Murray (Hartland), Roger Preston (Simsbury), Sally Rieger (Simsbury), Eric Barz (Windsor)