

**Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District
Via Remote Access****

AGENDA

Regular Meeting of Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

1. Safety Moment
2. Approval of Minutes – November 18, 2020 meeting
3. Water Chestnut Follow-Up: W. Henley and J. Tracy
4. Updates on other land and RWA properties, including invasive species update
5. Other Land items
6. Review date for FY 2022 Joint Committee Special Budget Review Meeting
7. Member to attend December 17, 2020 RWA Meeting – M. Levine
8. Next Meeting: Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.
9. Adjourn

****In accordance with the Governor Lamont's, Executive Order No. 7B for the Protection of Public Health and Safety during COVID-19 Pandemic and Response, the public meeting will be held remotely. Members of the public may attend the meeting via conference call, videoconference or other technology. For information on attending the meeting via remote access, and to view meeting documents, please visit <https://www.rwater.com/about-us/our-boards/board-meetings-minutes?year=2020&category=1435&meettpe=&page=>. For questions, contact the board office at 203-401-2515.**

Topic: RPB Land Use Committee Meeting

Time: Dec 9, 2020 05:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting (*via conference call*)

Dial by your location

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Meeting ID: 882 8276 4579

Passcode: 796614

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kdnyWY0s5M>

SAFETY MOMENT

DECEMBER – HOLIDAY STRESS

The holiday season brings with it a mix of joy and stress for workers; 51 percent say they are more cheerful at work this time of year, but 35 percent feel more work related pressure. Among the factors that employees reported increasing stress levels:

- Balancing work and holiday obligations (32%)
- Taking time off and returning to heavier workloads (23%)
- Having smaller staff than usual because of time off (18%)
- Buying gifts for co-workers and contacts (11%)
- Attending holiday office parties (8%)

To alleviate or prevent job-related stress:

- Before leaving work, list priorities for the next day. Keep a separate list for off-the-job to dos.
- Ask for help if you have too much work. Your supervisor might consider solutions such as adjusting deadlines or delegating.

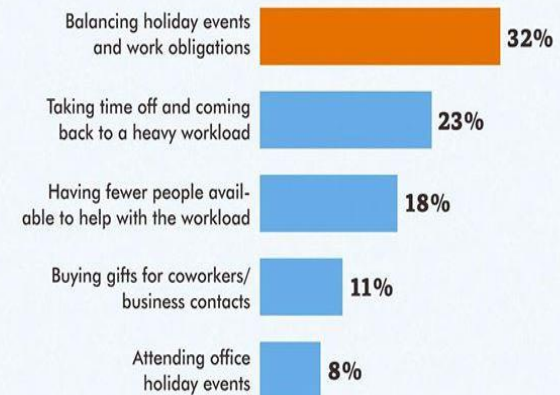


Tap Into
Safety



Regional Water Authority

Which aspect of the holiday season is most stressful for you on the job?



Other: 8%

Service – Teamwork – Accountability – Respect – Safety

Safety is a core company value at the Regional Water Authority .
It is our goal to reduce workplace injuries to zero.

Regional Water Authority

UNAPPROVED DRAFT

**Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District**

Minutes of November 18, 2020 Meeting

A regular meeting of the Land Use Committee of the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District (“RWA”) took place on Wednesday, October 14, 2020 at Lake Saltonstall, 100 Hosley Avenue, Branford, Connecticut. Chair Betkoski presided.

Present: Committee Members: P. Betkoski, B. Eitzer, R. Harvey, M. Horbal, M. Levine, G. Malloy, J. Oslander and J. Mowat Young

Authority: D. Borowy
Management: P. Ruggiero, T. Norris and J. Triana
RPB Staff: J. Slubowski

Chair Betkoski called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. He reviewed the Safety Moment distributed to members.

On motion made by Mr. Malloy, seconded by Mr. Eitzer, and unanimously carried the Committee approved the minutes of its October 14, 2020 meeting.

At 5:35 p.m., Ms. Young entered the meeting.

Captain Ruggiero, of the RWA Police, provided an update on surveillance of RWA properties, which included:

- Cameras deployed
- ATV’s and trespassers
- Illegal activity
- Property damage
- Police staffing

At 5:53 p.m., Captain Ruggiero withdrew from the meeting.

Update on *The Land We Need for the Water We Use Program* – J. Triana reported:

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
October 31, 2020	64	79	66	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
October 2020	4.22	7.76	3.85
Fiscal YTD (6/1/20 – 10/31/20)	15.65	22.57	19.02

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Killingworth - Corresponded with property owner of 25+/- acres.

Hamden/Bethany, DePodesta and Hendrickson properties – Received the recorded easement for Hendrickson from Hamden. Issued revised title policy to DEEP. Continued to work on DePodesta survey and title issues for the OSWLA grant.

Rental houses:

- Seymour, 59 Rimmon Rd. (SE 11) – Granted buyers additional extension for the closing into November.
- Hamden, 95 Ives St. (HA 13) and 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Submitted revised plans for Skiff St. lot split to Hamden staff.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Contacted owners about progress and forwarded contact information of others interested in the property.

Forestry Update

- Guilford – West of Sugar Loaf ash salvage (GU 4) – 40% complete
- North Branford - Beech Street Softwood (NB 4) – 85% complete
- Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) - Contract not yet awarded.
- Hamden - Overstory removal and Tornado Salvage, (HA 36) – Not started yet
- Bethany – East of Lake Bethany hardwood (BE 18) – 70% complete.
 - Marked timber harvests in two different areas; Seymour and Madison. Madison area is complete and out to bid.
 - Assisted the CAES (with help from our facilities dept.) in digging soil pits in Madison. These pits and the data collected from them will allow us to better understand changes in soil composition under a changing tree canopy.
 - Conducted drone flight and mapping of FR-EH tornado damage.
 - Ordered Christmas trees for the 2021 planting season.

Recreation

- Recreation permit holders – 5,758
- Boating ended. Dock removed.
- Maltby Lakes and Lake Chamberlain gates were vandalized and repaired.
- Newsletter published and mailed.
- Held invasive plant walk at Lake Chamberlain with 5 participants.
- Walleye stocking occurred at Lake Saltonstall.
- Quinnipiac Trail relocation in Prospect is complete.

Special Activity Permits

- Girl Scouts of Connecticut Troop 320 (Heather Angelico), Troop Leader - Brownie Troop is attempting to earn their Outdoor Art Creator Badge. Would like to hike Maltby Lake and inspire the kids to use lakes and local foliage as inspiration for their art projects, Maltby Lakes, West Haven, (10/25/20)
- Resources in Search and Rescue, Inc.-(Ms. Celeste Robitaille and designees)-Training of Search and Rescue K9 teams to locate lost or missing individuals, Lake Watrous and Lake Dawson, (10/13/2020-10/3/2021).
- Chris Sullivan, PhD Student, UCONN- Will be taking tissue (using non-lethal biopsy punches) from the 15 bass to evaluate mercury contamination, Lake Saltonstall, (10/17/20)
- GM2 Associates, Inc.-(Mr. Peter Tetreault and designees)-perform field survey and site survey of hydraulic conditions upstream and downstream of the culvert carrying Treadwell Street over Lake Whitney, (10/19/20-10/30/20).

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Agricultural fields – Discussed a field with a potential farmer.
 - North Branford, 229 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Sent letter about the encroachments.
 - Seymour, 6 Maiden Lane (SE 3) – Sent letter to son after death of licensee.

- Invasive plants – Treated invasives in East Haven, Woodbridge, and Bethany. Corresponded with CAES staff about spotted lantern fly monitoring at Lake Saltonstall. Collected herbicide plot data at Prospect.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	~8 acre
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	~35 acres

- Deer hunt – Scouting period began and ended. Hunt started on October 30. Eleven deer harvested and checked in on October 31st. Discussed plans with CAES about installing feeders and cameras after the hunt at Lake Gaillard.
- Cell phone antennas – Discussed swap of antennas at Rabbit Rock tank with vendor.
- Comcast lease, Burwell Tank site – Received proposal from Comcast about second amendment to lease. Sent counter proposal.

There were no other land items to report.

The committee reviewed and approved its 2021 calendar year meeting dates.

Chair Betkoski reported on the volunteer to attend the Authority meeting on November 19, 2020.

The next regular meeting of the committee is Wednesday, December 9, 2020 at 5:30 p.m.

At 6:13 p.m., the meeting adjourned.

Peter Betkoski, Chairman

Update on Water Chestnut (*Trapa natans*) Infestation and Harvest

Joshua Tracy
Invasive Species Management Technician

William Henley
Aquatic Resource Scientist



Trapa natans, Water Chestnut.



5564125

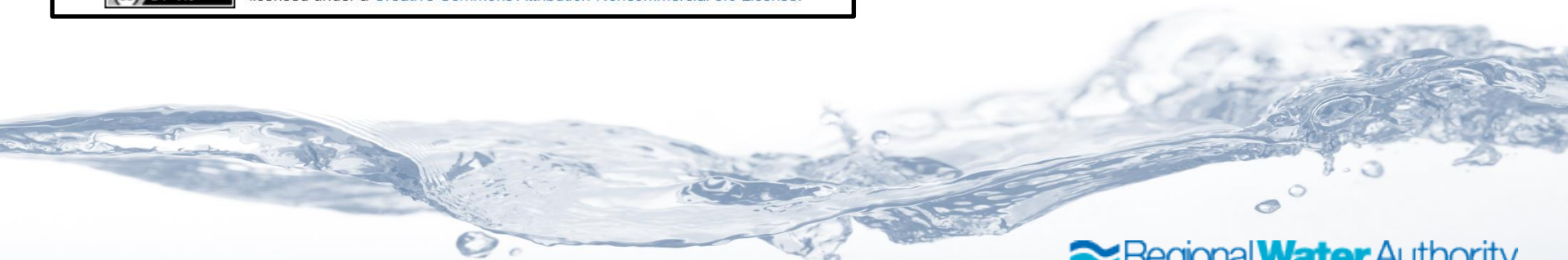


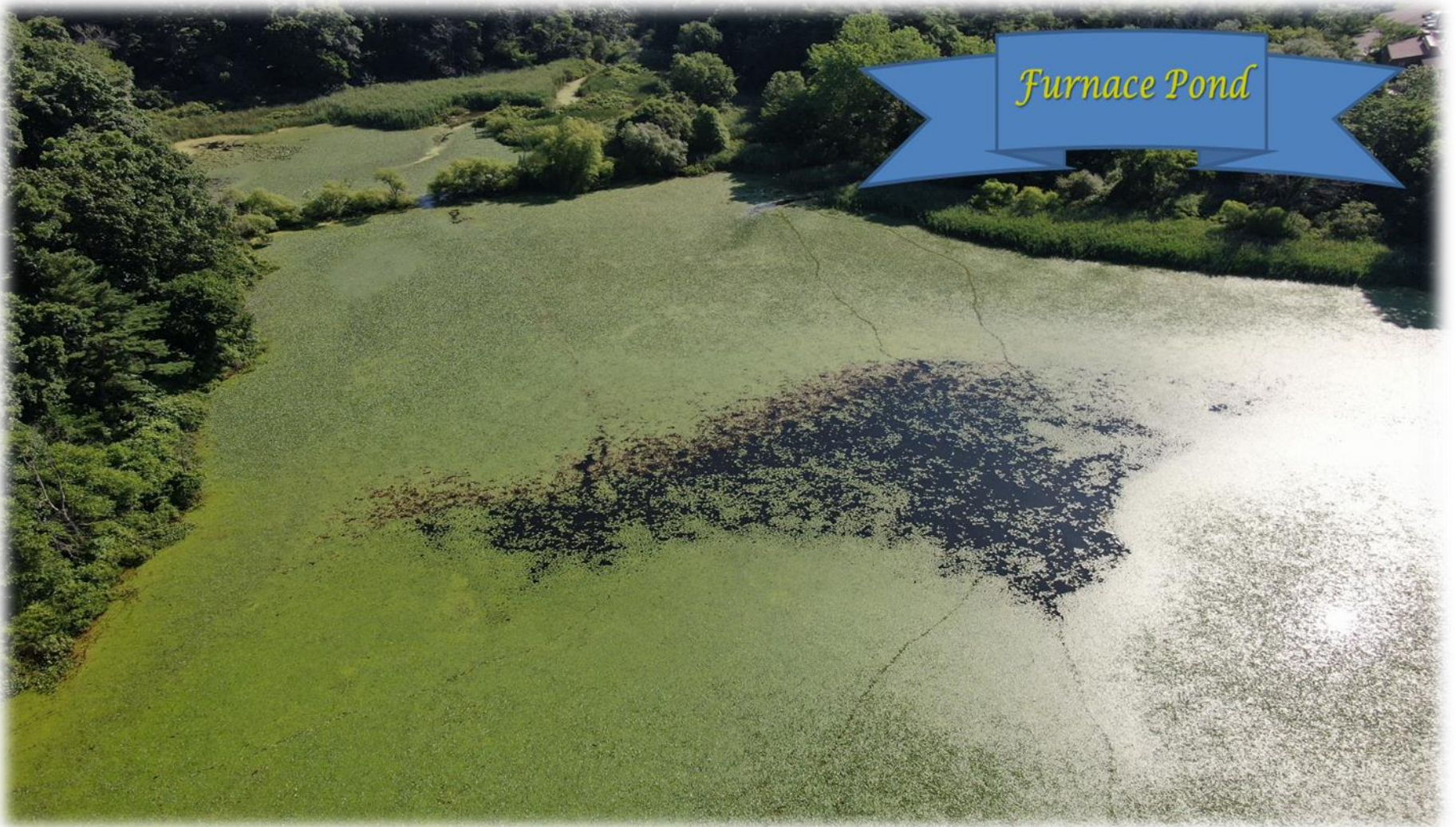
© Guillaume Labeyrie

Shaun Winterton, *Aquarium and Pond Plants of the World*, Edition 3, USDAAPHIS PPQ, Bugwood.org



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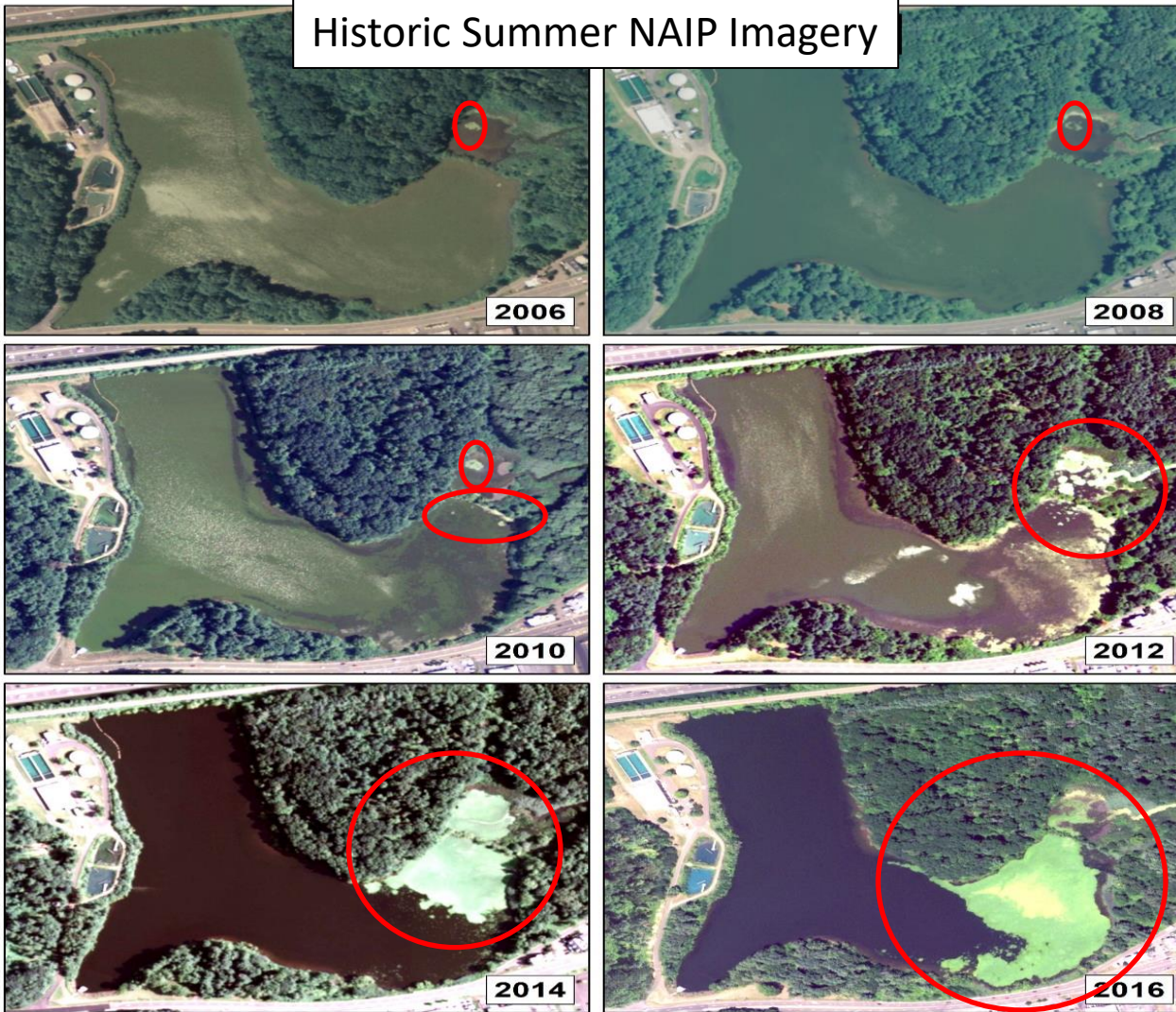




Furnace Pond



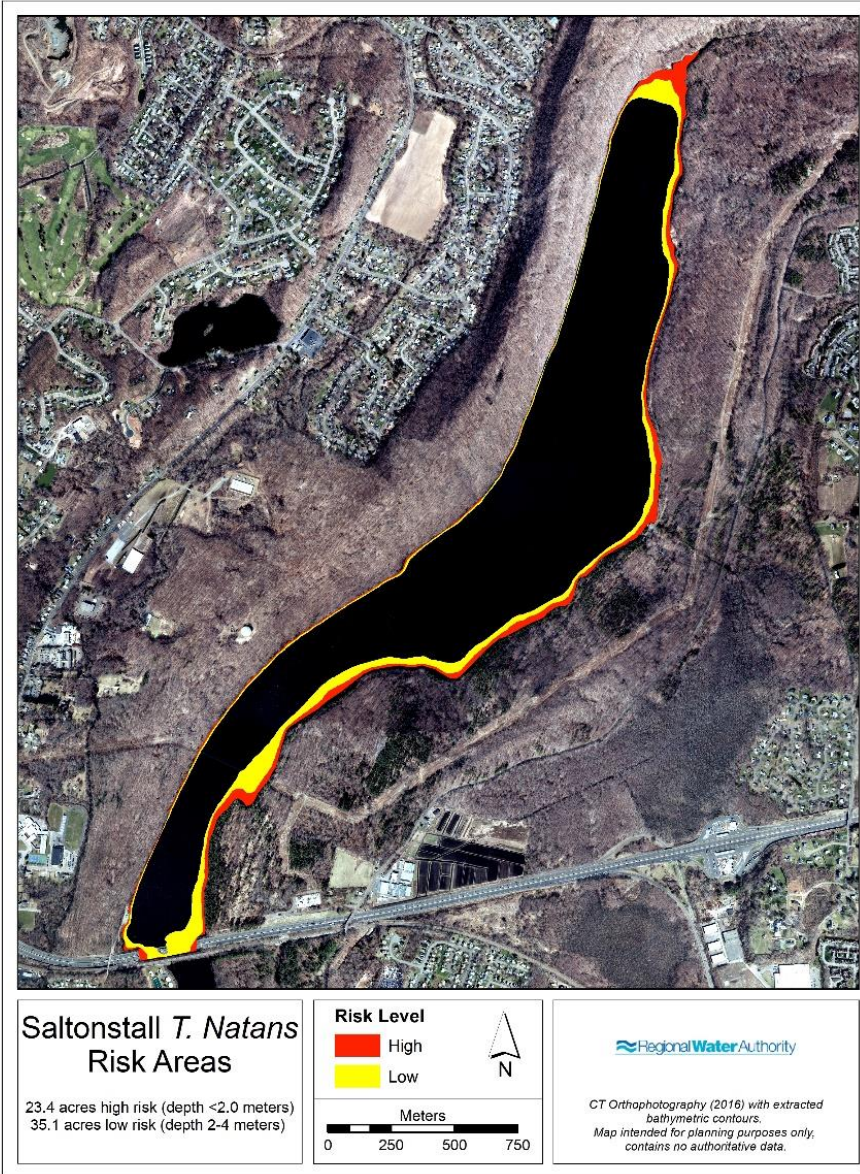
Historic Summer NAIP Imagery



This is a progression of the water chestnut infestation dating back to 2006, using NAIP (National Agriculture Imagery Program).

Courtesy of William Henley.

Preventing a disaster.



Lake Saltonstall is located directly north of Furnace Pond and is connected under I-95. With the infestation left unchecked, this is where the projected outbreak could extend to.

Summer 2020 Harvest

- Harvest conducted 07/08/20 - 8/12/20
- 2 week break during harvesting due to mechanical issues
 - All contracted hours still completed (80 hrs)
 - Contractor supplied additional day (8 hr) of harvesting
- Harvested 4.5 acres



Equipment for harvesting.



Contractor:

SOLitude.

Capacity:

Holds ~435 cubic feet of material.

Time between off-loadings:

~25 minutes.



Equipment for harvesting.

A payloader was used to remove the water chestnut from the boat launch and move it to the de-watering area.



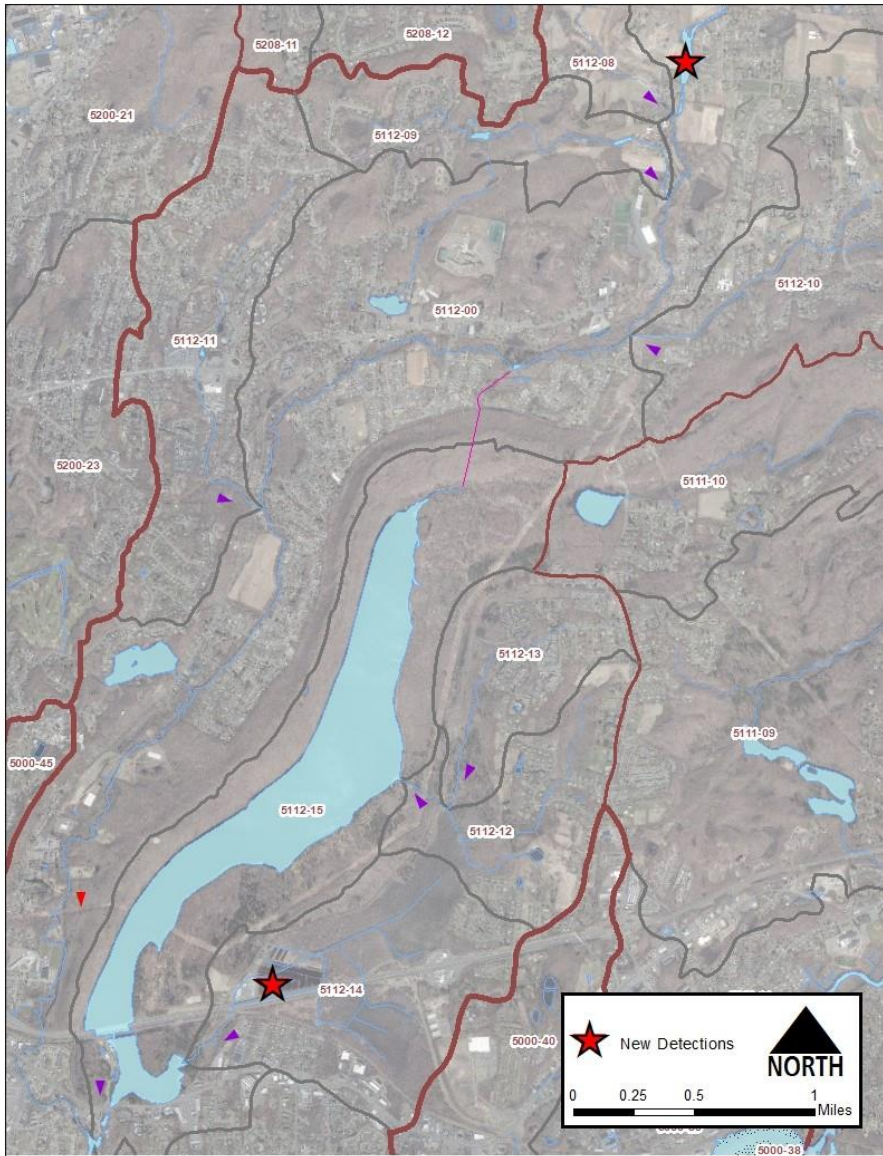
Spoils pile.



Water chestnut spoils
in various states of
decomposition, located
a few hundred feet
uphill from Furnace
Pond.

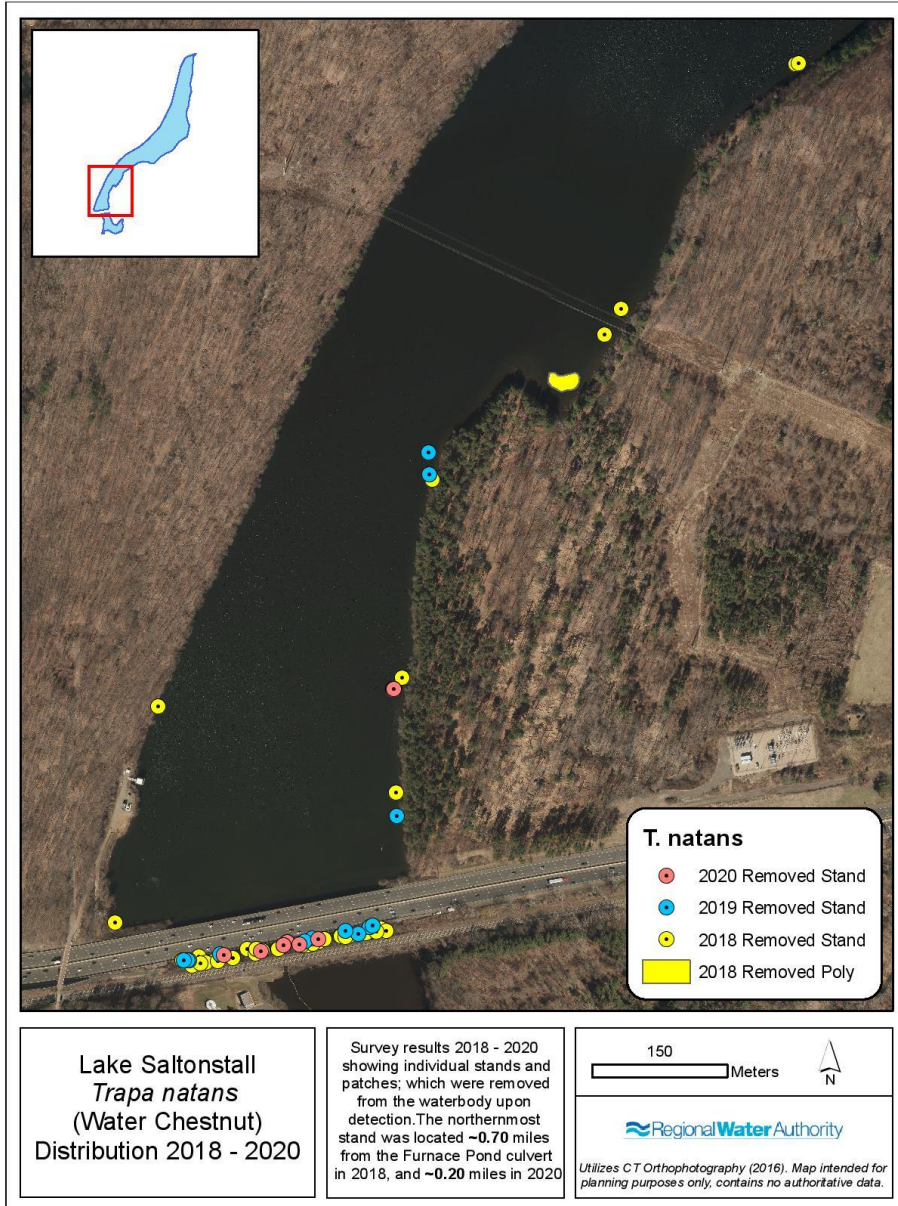


Summer 2020 Monitoring



- New populations located upstream of Furnace Pond/Lake Saltonstall
 - 1st detected during inspection by Environmental Analyst Steve Vitko
 - 2nd Detected during community “Steam Walk” at Pages Mill Pond

Summer 2020 Monitoring



- Population in Saltonstall is diminishing
 - Detection 3 years ago has prevented aggressive spread into Saltonstall
- No detections downstream of Furnace Pond
 - Surveys in 2018-19 found a handful of stands below Furnace Pond in the Farm River Tributary

Future Initiatives

- Budgeting for another two weeks (80hrs) of harvesting in Summer 2021
- Continue monitoring Saltonstall, hand pulling any stands found.
- Continue monitoring Furnace Pond, both on the ground and with remote sensing
- Begin monitoring Farm River East Haven



Drone Mapping Initiative

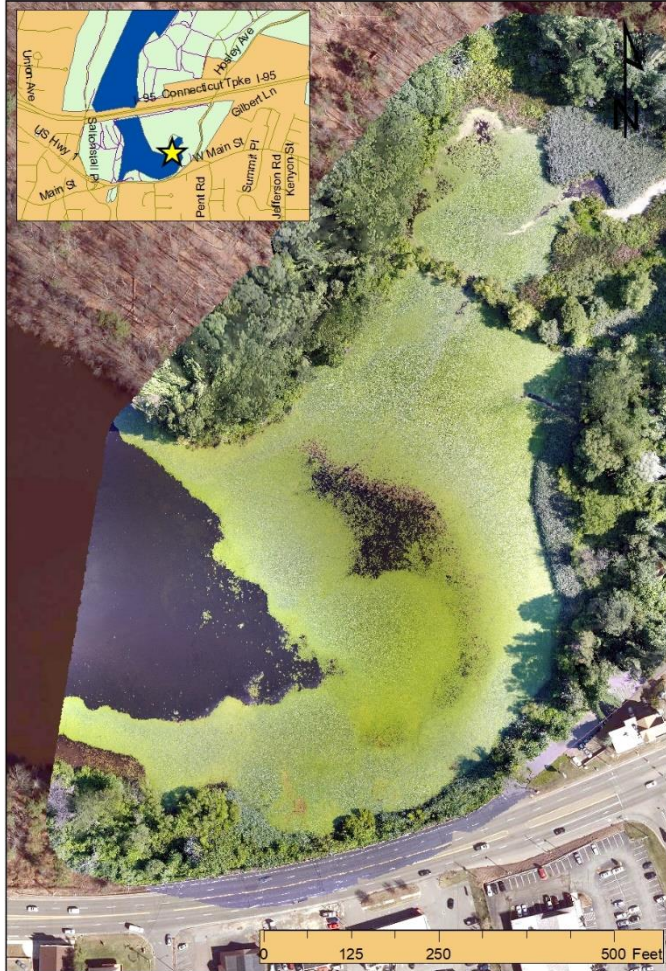
- Collected pre & post harvest aerial imagery
- Digitize imagery to assess *Trapa natans* extent and management effectiveness
- Utilize data for management planning and distribute aerial footage



Use of Pix4Dcapture.



Water Chestnut Harvest- Pre Harvest

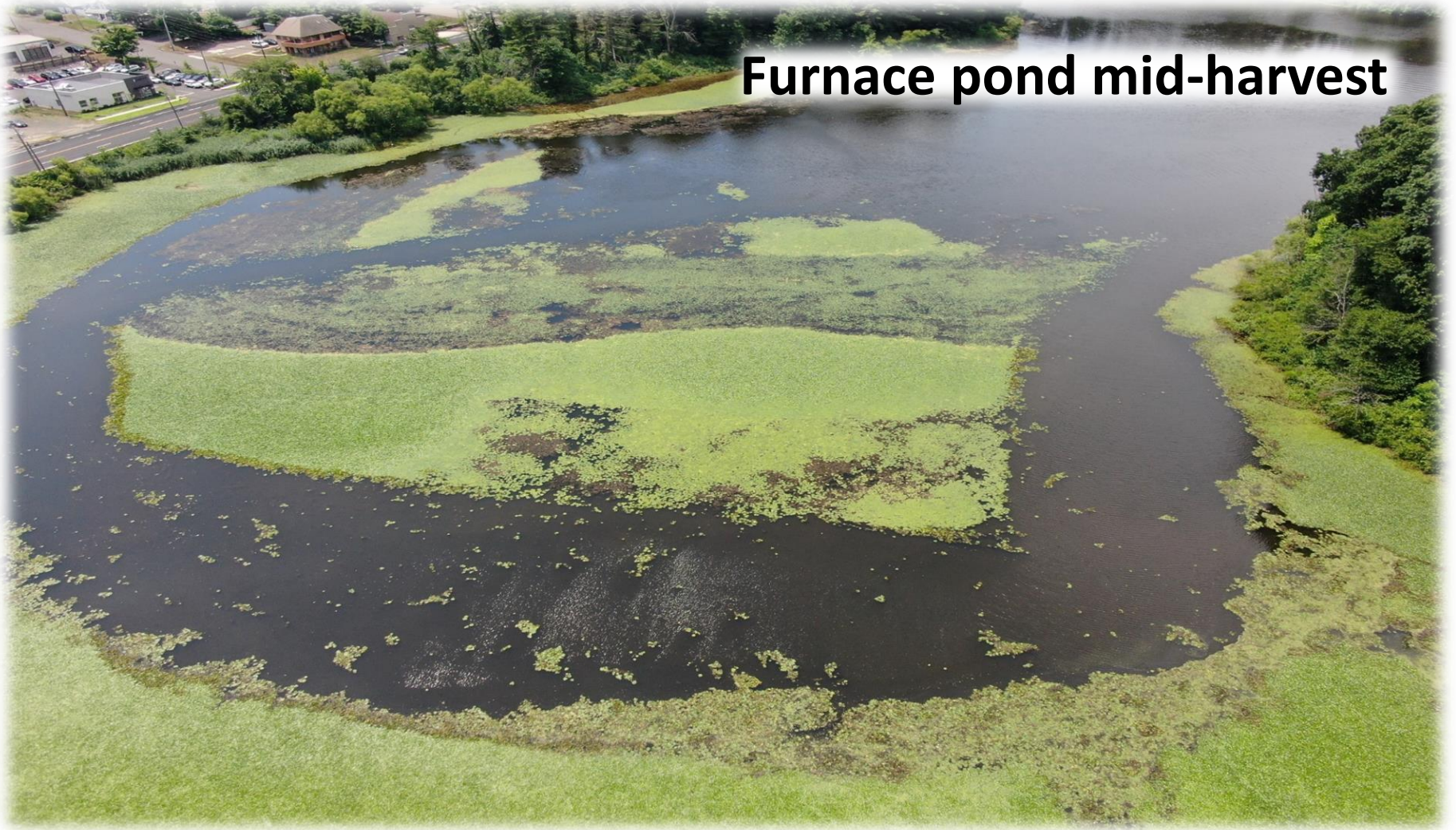


Map made by:
Joshua Tracy
Inv.Spc.Mgt.Tech.
08/31/2020

*Map produced of Furnace pond prior to the harvest beginning. This flight utilized the programs Pix4Dcapture and Maps Made Easy.



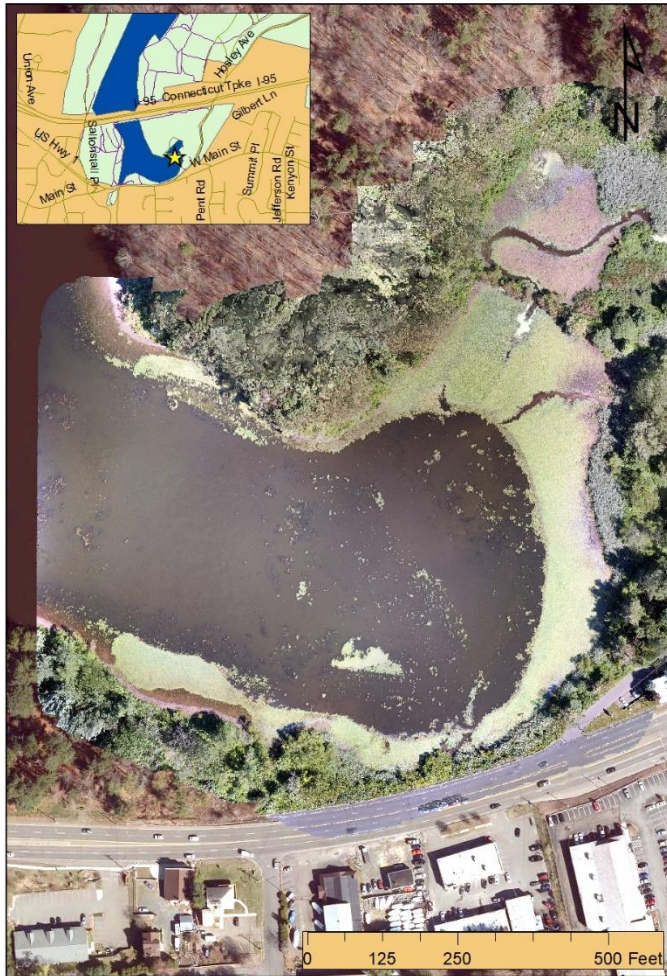
Furnace pond mid-harvest







Water Chestnut Harvest- Post Harvest

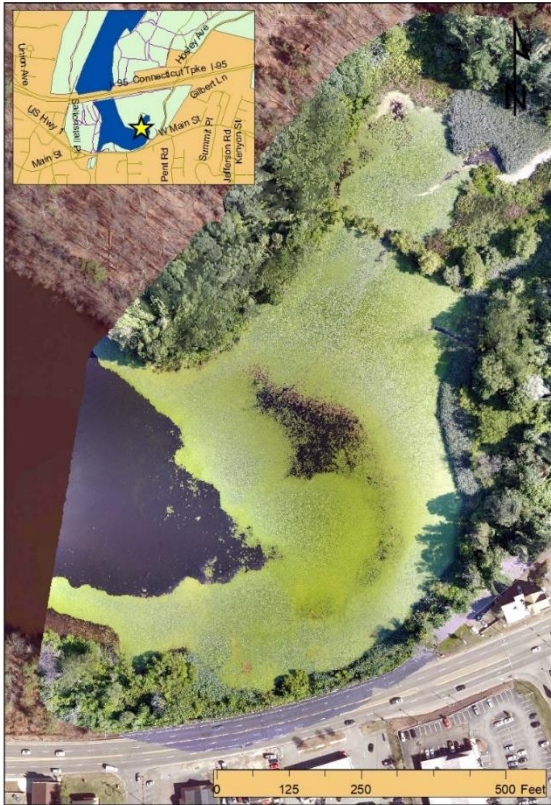


Map made by:
Joshua Tracy
Inv.Spc.Mgt.Tech.
08/31/2020

*Map produced of Furnace pond after the harvest had ended. This flight utilized the programs Pix4Dcapture and Maps Made Easy.



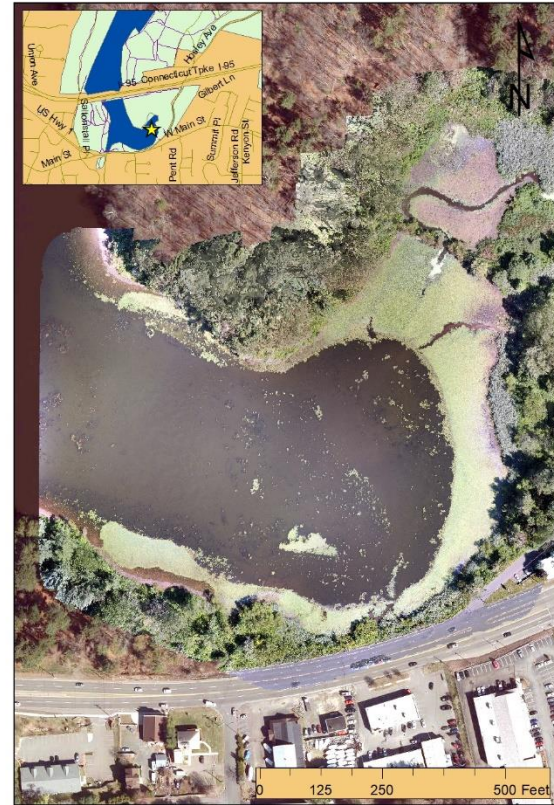
Water Chestnut Harvest- Pre Harvest



Map made by:
Joshua Tracy
Inv.Spc.Mgt.Tech.
08/31/2020

07/06/2020

Water Chestnut Harvest- Post Harvest



Map made by:
Joshua Tracy
Inv.Spc.Mgt.Tech.
08/31/2020

08/20/2020



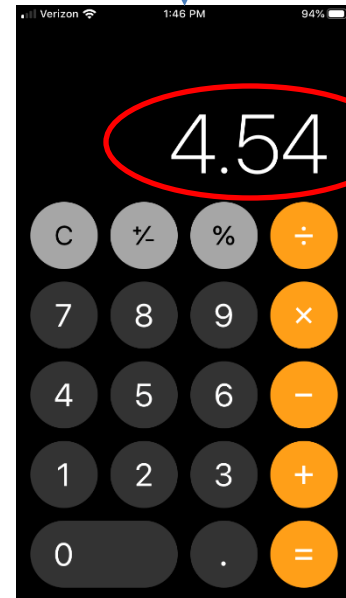
Water Chestnut Harvest- Post over Pre Harvest



Map made by:
Joshua Tracy
Inv.Spec.Mgt.Tech.
08/31/2020

Trappa_Natans_Pre_2020					
OBJECTID *	SHAPE *	SHAPE_Length	SHAPE_Area	Acreage	
1	Polygon	4599.025279	367033.26831	8.425958	

Trappa_Natans_Post_2020					
OBJECTID *	SHAPE *	SHAPE_Length	SHAPE_Area	Acreage	
1	Polygon	5527.499739	196092.199497	4.501676	
4	Polygon	288.139721	2909.051446	0.066783	



The drone will provide essential data.



Conducting these pre-and-post harvest flights will allow us to closely monitor the progress of remediation.



An aerial photograph of a vast field of small, vibrant green plants, likely clover or a similar species, growing densely together. The plants are illuminated by bright sunlight, creating a rich, textured green surface. In the center of the image, the words "Thank you." are written in a white, elegant cursive font, standing out against the green background.

Thank you.



December 9, 2020
Land Use Committee Meeting

Reservoir Levels (Percent Full)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average	Drought Status
November 30, 2020	67	79	66	None

Rainfall (inches)

	Current Year	Previous Year	Historical Average
November 2020	5.20	1.34	3.96
Fiscal YTD (6/1/20 – 11/30/20)	20.85	23.91	22.99

Land We Need for the Water We Use Program (Dispositions/Acquisitions)

- Killingworth - Corresponded with property owner of 25+/- acres.

Hamden/Bethany, DePodesta and Hendrickson properties – Had conference call with DEEP and Murtha about the DePodesta survey and title work. Original easements for Hendrickson sent to DEEP. Signed the agreement and easement for DePodesta and forwarded to DEEP.

Olin Powder Ponds property, Hamden – FMA approved discussions with Hamden Land Conservation Trust to assign the option to buy this property.

Rental houses:

- Seymour, 59 Rimmon Rd. (SE 11) – House and lot were sold. Property boundaries marked. Working with new owners to transfer the street light.
- Hamden, 95 Ives St. (HA 13) and 233 Skiff St. (HA 9A) – Town staff (engineer) would not sign off on the lot split application/map even though we met all the criteria. He contends that there were a taking for the bridge, but it never occurred. Emailed Murtha questions about the process here.
- Woodbridge, 1029 Johnson Rd. – Corresponded with parties who were contacted by the Tarlowski's.

Forestry Update

- Guilford – West of Sugar Loaf ash salvage (GU 4) – 40% complete
 - North Branford - Beech Street Softwood (NB 4) – **90% complete**
 - Killingworth - East Hammonasset Leaf Screen Thinning, (KI 4) - Contract not yet awarded.
 - Hamden - Overstory removal and Tornado Salvage, (HA 36) – Not started yet
 - Bethany – East of Lake Bethany hardwood (BE 18) – 70% complete.
- Showed and awarded timber sale in Madison Peter Marlowe Forest Products.
 - Managed hazard tree issues on our property, both from the public and facilities department.
 - In conjunction with CAES and NRCS, led Yale School of Forestry master's students on a tour of our newest timber harvest and explained the silvicultural prescription and background of the harvest.
 - Worked to get a landclearing contractor to aid facilities and engineering at Farm River-EH.
 - Ordered several species of trees for reforestation and pollinator garden purposes.

Recreation

- Fishing season ended.
- Operations staff cleared downed trees at Hammonasset.

- Operations repaired the fence by the Maltby entrance after a car accident.
- Led bird walk at Lake Hammonasset with the New Haven Bird Club. 25 people attended.
- Scavenger Hunt concluded with 7 entries.
- CFPA provided map of the Quinnipiac Trail relocation in Prospect.

	November		October	
	2020	2019	2020	2019
Permit Holders	5,879	3,785	5,758	3,812

Special Activity Permits

- McLaren Engineering Group (Craig Plate) – Perform a routine and underwater inspection at Whitney Avenue Bridge (SR707) over Lake Whitney; contracted by CTDOT to perform the inspection; (11/18/2020)

Other items

- Encroachments/agreements –
 - Agricultural fields – Discussed fields with three potential farmers.
 - North Branford, 229 Forest Rd. (NB 17) – Police hand-delivered letter and set time to meet abutters at the property.
 - Guilford, Wilbur’s Lane (GU 3) – Notified by Guilford Land Trust members of potential encroachment coming from Taylor Lane.
- Invasive plants – Treated invasives in Woodbridge, and Bethany. Documented invasive populations in Bethany and Killingworth.

Invasive Species Documented/ Mapped (ac)	~2.42 acres
Invasive Species Treated (ac/MH)	~1.88 acres

- Deer hunt – Hunt concluded on November 30. Harvest results below.

Deer Harvested	Bucks	Does	Total
Prospect	2	5	7
Bethany	0	3	3
Seymour	1	0	1
North Branford	16	18	34
			45

- Cell phone antennas – Agreed to increase of revenue from Rabbit Rock tank antenna replacement.
- Comcast lease, Burwell Tank site – Received counter proposal from Comcast about second amendment to lease. Rejected and resent our first counter proposal.
- Regional Conservation Partnership – Held zoom meeting about pollinator pathways with 30 attendees.
- South Cheshire Wellfield storm sewer – Met with Cheshire staff to discuss possible work on and expansion of the existing storm sewer outlet. Researched easement and sent information back to town staff.
- Hamden, New Haven Country Club – Corresponded with surveyor working with the NHCC and supplied maps that we have on file.
- Madison, Old Toll Rd. – Corresponded with neighbor about condition of the road into the Cedar Swamp area.

- Hamden, Spruce Bank Rd. sluice gate – Investigated report of possible vandalism to the old sluice gate related to the race that powered an old mill. Did not find any evidence of vandalism or an accident. Seems to have deteriorated and fallen out of the base.
- Lake Whitney dam work – Assisted CP&D with plans to access the east side of the dam through East Rock Park.

Attachments

- November 9, 2020 - Scaled back solar farm still a threat to watershed, Connecticut group says – Energy News Network
- November 2020 - RWA SUPPORTS EDUCATION INITIATIVES THROUGH CLAIRE C. BENNITT WATERSHED FUND – RWA Press Release
- December 1, 2020 - ‘No net loss!’ Don’t cut down forests to build solar sites – CT Mirror
- December 4, 2020 - \$100K On Horizon For Mill River Clean-Up Projects – New Haven Independent
- November 14, 2020 - ATV rider seriously injured after striking tree in North Branford - WFSB

Upcoming Agenda Items

January 2021 –

Scaled back solar farm still a threat to watershed, Connecticut group says

Written By Lisa Prevost - November 9, 2020 – Energy News Network

A scaled-back solar development approved by Connecticut regulators last week remains a threat to the area's watershed despite added measures to mitigate erosion, according to a local environmental group.

The state Siting Council voted 3-1 last Thursday to approve a proposal by Greenskies Renewable Energy for a 15.3-megawatt solar facility on 75 forested acres on Oil Mill Road in Waterford. This will be the Connecticut-based company's largest solar project in the state, utilizing nearly 46,000 panels.

Greenskies originally proposed a larger project: 16.78 MW on 98 acres. The Siting Council denied that petition, citing state environmental regulators' concerns about the adequacy of stormwater management controls. The developer subsequently hired a more experienced engineer, modified the design and presented the council with the new plan, said Jeff Hintzke, Greenskies vice president of policy and new markets.

But if the redesign satisfied the Siting Council, it does not impress the project's most vocal critic, Save the River-Save the Hills, a nonprofit focused on protecting the Niantic River watershed, which extends across Waterford, East Lyme, Salem and Montville.

The group argues that potential erosion and runoff during site clearing and after construction pose a threat to Oil Mill and Stony brooks, which bracket the property and drain into the Niantic River. The privately owned site contains wetlands, large bedrock outcrops and steep slopes.

"Solar is supposed to be helping environmental issues, not causing them," said Deborah Moshier-Dunn, Save the River's vice president. "This is taking down core forest to put up solar panels, and endangering two top-quality trout streams."

Sediment occurs naturally in waterways, but excessive fluctuation from urban runoff and development can harm trout and other species by clogging gills, making it harder to find food, and disrupting reproduction.

Concerns about severe erosion and runoff from large-scale solar projects have increased in Connecticut as development has expanded in recent years. The state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has issued at least three cease-and-desist orders to solar projects that caused adverse water quality impacts due to "aggressive" construction schedules and noncompliance with stormwater pollution control plans, according to comments submitted by environmental analyst Linda Brunza in response to Greenskies' 2018 application.

Moshier-Dunn pointed to runoff problems in East Lyme several years ago at a 5-megawatt solar field constructed by a Greenskies subsidiary. The town twice issued cease-and-correct orders against the developer after muddy water running off the site during rainstorms wound up in wetlands and waterways.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection is stepping up its regulatory efforts. Earlier this year, the agency proposed revisions to the permit for stormwater discharge required for large solar arrays. The new guidelines specify how to calculate water volume runoff, how to address slope steepness, and the schedule of inspections. They also require developers to submit a letter of credit to the state to ensure that adequate funds will be available to stabilize a project site in the event of problems.

Although the revisions have yet to be finalized, the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection reviewed Greenskies' new proposal with the standards in mind, according to the agency's filings.

Emily Gianquinto, a lawyer representing Save the River in the Siting Council proceeding, said that while she thinks the agency is taking the stormwater issue more seriously, she doesn't think they're doing enough.

"They should have put a temporary moratorium on these things until they figure out what they need to do to protect the environment," Gianquinto said.

Steven Trinkaus, a civil engineer who consults with Save the River, said he thinks the new guidelines underestimate peak runoff volume in sloped terrain, and therefore won't result in effective controls.

"They're not going to solve the problem," he said. "These issues come into play with forested sites because they're clearing, digging up stumps, pulling off topsoil. In my opinion, there are going to be more problems with these large arrays."

Lee Hoffman, Greenskies' lawyer, fired back at Save the River's criticisms in his final brief to the Siting Council, accusing the organization of doing "nothing but disparage the evidentiary record with baseless and unfounded conclusions, devoid of any scientific or mathematical support."

He noted that the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection has affirmed that the developer has redesigned the project in accordance with the new stormwater management guidance.

Greenskies must still submit a final development and management plan for the council's approval. The initial approval came with a number of conditions, including a requirement that after the site is cleared, it must be seeded and stabilized for an entire growing season before construction begins. That will likely be in spring of 2022, Hintzke said.

The council's vote on the matter was "troubling" in that it was decided by so few people, Ginanquinto said. Another three council members were at the meeting but did not vote — one recused himself, and the other two abstained, all without explanation.

RWA SUPPORTS EDUCATION INITIATIVES THROUGH CLAIRE C. BENNITT WATERSHED FUND

The Watershed Fund awards grants to the James Blackstone Memorial Library in Branford and the New Haven Science Fair

The Regional Water Authority (RWA) announced today that the company's affiliate, the Claire C. Bennitt Watershed Fund (The Watershed Fund), has awarded grants in support of educational initiatives to the New Haven Science Fair and the James Blackstone Memorial Library in Branford.

"These organizations are providing exceptional services and experiences to the children of our community, aligning with the Claire C. Bennitt Watershed Fund's purpose of providing education that encourages appreciation for and preservation of our environment," said Brian M. Stone, Claire C. Bennitt Watershed Fund President. "We believe that education is central to our mission of preserving open space and protecting watershed land."

"We are proud to support these programs that will inspire, educate and empower future generations," said Larry Bingaman, President and CEO of the RWA. "Through the Claire C. Bennitt Watershed Fund, the RWA has enriched the lives of thousands of students in our region, and we look forward to remaining strong partners in the Greater New Haven community for years to come."

The Watershed Fund awarded a \$10,000 grant to the New Haven Science Fair, a program dedicated to improving the quality of education, particularly in science and math, in New Haven Public Schools grades Pre-K through 12. The program provides teacher training, mentoring and support for the science fair and parent involvement. As part of the grant, The Watershed Fund will award a \$250 prize to the student with the most innovative project related to water, water conservation or environmental science. The Watershed Fund is a longtime partner of the New Haven Science Fair, awarding it more than \$135,000 since 2007.

The \$1,291 grant award to the James Blackstone Memorial Library will support the Reading Colors Your World (Waterways) program, developed by the library and the Town of Branford's Office of Sustainability and Compliance. The program will be broken into two sessions and will use a combination of stories, discussion starters, visuals and hands-on activities to introduce children in grades K through four to Branford's natural resources, including the watershed and various waterways. Both sessions will reinforce their importance and teach participants the actionable steps they need to take to protect this precious resource through conservation, recycling and reducing litter.

The RWA created The Watershed Fund in 1999, and it remains a driving force behind its mission to protect water quality by acquiring watershed land and promoting environmental education. Working in partnership with municipalities, land trusts and other entities, The Watershed Fund enhances the environment and improves quality of life by protecting drinking water supplies and watershed lands. The education programs and scholarships supported by The Watershed Fund provide future leaders with the tools they need to preserve and protect open space and drinking water supply resources.

'No net loss!' Don't cut down forests to build solar sites

This should not be a choice between forests and solar. We need them both.

Op Ed – CT Mirror - Elizabeth L Langhorne and Diane Hoffman - December 1, 2020

As residents of Hamden, we heartily support solar projects to meet the demand for electricity. Such projects reduce our dependence on burning dirty fossil fuels to get electricity, a method that produces the excessive carbon dioxide (CO2) driving global warming. Much better to get clean and renewable energy from solar panels!

However, we must oppose PETITION NO. 1425 made to the Connecticut Siting Council by Distributed Solar Development (DSD), a solar-energy offshoot of General Electric and Blackrock based in Schenectady, N.Y on behalf of their clients, the CSCU (Connecticut State Colleges & Universities). We applaud CSCU's desire to buy solar energy; however this particular project has a major flaw. It entails clear cutting 12 acres of trees in a forest!

As we all know, forests sequester carbon and mitigate the growing effects of climate change. The September 2020 report from the Governor's Council on Climate Change (GC3) Forests Subgroup presents as a top priority the adoption of a state policy of "no net loss" of forest. "KEEP FOREST AS FORESTS." Regarding this proposed facility, the Hamden Tree Commission writes: "This proposal to clear cut and chip over 12 acres of mature, mesic hardwood forest that is on steep slopes and contains wetlands will have substantial adverse permanent environmental impacts."

The steep slope, with some areas exceeding 25% slope, invites erosion. According to the Regional Water Authority letter to the Siting Council, the soil types at this site are "highly erosive." DSD's environmental report suggests that the developers can easily control erosion and storm water on site. But the DSD has yet to provide, as of November 12, a full set of storm water runoff models required by Connecticut's Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP).

The value of forest ecosystem services must also be considered. A forest is not just a bunch of trees but a biological community of interacting organisms and their physical environment. One of the most important ecosystem services provided by a forest is the protection of drinking water supplies. The forest and its wetlands filter runoff that helps clean the water we drink. This solar project is in a drinking water supply watershed: the watershed of Eaton Brook which flows to the Mill River, which flows downstream to the Lake Whitney reservoir. This reservoir is an active drinking water source for the South Connecticut Regional Water Authority (RWA) customers.

The best way to protect drinking water is to protect forests. The environmental report for this solar project does not even mention what watershed the project is located in or that it is in a source water protection area. This is a huge omission! As the RWA writes in its testimony "This Solar Project will result in an irretrievable loss of forestland that protects the affected RWA sources of supply in the Mill River watershed." In addition, the Hamden Tree Commission testimony addresses countless other ecosystem services and makes the point that "this parcel is a critical component of a forested corridor that connects the Naugatuck State Forest and adjacent Regional Water Authority watershed with Sleeping Giant State Park and Mill River Watershed."

The entire discussion in the public session on November 17 focused on how to get approval for what the project representatives repeatedly called a "challenging site." This "challenging site" is, in fact, an inappropriate site for a solar facility which will result in the destruction of 12 acres of trees! The Q and A session ignored the importance and value of the benefits of the trees being removed, and the goals of the local and state community in the face of an existing and growing climate crisis.

As of the November 17 public hearing, DSD had not contacted Hamden emergency responders for their thoughts on potential challenges they might have to face given a solar facility at this location. We learned that if Hamden's first responders couldn't deal with a problem, DSD personnel would have to travel from New York to Hamden to address it. This demonstrates a serious failure to appreciate the reality of extreme weather events we are now experiencing and the need to think about potential emergency events and plan for them as has been the focus of the GC3 working groups.

We call upon the Siting Council to require the petitioner to find a more appropriate location for this facility. Such alternative locations exist in Hamden that would be supported by the community and would not threaten nature's primary ally in the fight against climate change – our trees. This should not be a choice between forests and solar. We need them both.

So, for local, state-wide and indeed global reasons we oppose this particular solar project, and call upon the Siting Council to reject the petitioner's request. You, as a concerned citizen, can still write in opposition to the construction of this solar facility in a forest **to the CT Siting Council** by December 15 and to your Connecticut legislators in support of a State "No Net Loss" of forest policy.

\$100K On Horizon For Mill River Clean-Up Projects

by Allan Appel – New Haven Independent - Dec 4, 2020

It's easier to clean up rivers in rural and suburban settings than in a busy city, given obstacles like accessibility and private property interests.

Meanwhile, urban waterways like our Mill River have received less clean-up funding than they need and deserve.

That's about to change for the Mill River. Local groups long at work on a years-long riverine revival may be the beneficiaries.

Chris Malik, a staffer from the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), delivered that news Thursday night to the Fair Haven Community Management Team.

He announced that the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has given DEEP \$100,000 to pilot an "Urban Waters" partnership.

The state then decided that the funding should go to the Mill River. It has set up a partnership with the Mill River Watershed Association (MRWA) to funnel grant proposals for deserving Mill River clean-up and environmental education projects.

"Everyone knows the Mill River is is pretty grimy and inaccessible, littered with trash, and it should be enhanced," he said in a prepared statement. "I work with Clean Water Act funding, which generally is not for urban waters, which are very hard to work with."

Why the 17-mile Mill, which starts in the town of Cheshire, flows through Hamden and New Haven, and discharges into New Haven Harbor on Long Island Sound?

"The Mill River was selected for the pilot study due to the robust partnerships there," Malik added.

He cited not only MRWA but also New Haven-based river enhancement projects of Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound, the Regional Water Authority, and the others to open, clean up and make available for bicyclists and pedestrians the once inaccessible Mill River Trail

Many of those groups will be of interest to the funding committee, Malik said. "We want to strengthen existing programs and organizations not reinvent the wheel."

He said promotion of riverine awareness and of environmental justice are key features of the projects the funding is looking to advance.

"When locals and students are involved in monitoring water quality," he said by way of giving an example, "we find that has ripples (unintended pun)."

No matches are required for the funding. The projects should be sustainable and operational within three years. The funds must spent at the end of five years. Proposals, to be sent through MRWA, are due in the spring of 2021.

ATV rider seriously injured after striking tree in North Branford

Nov 14, 2020 - WFSB

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NORTH BRANFORD, CT (WFSB) - A man sustained serious injuries while riding an ATV Saturday night.

Fire officials say it happened around 8 p.m. on Middletown Avenue.

A man had been driving his ATV in a wooded area when he suddenly struck a tree.

First responders were able to safely remove the rider from the woods and transported him to the Trauma Center at Yale New Haven Hospital, where he is being treated for serious injuries.

This incident remains under investigation by the North Branford and Regional Water Authority Police.