



ANNUAL NEWSLETTER SALMON RIVER WATERSHED 2026



Twenty-five Years on the Air Line Trail in Pictures

Photo by Stan Malcolm

What began as commitment to walking miles a day, six to be exact, soon developed into photography journeys for Stan Malcolm, the photographer behind the website entitled "Along the Air Line...The Air Line Trail in Eastern Connecticut-Photos by Stan Malcolm". According to Stan, walking the same route daily got pretty boring. Photography and sharing made it much more fun, addicting even. His father and grandfather were avid photographers and he started as a kid with a hand-me-down Kodak 620 bellows camera.

The walking started in the summer of 2001 and by November of that year the website <https://www.performance-vision.com/airline/>, made its debut and is open for public viewing. Stan estimates that conservatively he walks 300 days a year at an average of 2.4 miles a day, which puts him over 17,000 miles, with much of that on the Air Line Trail South - Willimantic to Portland - but mostly in Hebron, Colchester and

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"The river has great wisdom and whispers its secrets to the hearts of men."

Mark Twain



Twenty five years--Continued from page 1

East Hampton. Watching the seasons unfold year after year and capturing stunning photos has resulted in thousands of pictures of sunrises, sunsets, unique and interesting flora and fauna, and of course idyllic landscape scenes. And it's not just the beautiful images, many of the photos have captions which include locations, types of animals or plants being captured and interesting facts and observations, making them mini-naturalist lessons along the way.



Because there are so many photos on the website, Stan suggests selecting and clicking on a year, which will then bring up a page of thumbnails. Each clickable thumbnail opens to about 50 photos - a way to "nibble" at the site and not be overwhelmed. On the left side of the website homepage "Special Topics" offers detailed coverage of various plants and animals, "Off-Site" photos of interest that were taken away from the trail, and last, "Life Cycles" which document the stages in various butterfly and silkworm lives.



When asked if he had any favorite photos, he offered up the photo entitled "Mates" which was awarded First Prize in the Connecticut Audubon Society Photo Contest, 2009. This photo and another favorite entitled "Beaver Wake" from 2024 are included at left. He has also received awards from American Trails in 2003 and 2010, given PPT talks to various groups, and hung exhibits at various DEEP facilities, Town Halls, and Public Libraries.



Stan has graciously shared his photography with the Salmon River Watershed Partnership for a number of our newsletters (including this one) and our displays and education items. Photos may be downloaded for non-commercial use with simple attribution (e.g.; Stan Malcolm photo) Please check out his website for terms and contact on commercial use.

Photos left-top to bottom: "Mates"-Cecropia Moths, Winter Sunset at Raymond Brook Marsh, Wild Geranium and Beaver Wake

Hebron – Protecting the Watershed!

By Frank Zitkus



Field on Simiola Parcel

The Town of Hebron’s Open Space Land Acquisition Committee and Planning & Zoning Commission have recently endorsed an open space purchase of a 13.25-acre unique property known as the Simiola parcel. This endorsed acquisition would further Hebron’s extensive efforts in protecting the water quality of the Salmon River Watershed. The parcel, located within Hebron’s planned Hope Valley Greenway, would provide access to the abutting Salmon River State Forest and Connecticut River Watershed Council preserved open spaces.

Located on historic Hope Valley Road, this property hosts Hope Valley Brook and associated Hope Valley Wetlands, a “Wetlands of Statewide Special Concern”, known for its biological and ecological features of restricted occurrence in the State.

Hope Valley Brook is a tributary of the Jeremy River, a Class A watercourse, which, combined with Blackledge River, forms the Salmon River. Jeremy River is a known “Trout Habitat” and is still stocked with salmon fry in an effort to support the genetic legacy of Atlantic Salmon.

The property lies, in part, within a FEMA Zone A Flood plain and its wetlands comprise an Alluvium Sand and Gravel

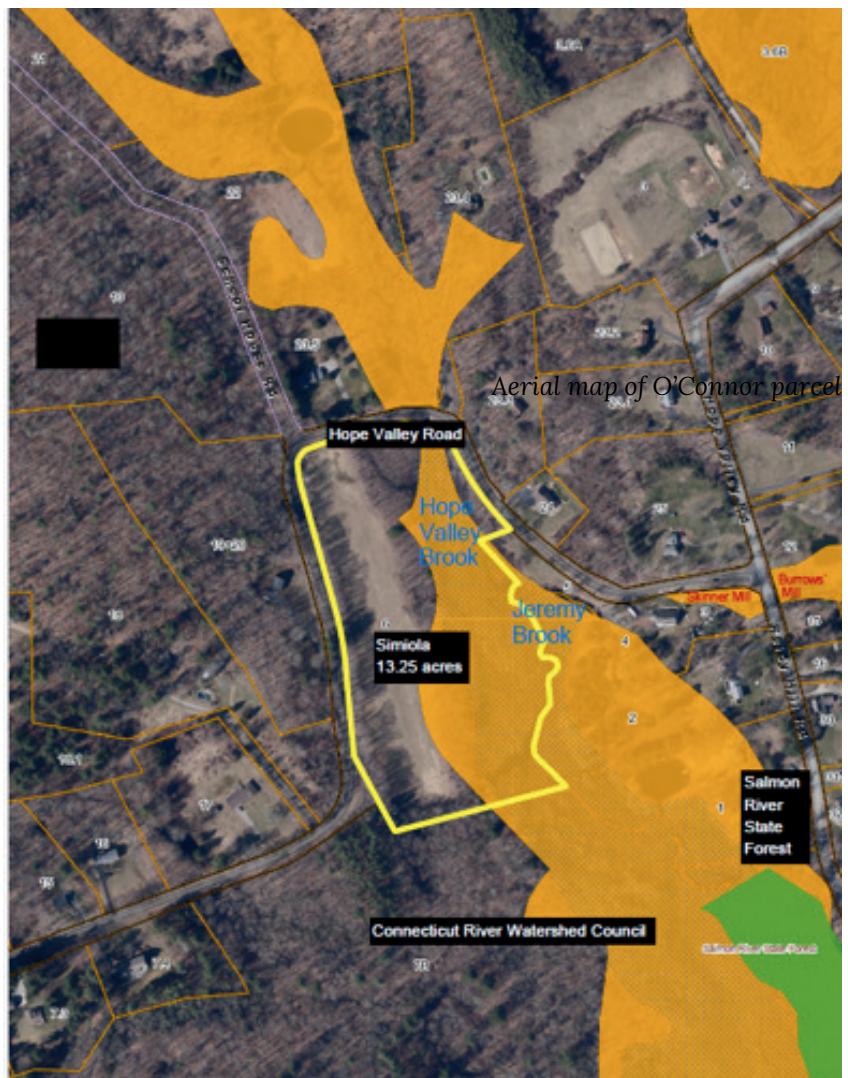
aquifer and a less common Stratified Drift Deposit aquifer, a potential source of future drinking water supply.

As depicted in a recent Natural Diversity Database (NDDDB) map, the property hosts Endangered Species and or Species of Special Concern. A July 2025 NDBB automated site assessment indicates such species within or in close proximity of the parcel.

Additional attributes of the property include a 3.67-acre hay field, consisting of prime and important agricultural soils. This field helps comprise an ecotone, a crucial area of wildlife habitat with open meadows bordered by forest and wetlands.

Acquisition of the Simiola parcel for open space would protect the ecosystem services the property affords, including stormwater management; water

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Aerial map of O'Connor parcel

Aerial Map showing location of Simiola Parcel

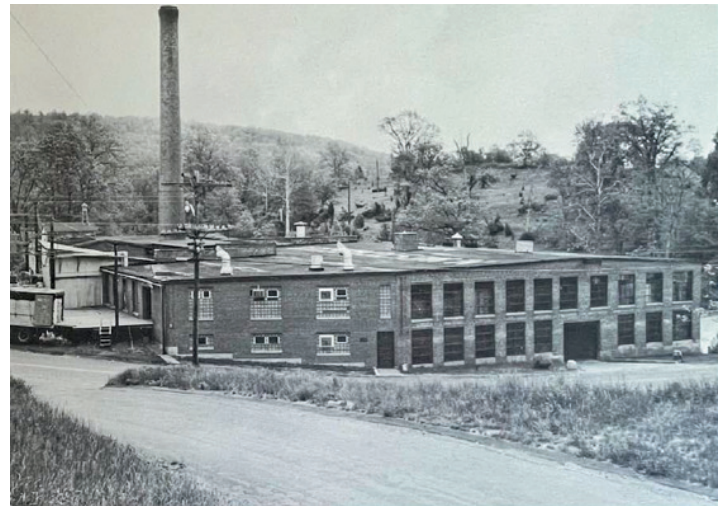
Norton Paper Mill-The Next Chapter

By Jay Giglotti

The Norton Paper Mill located in the North Westchester section of Colchester, has a long history representative of the early mills and businesses that used the Jerney River to power their equipment. Commencing operations in the 1720's, the mill operated under different ownership throughout the years and produced a number of products such as wrought iron, cotton, grist, wood and paper products.

Operations at the mill site ceased completely in 1968. At the time, the Mill was owned by the Norton family. They retained ownership until the Town of Colchester purchased the mill from the Norton family in 2016, with the condition the site would be redeveloped as a Town owned park.

Once acquired, the Town of Colchester partnered with the Nature Conservancy and the CT DEEP Fisheries Division to remove the dam and demolish the remaining portions of the building.



During the dam removal and the building demolition, it was discovered the site contained environmental contamination. In 2016, the Town of Colchester was awarded a grant from the CT Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) to remediate the site.

In 2020, Covid-19 consumed the world and hazardous disposal costs skyrocketed, making the previously awarded grant money insufficient to cover the cost of the remediation. Over the next three years, the Town of Colchester attempted to secure additional funds for the remediation.

Photos: top right: Norton Mill factory building, left: removal of the dam, and below: aerial photo of site after demolition of building and removal of dam.



Finally, after numerous attempts and grant applications, the Town was awarded \$1.1 Million from the DECD, \$250k from the CT DEEP CERCLA program and \$500k from the State Bond Commission to complete the remediation and redevelop the site for a Town Park.

In the winter of 2025/2026, remediation work began and continued through March of 2026. The remediation efforts encountered challenges along the way including unauthorized dumping and additional contamination not previously identified. The additional work came with additional costs, but the Town was able to complete the remediation and is now working with a consultant to design the park.

When complete, the Norton Park will operate as a public park, displaying historical tributes, providing walking trails & water access, as well as proximity to the Airline Trail.

The Norton Park project will be successful due to the many number of community members, volunteers, Town & State staff who worked for years to make this project a reality.



Editor's Note: Salmon River Watershed Partnership has conducted several aquatic macroinvertebrate habitat assessments at both the restored stream channel of the Jeremy River and Pine Brook with permission of the Colchester Fish & Game Club. Results indicate excellent habitat. Jeremy River is also part of the summer baseline monitoring program which tracks long term water quality trends.

Photos: top right: sign introducing the Norton Park Project, middle right: remediation work, and below: design and landscape plan for Norton Park.



NORTON PARK PHASE 2 MASTER PLAN
May 12, 2026



Thirteen Years of Partnering with RHAM High School

By Pat Young

For the last thirteen years, Salmon River Watershed Partnership has been partnering with RHAM High School to conduct benthic macroinvertebrate surveys at local stream sites.

These field surveys are done in the fall and involve netting, collecting, identifying and recording certain benthic macroinvertebrates. Specifically, stoneflies, mayflies and caddisflies which are known to only tolerate the cleanest water conditions. Riffle habitat with its high oxygen and cobble base is the habitat sampled in the stream. These aquatic insects are collected by carefully turning over rocks and holding them in front of the kick net while gently rubbing them to dislodge any critters attached to the rocks. The flowing water keeps them in the net. Once the gravel base under the rocks is uncovered then the area is “kicked” by scarifying the grave to dislodge even more insects. Six nettings are completed with the total area sampled being close to one square meter.

The collected bugs are sorted by type into ice cube trays on the streambank, then identified using a key with results entered into a data sheet. The key and data sheet are color-coded into blue, yellow, and red sections which are indicative of each type of insect's tolerance to water conditions such as temperature, dissolved oxygen and nutrient loading. The blue category contains the most sensitive organisms and if there are at least four different types in the blue category it means that the steam segment habitat is healthy.

RHAM students have assessed both the West and East Branch of Fawn Brook and also the lower Fawn segment right above the confluence with the Blackledge River and the Blackledge River itself. Raymond Brook has also been assessed by RHAM Middle School in the past and currently by visiting Coventry High School.

Partnering with local high schools allows SRWP to sample more areas and it also provides meaningful “hands on” learning opportunities for students, some which return later as community volunteers.



Photos clockwise starting from top left: Roach-like stonefly, RHAM students selecting net location in the river, free-living caddisfly, ice cube trays make good bug sorting tools, brushless leg mayfly and positioning the net directly perpendicular to river flow.



An Environmental Review Team

Success Story

By Jim Cordier, Hebron Conservation & Inland Wetland Agent



Pond on the O'Connor Parcel-Photo by Jim Cordier

In December of 2024, the Town of Hebron applied to the Connecticut Resource, Conservation and Development Agency (CTRC&D) to conduct a comprehensive Environmental Review Team (ERT) Natural Resources Assessment of the recently acquired, town-owned 115-acre O'Conner conservation property.

The O'Connor Family Trust property had manifold characteristics that were considered by the Hebron Open Space Land Acquisition Committee in pursuing the acquisition of this incredibly scenic land.

It features a highly diversified forest for wildlife habitat, and a series of interconnected shallow ponds. The outflowing streams from these glacial ponds converge to form an unnamed tributary of Blackledge River, a class A watercourse and major tributary of the Salmon River, a watercourse still stocked with salmon fry as part of the genetic legacy Salmon program. The parcel also hosts at least one upland vernal pool, and it is near a large Natural Diversity Data Base area of endangered / special concern species.

Our recent acquisition of this property will protect the area's vital watershed quality, preserve noted historic features, provide for passive recreational use and aid in attaining the State's climate mitigation goals that an intact, highly robust forest ecosystem offers.

The requested study was granted by CTC&D and four inventory teams, including wildlife biologists, historians, a geologist, an ornithologist, a herpetologist, a soil scientist, a cartographer, a forest ecologist, a watershed expert, CT DEEP staff, UCONN

Drone Corps and representatives of several land use and conservation groups were deployed.

Our driving goal is to generate impetus toward the acquisition of adjacent parcels having similar resource protection and connectivity values toward the expansion of the Greenway posited by Hebron's 2024 Plan of Conservation and Development

CTRC&D's Environmental Review Team final product will be used as a guide to the future preservation and passive recreational usage of this beautiful and unique parcel.

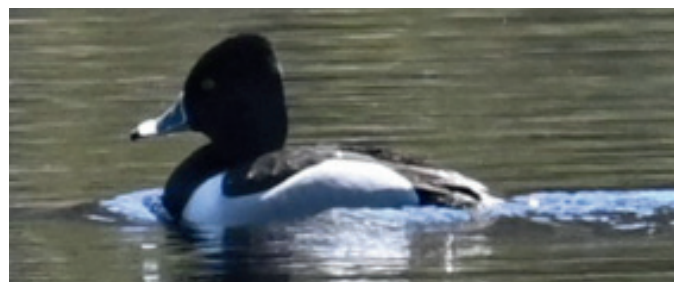
While we await the final product, many of our ERT objectives are being met already:

As an initial collateral benefit, the work of the UConn Drone Corps has added a new dimension to our review of this property. We can now conduct a longitudinal analysis of the three ponds and their appurtenant outfall feeder streams that flow into the Blackledge River and nearby fisheries management.

As a result of our site explorations, we have initiated discussions with the owners of an abutting horse farm property to the North to possibly acquire another 1.8-acre parcel that would protect a second Vernal Pool that was identified.

We discovered active deer hunting stands and game cameras that were situated on this property. They were identified by the Team and removed by our DEEP Law Enforcement counterpart. The owner of an abutting 40-acre forested parcel was grateful for this gesture and appears willing to discuss the future disposition of her property with us in the near-future.

The management challenges and opportunities presented by our holdings – some of which have been documented by our last 3 ERT Reviews - have impelled the formation of Hebron Paths and Trails and the Hebron Trail Rangers. They are assisting our Parks and Recreation Department in the identification, marking, development and maintenance of our local trails, which also includes some invasive species removal. *Continued on page 8*



Ring-necked duck on the O'Connor Pond-Photo by Pat Young

Steering Committee

Watershed Towns

Bolton:

Matt Rivers

Colchester:

Daniel Hickey

Columbia:

Ron Wikolm

East Haddam:

Bernie Gillis

Jim Ventres

East Hampton:

Glastonbury:

Suzanne Simone

Haddam:

Gail Reynolds

Phil Gaudreau

Hebron:

Brian O'Connell

Cris Frey

Lebanon:

Michelle Trani

Marlborough:

Peter Hughes

Organizations

The Nature Conservancy:

Shelley Green

Connecticut DEEP:

Shalyn Zappulla

Land Trusts

Colchester Land Trust:

John Barnowski

Recreational Groups

Trout Unlimited:

Gary Lussier

Member at Large

Silvio O. Conte Refuge-

Haddam Neck:

Phil Gaudreau

Watershed Coordinator

Patricia Young

Hebron.....Continued from page 3

storage, filtration and recharge; serve as a carbon sink, helping to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change; and provide healthy habitat for wildlife. In addition to the existing open spaces of the Salmon River State Forest and the Connecticut River Watershed Council would help to further protect the Salmon River Watershed, expand the Hope Valley Greenway, and preserve unique biodiversity.

Author's note: *The current landowners, if the property is acquired for open space, wish for the continued agricultural use of their beloved open meadow field.*

The author is the Hebron Open Space Land Acquisition Committee Secretary

ERT Success.....Continued from page 7

Elements of this ERT Report are being used in the Town's pending application to DEEP for funding under the Recreational Trails Grant – through which the Town hopes to develop a trail system and additional public access for one of our previously reviewed ERT Survey properties.

CTRC&D, has assisted Hebron many times in the past, as indicated by the collection of seventeen studies on record. Simply stated, small municipalities like Hebron harbor the bulk of Connecticut's open spaces, agricultural enterprises, watercourse headwaters, wildlife, natural resources, scenic vistas, and outdoor recreational opportunities and cannot afford or marshal the specific and collective expertise required to identify these assets and to plan for their protection and optimal utilization without the unique and crucial services offered by the CT ERT Program.



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[Salmon River Watershed Partnership](#)



Our thanks to...

The efforts of the Salmon River Watershed Partnership would not be possible without the support of many volunteers, the watershed towns and local businesses and organizations. Special thanks to...

Ken Geisler (GIS Mapping), CT River Coastal Conservation District, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, The Nature Conservancy, Stan Malcolm-Performance Vision Photography, University of Connecticut and the Office of Aquatic Invasive Species



The Salmon River Watershed Partnership is a project sponsored by the Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.