

# Salmon River Watershed Partnership 5-Year Strategic Plan FY 2023-2028



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*This document is primarily intended for use by Salmon River Watershed Partnership (SRWP) board members, participating organizations, and municipal leaders in the Salmon River Watershed. This plan guides SRWP toward being a sustainably funded and managed collaboration of watershed communities working for the benefit of protecting Salmon River Watershed resources.*



# Salmon River Watershed: A Valuable Landscape Enriching the Local Communities

The value of the Watershed, with its preserved lands, goes far beyond its rich ecological diversity. It offers local communities so much more:

**Sense of Place:** The “rural feel” of the town is often cited as a reason residents chose these local communities and the goal of preserving this rural lifestyle is goal cited in many of the Plans of Conservation and Development.

**Drinking Water Protection:** With many of the watershed residents depending on private wells, drinking water protection is paramount.

**Recreational Opportunities:** With over 26,500 acres of preserved lands in the watershed, including the multi-town Air Line Trail State Park and prime freshwater fishing spots, there are ample outdoor experiences for year-round enjoyment which also promotes local business opportunities.

**Agriculture:** Land for healthy, local, sustainable food crops offers residents food security in a changing climate.

**Economic Benefits:** Protecting drinking water and small town atmosphere, preserves quality of life and property values. Agricultural land supports local business and food security. Outdoor spaces encourage out-of-town visitors that frequent local businesses. For example, the number of visitors to two of our state parks were estimated by state personnel to be over 50,000 for Day Pond State Park (Colchester) and almost 75,000 for Gay City State Park (Hebron, Bolton) in 2021.



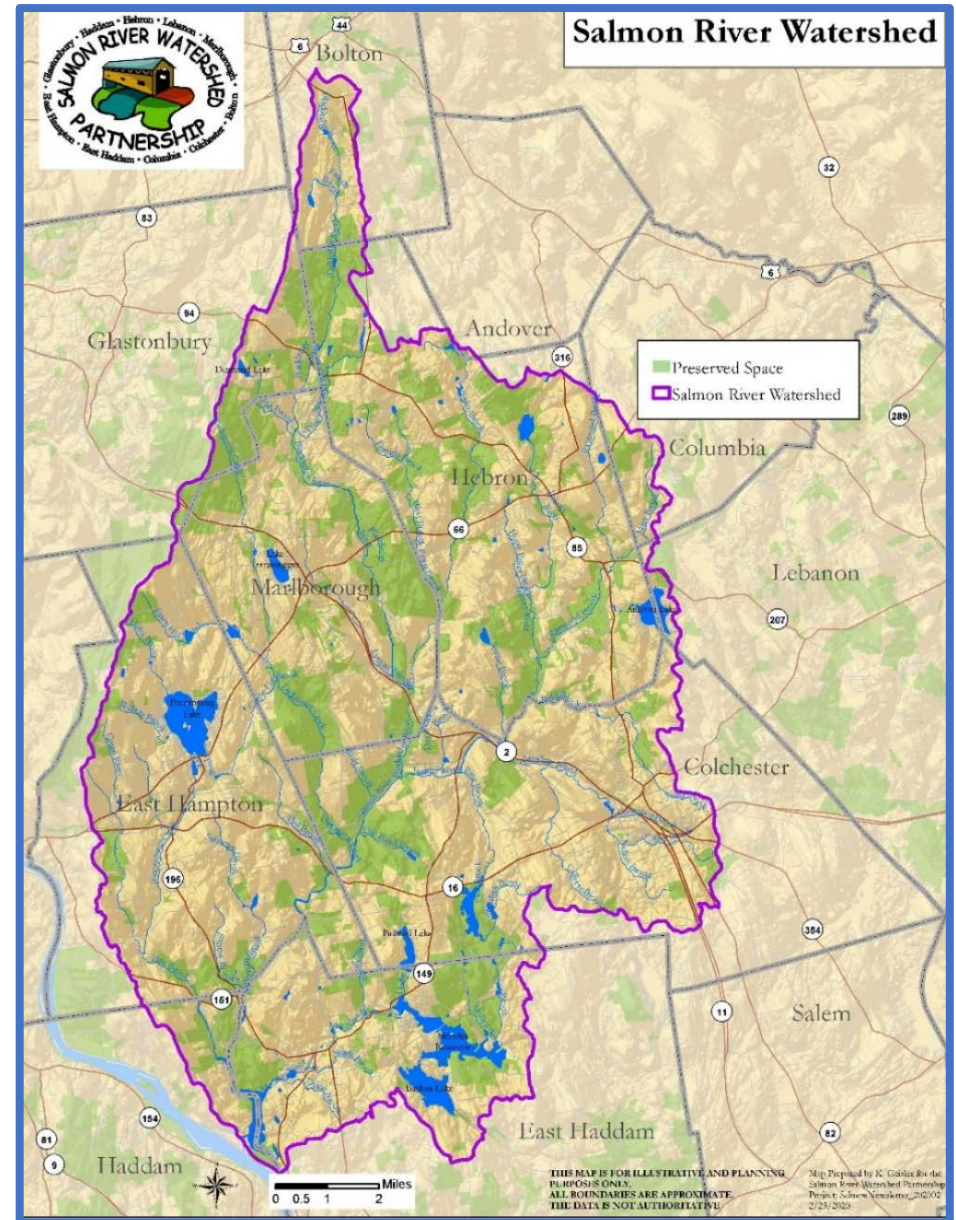
## The Salmon River Watershed Partnership

In 2007, the Salmon River Watershed Partnership (SRWP) was launched by The Nature Conservancy as a collaborative effort with watershed towns to embark on a comprehensive review and update of land-use practices in the watershed. Recognizing the importance of managing watershed resources with a multi-town approach, SRWP made the decision to continue the partnership upon the completion of the original grant project. Continued collaboration among the towns is key to conserving the Salmon River watershed and supporting the long-term social and economic vitality of watershed communities.

Today, SRWP consists of representatives from watershed towns, The Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Trout Unlimited, Colchester Land Trust, and Friends of Silvio O. Conti Refuge. SRWP is staffed by a part-time Watershed Coordinator and summer interns.

### The Salmon River Watershed

Located within the towns of Bolton, Colchester, Columbia, East Haddam, East Hampton, Glastonbury, Haddam, Hebron, Lebanon, and Marlborough.

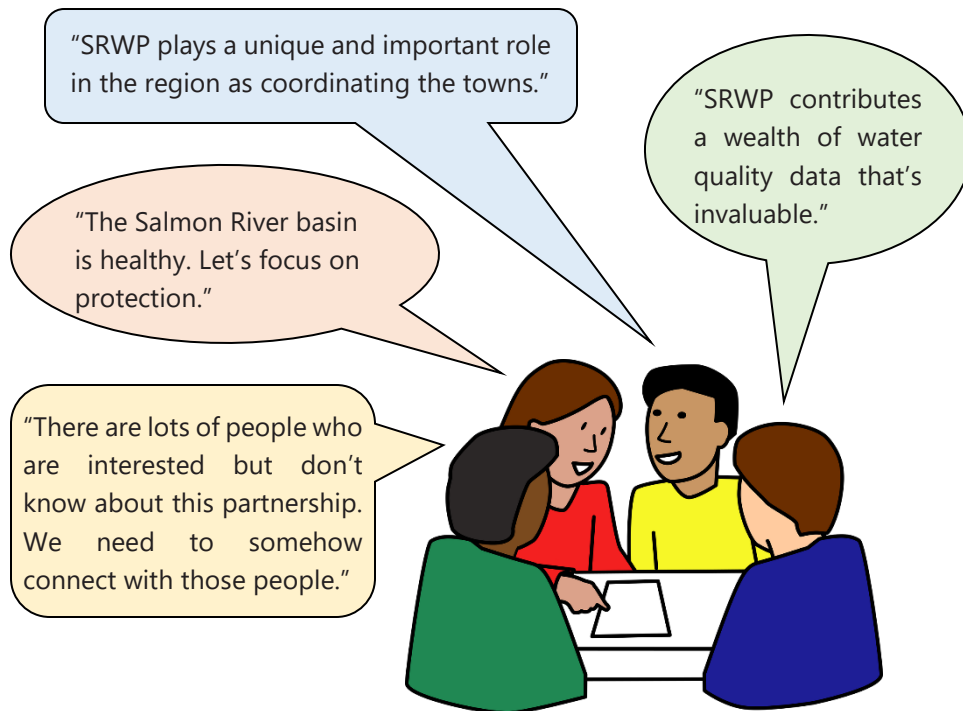


# Strategic Plan Overview

In 2021, SRWP embarked on an initiative to create a long-term vision and plan for sustainable management and funding of the organization. During a series of workshops in 2021 and 2022, the SRWP steering committee and watershed stakeholders explored two driving questions:

**“Where do we want to go?”** and **“How are we going to get there?”**

The discussions covered a range of topics that helped clarify watershed needs and challenges; the value of SRWP’s current activities and desired changes or additions; and opportunities to strengthen SRWP’s long-term viability. The series of workshops culminated in an action-planning workshop, in which participants mapped out a path for SRWP’s future.



## Our Vision for SRWP

SRWP is an intermunicipal collaborative that strives to sustain a resilient and vibrant environmental and recreational landscape across the Salmon River Watershed. SRWP supports this vision with education, planning, science, and project support.

## Our Goals

SRWP aims to achieve the following five goals through the implementation of this strategic plan:

- GOAL 1. Continue and expand upon core watershed activities
- GOAL 2. Raise awareness about SRWP’s work and benefits
- GOAL 3. Ensure adequate staffing and facilities for SRWP’s watershed activities
- GOAL 4. Strengthen organizational structure and sustainability
- GOAL 5. Secure funding for SRWP’s current and future needs



# Goal 1: Continue and Expand Upon Core Watershed Activities

SRWP protects and celebrates the watershed through education, science, planning, and advocacy. We will continue these core watershed activities and expand upon them as our organization grows. Through this work, we will continue to:

- 1) Foster a knowledgeable constituency with a strong stewardship ethic.
- 2) Further our understanding of watershed health through water quality and biological monitoring.
- 3) Develop open-space mapping and a watershed management plan to guide future land-use and watershed-protection actions.
- 4) Support plans, policies, and projects that align with SRWP's vision for a resilient and vibrant watershed.

## Salmon River Watershed Management Plan

An important new initiative for SRWP will be to develop a watershed plan. This plan will identify threats, establish goals, and prioritize actions to protect our watershed's water quality and natural resources. The plan will also enhance the eligibility of SRWP and the watershed towns to receive various grant funds.

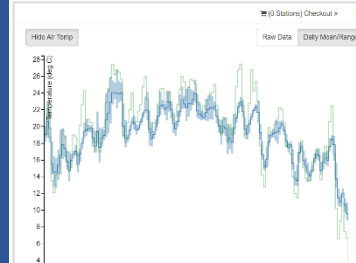
## EDUCATION

- School programs
- Tabling
- Citizen scientists



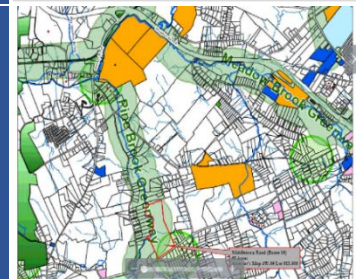
## SCIENCE

- Water quality & biological monitoring
- Data sharing



## PLANNING

- Open space mapping
- Watershed management plan



## MUNICIPAL SUPPORT

- Letters of support
- Guidance on town plans & policies

*The Plan of Conservation and Development*



## Goal 2: Raise Awareness about SRWP's Work and Benefits

Through our watershed activities, SRWP is making a positive impact on the Salmon River Watershed and its towns, businesses, residents, and visitors. We will boost our impact and better sustain our organization by spreading the word, raising our profile, and getting more people involved. Through improved and expanded communications, we will:

- 1) Ensure that Town staff and officials are informed of our services, such as grant application letters of support, policy guidance, and stormwater education for Municipal Separate Stormwater System (MS4) compliance, as well as the broader economic and quality-of-life benefits derived from a healthy watershed.
- 2) Reach a diverse audience of watershed residents, businesses, and visitors to let them know about SRWP's work and how they can help protect and celebrate the river system.
- 3) Collaborate with planning, recreation, academic, environmental, business and health organizations and agencies to amplify SRWP's message.



### Many ways to get the word out about SRWP!

- Frequent presentations and updates to Town boards, local businesses, recreation groups, and other partners
- Website
- Social media
- Press releases
- Newsletter
- Tabling at events
- Mentions in Partner communications



## Goal 3: Ensure Adequate Staffing and Facilities for SRWP's Watershed Activities

Staffing and facilities are critical to sustaining and growing SRWP's high quality projects and services. To strengthen our capacity to successfully implement watershed activities, we will seek to:

- 1) Increase staffing levels incrementally, focusing first on meeting current staffing needs.
- 2) Leverage outside resources, such as interns and technical assistance, from other organizations and agencies.
- 3) Procure office, meeting, and storage space.

### The many responsibilities in effective watershed management:

- Program and project leadership
- Municipal support and policy review.
- Data collection and analysis, reporting and resource mapping.
- Engaging and coordinating citizen scientists and field interns.
- Outreach and education
- Administrative and accounting support
- Grant writing and management



### Expanded partner relationships may create opportunities for shared expertise and resources

- CT River Coastal Conservation District
- CT River Conservancy
- CT DEEP
- Councils of Governments
- Colleges and universities
- New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA)
- Land Trusts
- Eastern CT Forest Landowners Association
- CT Forest & Park Association
- Fish & game clubs
- Whitewater rafting groups
- Scout and Civic groups





## Goal 4: Strengthen Organizational Structure and Sustainability

SRWP will implement changes, as needed, to the organization's structure and fiscal arrangements that will allow for sustainable funding and operations. The watershed towns will remain SRWP's core leaders, beneficiaries, and funders as SRWP explores options to expand protection, management and funding opportunities including, incorporating as a 501(C)(3) or pursuing federal designation for Salmon River as a Wild & Scenic River\*.

### Current Organizational and Fiscal Structure

Fiscal Arrangements: SRWP currently exists as a project of the Connecticut Resource Conservation & Development Area (CT RC&D), a 501(C)(3) nonprofit corporation. It is funded primarily through municipal contributions. SRWP is itself an unincorporated organization, so RC&D serves as its fiscal agent and receives municipal funds, tax-deductible charitable contributions, and grant funding for the benefit of and use by SRWP. RC&D provides bookkeeping services to SRWP on an hourly basis, and non-municipal contributions and grants for SRWP are subject to a 10% charge from RC&D to cover the costs of administrative, legal, and accounting services.

Leadership: SRWP is comprised of appointed representatives from ten watershed towns, The Nature Conservancy, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Trout Unlimited, Colchester Land Trust, and Friends of Silvio O. Conti Refuge.

### What is the Future of SRWP?

Through the visioning and action planning process, SRWP and other participants expressed consensus that the **watershed towns should continue to be primary leaders and funders of SRWP**. Discussions about potentially changing the organizational and fiscal structure focused primarily on two options:

- 1) Incorporating SRWP as an independent 501(C)(3) non-profit organization, and
- 2) Pursuing federal designation for the Salmon River as a Wild & Scenic River, similar to Farmington, Eightmile, Wood-Pawcatuck & Housatonic Rivers in CT.

These options would change both the operations and leadership structure of SRWP, as well as the funding sources. As a program of CT RC&D, SRWP can receive grants and donations, but 10% of those funds go to CT RC&D to cover administrative costs. If SRWP started to receive more donations, **it would likely need a different fiscal arrangement.**

- 1) **Independent 501 (C) (3):** This path would require establishing the SRWP as its own legal entity with those required responsibilities. It may also alter the relationships with the towns as an entity that would be distinctly separate with its own by-laws and membership.
- 2) **Wild & Scenic River designation:** This path does not eliminate the need for a fiscal agent and requires the establishment of a Steering /Coordinating Committee to shepherd the study process and implement the required Watershed Management Plan. Federal designation may provide long-term funding for projects, staffing and administration, as well as technical support and further river protection mechanisms. The process for designation is generally lengthy (years) and requires both political support and that the affected municipalities approve inclusion into the Wild & Scenic program.

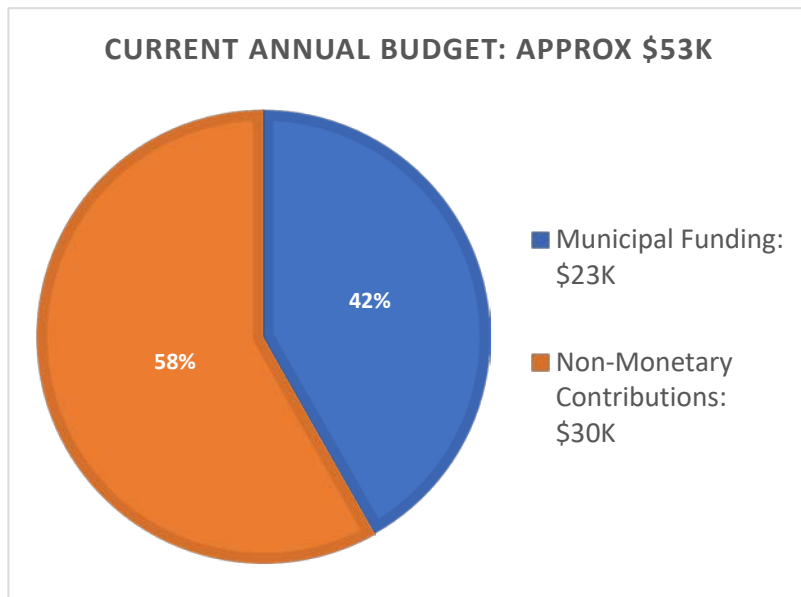
\*Note: Segments of the Salmon, Blackledge and Jeremy Rivers are listed in the National Rivers Inventory as potentially being eligible for protection under the Wild & Scenic River Partnership Program. (<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/rivers/nationwide-rivers-inventory.htm>)



## Goal 5: Secure Funding to Meet SRWP's Current and Future Needs

Over the next five years, SRWP will incrementally increase our budget and will secure funds to meet budgetary needs for staffing, facilities, equipment, and other operational costs. Our funding objectives are to:

- 1) For FY 2024, request funding participation from all 10 of the watershed towns as well as a 10% bump in funding from those towns already contributing, in order to account for the increased cost of living and goods since 2008 to support existing services.
- 2) By FY 2028, seek to increase funding to add staff support, secure office and storage space and pursue a watershed management plan.
- 3) Diversify funding sources, supplementing municipal funds with private donations, public grants, and in-kind contributions.



SRWP relies on municipal contributions to fund core watershed activities and one part-time staff person. SRWP currently receives approximately \$23,000 annually in municipal funds, plus non-monetary contributions in the form of volunteer time, professional donated time, and donated facilities. In contrast, other watershed organizations, such as Wild & Scenic Partnership Rivers currently operate with budgets over \$200,000 annually.

A request for continued funding is sent out to watershed towns at the beginning of each year to be included in municipal budget preparation. Originally, higher contribution amounts were established for the four towns that have the bulk of the watershed within their boundaries (Colchester, East Hampton, Hebron, and Marlborough), while contributions from other towns were determined based on amount of land in the watershed and their ability to contribute. Contributions from individual towns currently range from \$0 to \$5,000 annually.



## Potential Funding Sources for the Salmon River Watershed Partnership

| Funding Program   | Can Fund General Operations? | Description  | Links   |
|---|------------------------------|--|---|
| Municipal Partner Contributions   | Y                            | Annual contributions from individual towns currently range from \$0 to \$5,000. SRWP could request larger contributions in coming years.   | N/A   |
| Municipal Services Agreements   | N                            | Contracts with municipalities to provide <b>monitoring, education and engagement</b> services in support of municipal NPDES permit obligations.  | N/A   |
| Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Grants                          | N                            | DEEP awards grants for projects that address nonpoint source pollution impacts in surface waters, including the creation and implementation of approved <b>watershed-based plans</b> .   | <a href="https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water/NP%20S/Request-for-Proposals-for-Nonpoint-Source-Management-Grant-Program">https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water/NP S/Request-for-Proposals-for-Nonpoint-Source-Management-Grant-Program</a> |
| National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Long Island Sound Futures Fund | N                            | The Long Island Sound Futures Fund supports projects to fully restore the health and living resources of Long Island Sound. Funded projects include habitat restoration, resilience, water quality, fish passage, <b>education</b> , and nitrogen-prevention <b>watershed planning</b> and implementation projects.  | <a href="https://www.nfwf.org/programs/long-island-sound-futures-fund">https://www.nfwf.org/programs/long-island-sound-futures-fund</a>   |
| NFWF Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grants                          | N                            | Grants seek fund collaborative teams to address water quality issues such as erosion due to unstable streambanks, pollution from stormwater runoff, and degraded shorelines caused by development. Eligible projects include wetland, riparian, in-stream and/or coastal habitat restoration; design and construction of green infrastructure BMPs; <b>water quality monitoring/assessment; and outreach and education</b> . | <a href="https://www.nfwf.org/programs/five-star-and-urban-waters-restoration-grant-program">https://www.nfwf.org/programs/five-star-and-urban-waters-restoration-grant-program</a>   |
| NFWF New England Forest and Rivers Fund                                     | N                            | This fund is dedicated to <b>restoring and sustaining healthy forests and rivers</b> that provide habitat for diverse native bird and freshwater fish populations in New England.  | <a href="https://www.nfwf.org/programs/new-england-forests-and-rivers-fund">https://www.nfwf.org/programs/new-england-forests-and-rivers-fund</a>   |
| Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut                                 | N                            | The Community Foundation supports programs that seek to preserve and protect environmentally significant land, waterways, and wildlife habitats. The foundation funds essential work of <b>conservation and education</b> organizations through grantmaking. It also supports nonprofits with <b>capacity-building</b> grants to strengthen staff and boards.  | <a href="https://cfect.org/">https://cfect.org/</a>   |
| The Rockfall Foundation   | N                            | The mission of The Rockfall Foundation is to promote and support <b>environmental education and conservation</b> in the Lower Connecticut River Valley. TRF annual awards grants to other non-profit organizations, schools, and municipalities.   | <a href="https://www.rockfallfoundation.org/grants/annual/">https://www.rockfallfoundation.org/grants/annual/</a>   |



| Funding Program                        | Can Fund General Operations? | Description  | Links  |
|--|------------------------------|--|--|
| National Wild and Scenic River Program | Y                            | A designated 'Wild and Scenic River' is a free-flowing river with documented Outstanding Remarkable Values (ORVs). It is classified as either wild, scenic, or recreational, and administered with the goal of protecting and enhancing the values that caused it to be designated. A river study is generally required for designation, and an agency or organization provides watershed management and monitoring. It is also provided with technical and financial support from the National Parks Service for organizational operations, watershed planning, and projects. | <a href="https://www.rivers.gov/">https://www.rivers.gov/</a><br><a href="https://www.rivers.gov/designation.php">https://www.rivers.gov/designation.php</a> |

Additional funding resources are provided below (*adapted from a 7/27/20 presentation by Jennifer O'Brien, Eastern CT Community Foundation*).

### Community foundations with a commitment to environmental funding:

- Connecticut Community Foundation: <https://connct.org/>
- Middlesex Community Foundation: <https://middlesexcountycf.org/>
- Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut: [www.cfect.org](http://www.cfect.org)

### Private and Corporate Foundations providing environmental funding:

- Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation: <https://www.tremainefoundation.org/>
- Common Sense Fund: <https://commonsensefund.org/>
- Hampshire Foundation: <https://hampshirefoundation.org/>
- Bank of America charitable funds: <https://www.bankofamerica.com/philanthropic/search-for-grants/>
- Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation: <https://www.dominionenergy.com/our-company/customers-and-community/charitable-foundation>
- The Outdoor Foundation: <https://outdoorindustry.org/participation/>

### Philanthropy Collaboratives and Organizations:

- Long Island Sound Funders Collaborative: <http://www.lisfc.org/>
- Environmental Grantmakers Association: <https://ega.org/>
- Connecticut Council for Philanthropy: [www.ctphilanthropy.org](http://www.ctphilanthropy.org)

### Local Businesses and Organizations

- (e.g., realtors association, local banks, sporting associations, garden club)



# Action Plan

## Five-Year Action Plan for the Salmon River Watershed Partnership

| Action   | Year 1 | Years 2-3 | Years 4-5 | Responsible Parties     |
|--|--------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|
| <b>Goal 1. Continue and Expand Upon Core Watershed Activities</b>  |        |           |           |                         |
| Continue current watershed activities (education, science, planning, and advocacy)   | X      | X         | X         | Staff                   |
| Expand youth education programs to include other groups (e.g., scouts, 4H)   |        |           | X         | Staff                   |
| Create recreational open space mapping, trails information, and interpretive signage for visitors to enjoy and learn about the watershed   |        |           | X         | Staff                   |
| Create watershed-specific educational content (online and print) about watershed-protection best practices (such as fertilizer management)   |        |           | X         | Staff                   |
| Develop a watershed management plan  |        |           | X         | Staff, Board            |
| Participate in conservation, restoration, stormwater management, and recreation projects managed by others   |        |           | X         | Staff                   |
| Create data stories/infographics to better communicate findings from SRWP's water quality and biological monitoring  |        |           | X         | Staff                   |
| Organize and host stewardship events   |        |           | X         | Staff, Board            |
| Host meetings throughout the Salmon River Watershed, specifically for sharing & coordinating across municipalities.  |        |           | X         | Staff, Board            |
| Collaborate with and support local boards and committees, conservation districts, land trusts, friends-of-groups, etc. to further the beneficial impact of SRWPs watershed activities. |        |           | X         | Staff                   |
| <b>Goal 2. Raise Awareness about SRWP's Work and Benefits</b>  |        |           |           |                         |
| Create fact sheets that convey SRWP's services and benefits for each town  | X      |           |           | Staff                   |
| Reintroduce SRWP to town departments, select boards, and boards of finance with in-person presentations  | X      |           |           | Board                   |
| Create and distribute newsletters and/or e-blasts several times a year highlighting SRWPs activities and accomplishments   | X      | X         | X         | Staff                   |
| Improve website  |        | X         |           | Staff (with consultant) |
| Diversify communication channels to reach new audiences  |        | X         | X         | Staff                   |
| Present to/provide updates to municipal boards/committees and departments quarterly  |        | X         | X         | Board                   |



| Action  | Year 1 | Years 2-3 | Years 4-5 | Responsible Parties   |
|---|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Present to watershed town Select Boards annually  |        | X         | X         | Staff, Board          |
| <b>Goal 3. Ensure Adequate Staffing and Facilities for SRWP's Watershed Activities</b>  |        |           |           |                       |
| Increase staff hours and redefine staff positions/roles accordingly   | X      |           |           | Board                 |
| Hire additional staff (~ 1 Fte)   |        | X         | X         | Board                 |
| Continue engaging volunteers in monitoring and educational activities   | X      | X         | X         | Staff                 |
| Coordinate with local colleges to hire interns  | X      | X         | X         | Staff                 |
| Explore options for sharing staff with other organizations (e.g., Colchester Land Trust)  | X      |           |           | Staff, Board          |
| Rent or secure in-kind donation of office, meeting, and storage space   |        | x         |           | Staff, Board          |
| Acquire furnishings and office supplies   |        | x         |           | Staff, Board          |
| <b>Goal 4. Strengthen Organizational Structure and Sustainability</b>   |        |           |           |                       |
| Continue to engage with watershed towns as core leaders, beneficiaries, and funders   | X      | X         | X         | Board                 |
| Host quarterly Steering Committee and/or subcommittee meetings  | X      | X         | X         | Staff, Board          |
| Complete an analysis of benefits, expectations, obligations, skills, etc. of becoming a 501c3; document in a "white paper"  | X      |           |           | Board (with attorney) |
| Host an internal discussion about pursuing Wild & Scenic designation, including level of effort to pursue   | X      |           |           | Board                 |
| Decide on the fiscal structure that will yield the best outcome for SRWP  |        | X         |           | Board                 |
| Initiate changes (as needed) to fiscal and organizational structure (e.g., to 501c3, W&S designation)   |        | X         |           | Board (with attorney) |
| Document organizational and fiscal structure through organization bylaws, MOUs, etc.  |        |           | X         | Board                 |
| <b>Goal 5. Secure Funding to Meet SRWP's Current and Future Needs</b>   |        |           |           |                       |
| Determine FY2024 budget needed to fund Year 1 actions   | X      |           |           | Board                 |
| Investigate options for tying municipal contributions to area or population within watershed  | X      |           |           | Board                 |
| Request increase in funding from municipalities under FY2024 budgets (budgeting in January 2023)  | X      |           |           | Board                 |
| Initiate outreach to community foundations (e.g., Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut) and recreational organizations (e.g., fish and game clubs) about donations | X      |           |           | Board                 |
| Develop budget and other in-kind contribution targets for Years 2-5   | X      | X         |           | Staff, Board          |
| Pursue grants and private/community foundation support to meet budget targets for years 2-5.  |        | X         | X         | Staff                 |



# Acknowledgements

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- Brian O'Connell, SRWP Member (Hebron)
- Chris Frey, Town of Hebron, Inland Wetland and Watercourse and Conservation Commissions, Open Space Land Acquisition Committee, SRWP Board Member
- Eric Thomas, CT DEEP Watersheds, SRWP Board Member
- Gail Reynolds, Town of Haddam, Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commissions, Sustainability Committee, SRWP Board Member
- Greg Lowrey, Town of Marlborough, First Selectman
- James Ventres, Town of East Haddam, Land Use Administrator, SRWP Board Member
- Jay Gigliotti, SRWP Board Member (Colchester)
- Jeremy DeCarli, Town of East Hampton, Planning and Zoning Official, SRWP Board Member
- Joe Cassone, CT DEEP Fisheries
- Mark Walter, Town of Columbia, Town Administrator
- Matthew Bordeaux, Town of Colchester, Planning Director
- Matt Bordeaux, Town of Hebron, Town Planner (previously Town of Colchester, Planning Director)
- Mike O'Leary - Hebron
- Patricia Young, SRWP Watershed Coordinator
- Paul Stacey, Footprints in the Water, LLC
- Peter Hughes, Town of Marlborough, Planning and Development Director, SRWP Board Chair
- Philip Gaudreau, Town of Haddam, SRWP Alternate Board Member
- Rob Smith – East Haddam
- Scott Sivek, Colchester Land Trust, SRWP Alternate Board Member
- Suzanne Simone, Town of Glastonbury, Environmental Planner
- Tess Lundgren, SRWP Board Member (Lebanon)



# Salmon River Watershed Partnership

**Connect with Us!**

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[www.instagram.com/salmonriverct/](https://www.instagram.com/salmonriverct/)

[Salmonriverct@att.net](mailto:Salmonriverct@att.net)

