



SALMON RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER SALMON RIVER WATERSHED 2022



Salmon River - Jon Kosak

Protecting the Watershed:

Protecting a Watershed takes coordination, dedication and often, getting your hands dirty. The Salmon River Watershed holds tales of our past and our hope for the future and this newsletter is filled with stories of efforts to protect our natural and recreational resources. From planting trees to enacting municipal policies, every action contributes to the goal of making sure that the watershed will continue to be a part of our communities' healthy landscape. We are simply today's stewards, ensuring future generations will have the same opportunities we have to experience our rives.

Pat Young, Watershed Coordinator

Water is our most precious and interconnected natural resource. It sustains all ecosystems, communities, and economies from local watersheds to the seas. It's vital to sustaining our health, safety, and the environments in which we live and work. Simply put, water is life.

— Alexandra Cousteau

Colchester Brownfield Assessment Grant

In 2021, the Town of Colchester was awarded \$27,500 from the CT Dept. of Community & Economic Development, Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development. Awarded funds will be utilized to perform environmental site assessments of an abandoned mill property on Comstock Bridge Road.

The property consists of 3.9 acres, with nearly 1,700 linear feet of frontage along the Salmon River. Products produced at the mill included fishing line, tennis racquet trimming cord, cardboard and most likely pressure-treated railroad ties. The owners have expressed interest in preserving the property from development and have offered it to local, state and private land preservation entities. This would be an extremely desirable property for preservation due to its immense frontage along the River and proximity to the Salmon River State Forest. However, with the historical uses of the property and the potential for environmental liabilities, these entities have been hesitant to accept the property. In addition, the owners had a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment completed in 2004. The Phase I recommended Phase II testing be conducted, based on the previous uses of the property. This all but required the need for additional environmental assessment in order to transfer the property.

Working with the owners, the Town of Colchester submitted a brownfield assessment grant application seeking funding for a Supplemental Phase I and a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment. With the awarded grant funds, the Town will contract with the local environmental firm, Alta Environmental, Corp., to complete the assessments. Even after the Phase I & II, much work will still need to be completed, however, the assessment work is a step in the right direction after years of attempts to preserve the property.

Both articles and pictures by Jay Gigliotti,



Colchester Open Space Fund

As with many Towns, Colchester maintains an open space fund, expenditures from which can be utilized solely for open space purposes. Expenditures can take a variety of forms including property or easement acquisition and soft costs typically associated with land acquisition such as appraisals, surveys or closing costs.



Procedures to make expenditures from the open space fund is detailed in the Town Ordinances. Until recently, the ordinance allowed expenditures from the fund to be made only in connection with a project that ultimately resulted in Town ownership or interests. In other words, the Town could not partner with other preservation entities unless the project resulted in Town ownership.

Many opportunities exist to collaborate with other stakeholders who share similar preservation goals. Farmland Preservation programs administered by agencies such as the CT Department of Agriculture and Natural Resource Conservation Service, offer land owners the opportunity to sell the development rights to their land, in exchange for the market value of those rights. The result is an easement that keeps the land in private ownership and allows it to be productive farmland without the fear of the property being developed in the future.

Preservation entities, such as the Town, can assist the land owner by paying for the soft costs associated with the transaction. Realizing the ordinance prevented the Town from contributing to such projects, an initiative formed to amend the ordinance, allowing the contribution of open space funds towards these projects. Working with Town counsel and the Colchester Land Trust, the Colchester Planning and Zoning Department drafted a revision to the open space fund ordinance. The revision was approved by the Colchester Board of Selectmen on 12/16/21. The adopted revisions provide the town with another effective tool for preservation projects.

The Story of Venture Smith

The story of Venture Smith is a story of the extraordinary resilience, character, and industry of a black man who was taken from his native Guinea at age 6, brought to New England, and endured 30 years of violent slavery before buying not only his own freedom but that of his wife and three children. This story is a summary of Venture's own narrative, which you can read here: <https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/venture/venture.html>.

In 1729, in Guinea, the eldest son of the King of the Tribe of Dukandarra was born. His name was Broteer Furro and he came from a peaceful tribe of people who were commonly over 6 feet tall and very large. When he was 6 years old, news reached his tribe that an army outfitted with arms, by a white nation, was approaching and planned to invade. His tribe was not prepared to fight off the army of six thousand, so they fled but were soon discovered. Broteer witnessed his father being tortured and killed. The army took Broteer and others captive and brought them about 400 miles towards the sea.

When they reached the slave-trading town of Anomabo, in present-day Ghana, the army was attacked and overcome by another group, which sold Broteer and the other captives as slaves. Two hundred and sixty people, including Broteer, were bought and put on a Rhode Island ship commanded by Captain Collingwood and Thomas Mumford. Broteer was bought for four gallons of rum and a piece of calico by Robertson Mumford, the ship's steward. Mumford renamed Broteer, Venture, because he bought him on "his own private venture". The ship sailed from Africa to Barbados, and on this journey about 60 of the enslaved people died of smallpox. Almost all were sold in Barbados except for Venture and three others who were brought to Rhode Island.

Venture was about 8 years old when he began living as a slave in Mumford's residence on Fishers Island. At this young age, he was forced to do strenuous tasks otherwise he would be punished rigorously. At 22, Venture married Meg, an enslaved woman who he fell in love with. After attempting to run away, Venture was sold to Thomas Stanton II, a farmer in Stonington, in about 1754. About a year and a half later, Venture convinced Stanton to purchase his wife from Mumford. Their servitude in the Stanton residence was met with violent abuse. Eventually, Venture was sold a third time to Colonel O. Smith of Stonington. At 36 years old (in 1765), Col. Smith allowed Venture to buy his freedom from him. Venture had always worked beyond his slave duties to make money on the side. His physical and mental



strength were extraordinary. It was in honor of Col. Smith that Venture adopted his surname, becoming Venture Smith.

Venture worked hard as a free man to earn enough money to buy his pregnant wife and two sons from Thomas Stanton and his daughter from the Mumford family. Venture had many business ventures that included, whaling, fishing, cutting cordwood, and investing in land. In 1770, he bought 26 acres next to his former master Thomas Stanton, which is now Barn Island Wildlife Preserve in Stonington. He later sold this land and used the money to buy 10 acres from Abel Bingham in Haddam Neck, where he moved his family. He continued his entrepreneurial endeavors and grew his property to 100 acres, along the Salmon River. However, his life as a free man was not without struggle. Due to racism and injustice, he was cheated and taken advantage of numerous times.

At 69 years old, he relayed his life story to someone who authored his narrative, which was published in 1798. Venture died in 1805 at age 76 and was buried in the First Congregational Church cemetery in East Haddam, where you can visit his gravestone.

Works Cited:

<https://connecticuthistory.org/venture-smith-from-slavery-to-freedom/>

<https://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/venture/venture.html>

<https://www.iaismuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/preserve-booklet-venture-smith-homestead.pdf>

Article and picture by Riley Doherty

Do You Live in a MS-4 Town?

First, let's define what it means. MS-4 stands for Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System. Simply put, it refers to a collection of structures designed to gather stormwater and ultimately discharge it into local streams and rivers. It can include catch basins, gutters, detention basins—really anything that conveys stormwater. It is not connected to a Sanitary Sewer, which is why it is referred to as “separate”. While the MS-4 program is regulated by CT DEEP, it is part of a national mandate to manage the negative impacts of stormwater on local waters. Towns in CT are designated based on the US Census—which defines urbanized areas, or in other words, areas of higher population densities. Towns that are “MS-4” towns are required to develop Stormwater Management Plans which must include the following 6 main focus areas;

- Public Education and Outreach
- Construction Site Erosion Control
- Public Participation and Involvement
- Post Construction Stormwater Management
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping

In the Salmon River Watershed, currently 5 of our 10 towns are “MS-4” Towns. They include ***Bolton, Glastonbury, Haddam, Hebron*** and ***Marlborough*** and ultimately all towns in the state are projected to be included. You can learn more about what your town is doing by visiting its website.

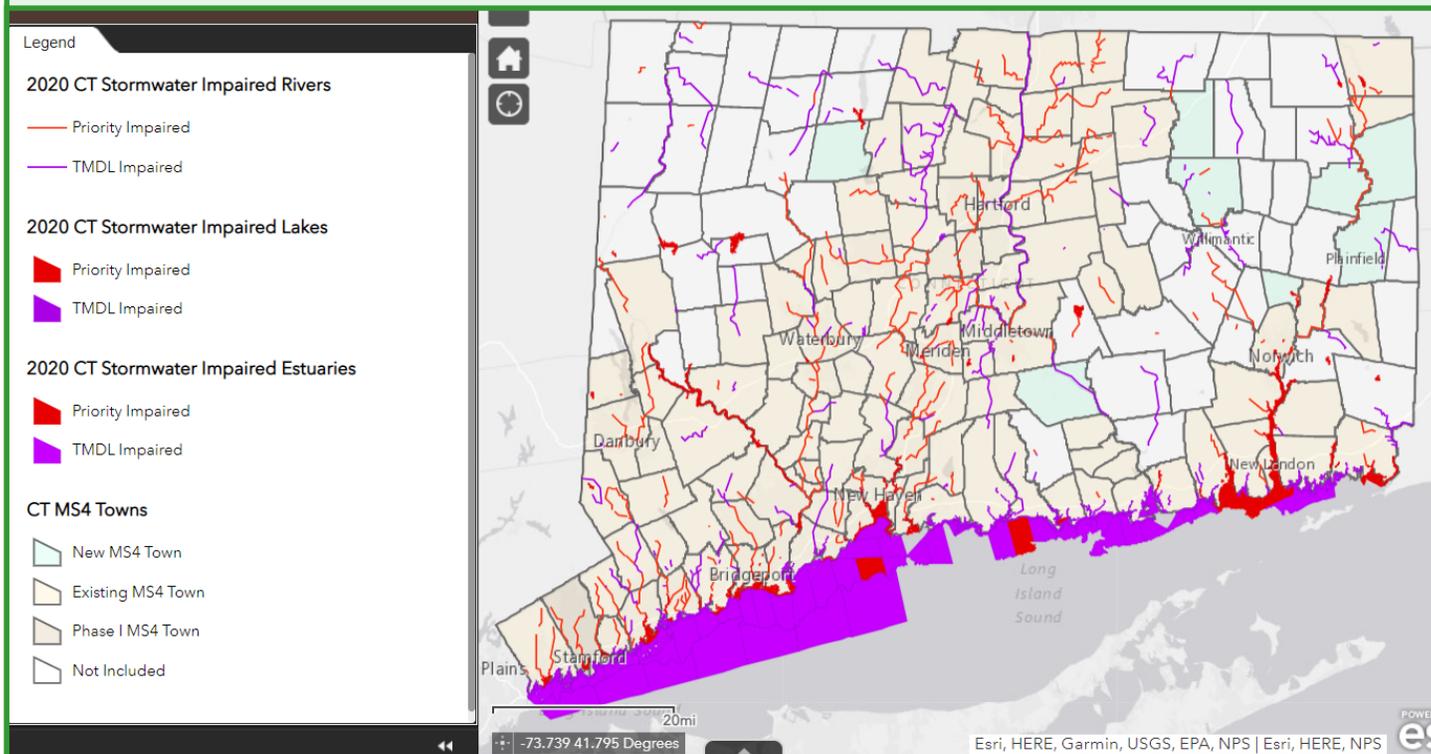
How do We Help?

The Salmon River Watershed Partnership conducts stream monitoring, education programs and outreach to assist towns in meeting their requirements and submits an annual report to each town documenting activities.

How Can You Help?

There are a number of relatively simple things landowners can do to help minimize the impacts of stormwater, including:

- Directing driveway and roof drainage away from road gutters where possible.
- Installing grass swales or rain gardens as a means to treat driveway or roof drainage.
- Planting native species which are better suited for our soil types..
- Minimizing lawn applications of fertilizer and herbicides.
- Using pervious materials, such as permeable pavers for driveways or patios.
- Getting involved with volunteer activities such as stream monitoring, river clean-ups or native pollinator gardens.





Trees for Trout

In honor of Earth Day, Thames Valley #282, Trout Unlimited, sponsored a tree planting along the banks of the Blackledge River in Colchester. Coordinated with CT DEEP Fisheries and Forestry, 50 potted white pines were placed along an exposed section of the river; the site of a former bank restoration project.



Clockwise from the left: TU members giving planting instructions to volunteers, SRWP board members and volunteers getting ready to plant a tree and new growth a month after planting.

Colchester Wildlife Management Plan- Sablitz Open Space

In July of 2020, the Town of Colchester was awarded a CT DEEP Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant to acquire the 75 acres of vacant property located off of Middletown Road (Route 16), formerly owned by the Sablitz family. The Town completed the property acquisition in October of 2021. The Town intends to construct a small parking and picnic area on the property as well as a network of hiking trails.

Recently, the Town was approached by UCONN students engaged in the wildlife management program, interested in developing a wildlife management plan (WMP) for a Town-owned property. Completing a WMP for a state or town owned property is a requirement of the students' course syllabus. In 2021, Colchester worked with UCONN wildlife major students to develop a WMP for Ruby & Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands, a passive recreation park owned by the Town. The completed WMP provided the Town with an inventory of wildlife and habitat species on the property, and provided recommendations to ensure the heavily used public park functions in harmony

with wildlife.

The Town Conservation & Open Space Commissions endorsed the development of a WMP for the Sablitz open space property. Since the proposed park amenities have not yet been designed or installed, the WMP will provide the community an opportunity to be considerate of the impacts the improvements could have on wildlife.

By Jay Gigliotti, Planning & Zoning Department



Pine Brook-Colchester

Steering Committee

Watershed Towns

Bolton: Matt Rivers

Colchester: Jay Gigliotti
until 5/22)

Columbia: Open

East Haddam: Bernie Gillis, Jim Ventres (alternate)

East Hampton: Jeremy DeCarli

Glastonbury: Suzanne Simone

Haddam: Gail Reynolds,

Hebron: Brian O'Connell,
Chris Frey (alternate)

Lebanon: Tess Lundgren

Marlborough: Peter Hughes

Organizations

The Nature Conservancy:
Shelley Green

Connecticut DEEP: Eric Thomas & Joe Cassone

Land Trusts

Colchester Land Trust:
Scott Sivek, Lisa Hageman,
(alternate)

Recreational Groups

Trout Unlimited: Gary Lussier

Member at Large

**Silvio O. Conte Refuge-
Haddam Neck:** Jim
McHutchison

Watershed Coordinator:
Patricia Young

Website:
www.SalmonRiverCT.org

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/10towns/

Instagram: #salmonriverct

Creating a Master Plan for the Air Line Trail in our Watershed

Connecticut Resource Conservation and Development (CT RC&D) is creating a Master Plan for the twelve towns in Connecticut that lie along the Air Line Trail to help enhance Trail user experience; advertise the natural, historical, and cultural assets of these towns; and promote the Air Line Trail as a driver of current and future economic activity. The Air Line Trail Master Plan creation is funded by the State of Connecticut. Work is being done by Infrastructure and Municipal Leadership, Conservation, Advocacy and Marketing, and Sustainable Economics and Land Use Committees with support provided to each of these groups.

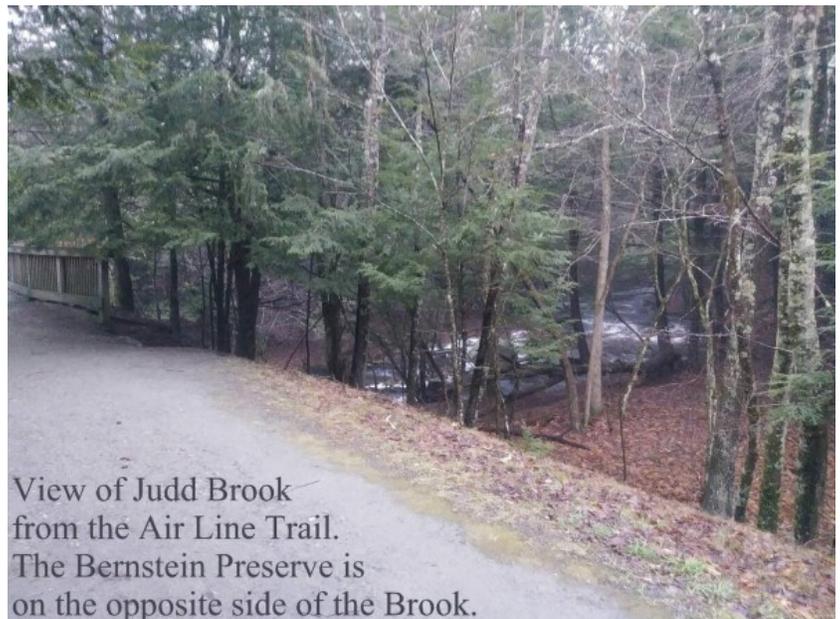
In conjunction with participating in the creation of the Master Plan effort, the Town of Hebron requested Environmental Inventory Reviews from CT RC&D for two critically significant natural areas along the Air Line Trail, the 82-acre Town Open Space "Hibbert Preserve" and 215-acre Town Open Space "Bernstein Preserve." The Hibbert Preserve contains intact and diversified upland forest and 3000 feet of the Raymond Brook. A 1700's mill site, an 1800's dam site, and a wagon road are some fascinating historical features of this preserve. The Bernstein Preserve is primarily intact forest and wetlands containing several endangered species and an important section of the Judd Brook. Historical stone bridge foundations, instrumental in the building of the Air Line Railroad, lie on this portion of Judd Brook.

The Raymond Brook and Judd Brook are major tributaries to the Jeremy River, a Class A watercourse, and critical to the quality of the Salmon River. The Environmental Review Team includes natural and cultural resource professionals who will provide insights and recommendations regarding the ecological, historical, transportation, archeological, stewardship and more aspects of these important natural assets along the Air Line Trail. The experts met on-site in the Fall in conjunction with local specialists who offered their gathered historical and environmental familiarity with the areas. Further on-site visits are planned this Spring.

Air Line Trail Master Plan efforts are now focusing on creating a twelve-town regional website, a logo with cohesive signage, a trifold EZ-map for each town and a promotional video. High school students are being sought to be ambassadors for the Air Line Trail. Jeanne Davies, Executive Director of CT RC&D, is orchestrating the efforts of the

many contributors to this valuable regional endeavor. Visit <https://ctrcd.org/airlinetrail/> to keep abreast of the development of the Air Line Trail Master Plan and sign up for the development newsletter.

Article and picture by Ann Zitkus



View of Judd Brook from the Air Line Trail. The Bernstein Preserve is on the opposite side of the Brook.

The Lure of Fishing

I have been fishing since I was about eight years old and fly fishing for over 25 years. I spend most of my time fishing rivers and streams in New London and Windham Counties with at least a few visits each year to the Housatonic and Farmington Rivers and occasionally beyond. Over the last few years, I've found myself spending a good portion of my time fishing on the Salmon River.

Granted it's relatively close to home, but so are at least a half dozen other rivers that I can get to just as easily. There's some special attraction to the Salmon, some of it may be hard to explain.

The Salmon River begins at the confluence of the Blackledge and Jeremy Rivers and flows a little over 10 miles before entering Salmon Cove and finally the Connecticut River. It's a beautiful river, with clear clean water running through mostly heavily wooded area including the Salmon River Forest. It's fairly easy to wade and there are a lot of places to gain access. The river is regularly stocked with trout by DEEP. It is perfect habitat for trout with a rocky gravel bottom, lots of riffles and pools and good shade from the wooded banks.

For me, there's nothing more relaxing than being alone on a river, listening to the moving water all around me and trying to solve the puzzle of what it's going to take to get a fish to bite given the variety of conditions of the moment. The Salmon is the perfect place for that with long stretches of water with nothing around you but trees. And there's a lot more to experience than just the fishing. There's an abundance of wildlife along the river to see. I frequently see bald eagles, osprey and hawks flying up and down the river just overhead and below tree top levels. Seeing an eagle up close flying over or perched in a nearby tree never loses its thrill for me. In addition, I often see ducks, blue heron, red wing blackbirds, Baltimore orioles, pileated woodpeckers, kingfishers and countless other wild birds. I've also seen raccoon, fox, bobcat, deer, weasels even one chance sighting of the elusive fisher cat. All of those things combined make a day on the Salmon about so much more than just fishing.

Many people go the river, especially the picnic area to just enjoy the outdoors. They'll walk the trails, walk



Gary Lussier (left) being filmed by videographer Jon Kosak (right) about fishing in the Salmon River

their dogs, picnic with their friends and family, take their kids fishing or just pull up a chair at the edge of the river and read a book in the sun. The one down side, if you can call it that, is that the river seems at times just too popular. I've had days were I would drive to spot after spot only to find multiple cars and people already in "my" spot. Usually, you can eventually find a place for yourself but I've had more than a few days when I just give up and move on to plan B.

An unfortunate byproduct of the river's popularity is the amount of litter that gets discarded along the banks. It frustrates and angers me to no end to see the complete disregard of just a few people who are willing to desecrate this beautiful resource by leaving their garbage

behind rather than simply carrying it away when they leave. I usually pack an empty plastic bag to pick up whatever trash I find and get it out of the river. Occasionally I see this woman walking along Comstock Road running parallel to the river. She carries a big plastic bag and picks up trash along the road and river. I can't help but feeling guilty because even though it wasn't me, some of that trash was left behind by anglers. All anglers that I know have way too much respect for their waters to trash them. The few that don't creates a bad impression of anglers that tarnishes the rest of us.

While I sometimes selfishly wish that less people knew of the Salmon River so I could have more of it to myself, I also believe that the more people that appreciate it, the more advocates we have that will stand up and protect it. I have just recently become involved with the Salmon River Watershed Partnership. Being a member of Trout Unlimited (which is a national cold water conservation organization), I know how difficult it is to assemble such a diverse coalition of towns, agencies and support groups with the common interest of preserving, protecting and improving a watershed. After just a few meetings, I'm impressed with the participation from the surrounding towns and their dedication to safeguarding the Salmon River. It's a far too valuable resource to take for granted and not preserve it for ourselves and for future generations.

By Gary Lussier, President Thames Valley #282, Trout Unlimited

Internships: Essential for Future Careers

Student interns have been assisting the Salmon River Watershed Partnership with stream monitoring, data collection and outreach for the last ten years as part of a student internship program that allows student volunteers to transition into student interns. For many students, their work with SRWP was their first step in gaining experience, which then led to professional careers in the environmental field. Recently SRWP asked several of them to update us on where they are now.



Matthew Benedict

Degree: UCONN, BS-Ecology & Evolutionary Biology, and Psychology. Currently pursuing MS-Biology
Current Occupation

and Employer: Herpetologist at the National Aquarium in Baltimore

Comments on experience with SRWP: Gained a skill-set for water quality and culvert mapping for fish and amphibian passage. Interning with the SRWSP was a necessary precursor to working in the field I am in now. I still utilize skills I gained with them in my current career.



Jessica Lord

Degree: URI, BS-Wildlife and Conservation Biology

Position: Environmental Scientist with the State of Rhode Island (Office of Water Resources in the Freshwater Wetlands Permitting Section)

Comments on experience with SRWP: My time at SRWP was my first experience working in the environmental field and it convinced me

to pursue an education in wildlife biology. Throughout my time at SRWP, I gained valuable field work experience and a further appreciation for the environment. The intern position taught me how to collect scientific data in the field, how to properly manage the data, and much more! It was a great stepping-stone for getting into the scientific field and was the basis for starting my career as it opened doors for many other opportunities.



Fernanda Mastroluca

Degree: UCONN, BS-Environmental Engineering, and BA-Geography

Position: Water Resource Engineer, SLR Consulting

Comments on experience

with SRWP: My internship with SRWP was of extreme value and helped shape my current career. I was able to understand river dynamics better and learned a great deal about aquatic/terrestrial organism passages and challenges we face in the Northeast. This internship connected me with so many people and organizations that work in the water resource field, such as DEEP fisheries. The opportunity I had to work in the SRWP made me appreciate rivers and their importance to humans, fish, macroinvertebrates, and all other organisms that depend on it. Today, at SLR Consulting, I work in dam removal projects, river/streams and wetland restoration projects, along with many other flood and coastal resilience projects all over CT, NY, and MA. I will be forever grateful to the SRWP for all the opportunities this program was able to give me!



Emma Coffey

Degree: Keene State College, BS-Public Health, minor in Environmental Studies

Position: Air Quality Equipment Technician with U.S. Environmental Rental Corporation-E. Hartford, CT

Comments on experience with SRWP: SRWP provided me several years of experience

in both field and office-based work. I gained technical and analytical skills in this position that provide an edge against other competitive job applicants. Since leaving SRWP, I have worked at CT DEEP as a seasonal with their Water Monitoring Unit, as well as landing a full-time position with U.S. Environmental working to clean, calibrate and prepare life-saving air instruments for monitoring purposes. I believe without my time at SRWP I would not have made the connections and experiences I hold and value today. I would recommend SRWP to anyone who is interested in local community and environmental protection and summer sampling days!