

QUINNIPIAC RIVER FUND FINAL REPORT- 2019

Please complete and submit completed form via e-mail to [dcanning@cfgnh.org](mailto:dcanning@cfgnh.org) at The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven by March 31, 2019 (or as otherwise stated on the terms of grant).

Date: 3/29/19

Group/Organization Name: New Haven Land Trust

Address: 817 Grand Ave, New Haven, CT 06511

Telephone #: 203-562-6655

Project Name: Q River Fund - NHLT Education and Environment Program

Grant Number: 20180209

Name & title of person completing this form: Cori Merchant, Preserves & Education Coordinator

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Please respond to the following statements:

1. List the specific objectives/outcomes of the project and tell how they were met during the grant period. Also, provide an update on any special conditions of the grant (if applicable).

The project associated with this grant included procurement and development of an adjacent piece of property to the New Haven Land Trust's Quinnipiac Meadows Nature Preserve along the Quinnipiac River. The project also included the hiring of a full time educator and preserve coordinator to assist in those efforts at Q Meadows and at the Long Wharf Nature Preserve, with the further development of education programming, the summer camp and volunteer opportunities along the Quinnipiac River and New Haven Harbor.

As stated in the grant application, we have provided increased outreach at our Quinnipiac River and Long Wharf Nature Preserve sites through many volunteer and educational events in the granting period. At Q Meadows we have hosted seven educational events with 125 people in attendance and three volunteer events with 35 in attendance. At Long Wharf we have hosted

seven educational events with 250 people in attendance and four volunteer events with 142 people in attendance.

Examples of educational events included an Early Spring Bird Walk, a Scat & Tracks hike, and evening Bats & Bugs talk. We developed school year partnerships with Conte West Hills Elementary School in New Haven, hosting their 2nd graders on 3 field trips to Long Wharf in the spring of 2018. In the spring we also ran after school programming for Sound School high schoolers including frequent weekday visits to Long Wharf and a Saturday field trip to Q Meadows. Volunteer events included an Earth Day Cleanup and a Clean up on International Coastal Cleanup Day, removing over 300lbs of trash from the preserves.

A full time Camp Director and Preserves Coordinator was hired in the spring and began work on school, education and volunteer programs described above and the further development of Schooner Summer Camp. Schooner Camp had an amazing summer and expanded from 40 campers per week to 80 campers per week, including pilot programs for campers age 4-5 and the Leaders in Training program for ages 13-14. At 90% full, camp provided 574 camp weeks to 384 participants, as compared to around 200 participants in 2017. \$83,000 was provided in financial aid to ensure campers of all backgrounds were given the opportunity to participate.

Quinnipiac Meadows Acquisition Update: The property has now moved out of the estate it has previously been held in. We are working directly with the owner and are very near to a final draft of the agreement of sale, which should be completed within the next week or two. Once the agreement of sale has been finalized and signed, there is a 60 day window for environmental review. At the conclusion of this review and presuming the environmental assessment goes well, New Haven Land Trust will purchase the property. We are closer than ever to acquiring this additional property along the Quinnipiac River and are cautiously optimistic that final agreements can be made to finish this deal.

2. Please share your successes, challenges and any lessons learned through the implementation of your project. Were there any unintended consequences or lessons learned that may affect how you operate your program moving forward?

This granting period, our public educational programs and volunteer workdays have been immensely successful. These two types of events are central to the work we do at the Land Trust, because we see education as our greatest tool in helping to develop engaged, environmentally-conscious stewards and community leaders in New Haven. We served over 550 people in these programs that engaged them with their local environment. Schooner Camp and school field trips provided an even more direct point of entry, because we reach so many youth (approximately 450) and because students get to spend multiple days at Long Wharf Preserve, learning in-depth about the ecosystem.

We will continue to improve in our efforts to engage populations that have historically been denied access to wilderness or left out of the discussion in the conservation movement. It can be a challenge to reach neighbors and local populations around the nature preserves, and many

in New Haven still don't know they exist. As our school programming expands, we know this will help grow awareness of the nature preserves and our programming. The year round Schooner

Director and Nature Preserves manager has greatly improved our outreach abilities and strengthened our partnerships with New Haven schools, universities, and other nonprofits.

The land acquisition project has continued to be a challenge. We have spent quite a bit of time fine tuning the language in the contract to create something that can be acceptable with both parties. We have had to re-envision our usage of the property in the interest of making sure this ecologically important piece of land is preserved and protected going forward.

3. What are the opportunities and needs of your organization as it continues to move forward with its work to positively impact the Quinnipiac River?

The New Haven Land Trust plans to continue working to conserve and protect our landholdings adjacent to the Quinnipiac River and offer increasingly robust, year-round programming and stewardship opportunities to the community.

In 2019, Schooner Camp will offer an increased variety of programming to our youth, including a new 2-week Adventure Sailing program. With the ongoing support of the Quinnipiac River Fund, Schooner will continue to expand its capacity and its breadth of offerings, further engaging New Haven youth to explore the Quinnipiac River Watershed and learn to sail in Long Island Sound. The new year round Education and Preserves Coordinator is working closely with New Haven Public Schools and will be getting about 1000 students onto the preserves for school year field trips, a large increase from the about 150 students previously.

In addition, the expected acquisition of 26 acres at Quinnipiac Meadows Preserve will allow the Land Trust to double the size of the preserve and develop an entirely new trail system and management plan. We will need financial support and scientific expertise in the coming years in order to develop this land into a fully accessible and functioning addition to the preserve. Development of this land will provide numerous opportunities for the New Haven community to engage directly with the land and make a lasting material impact at the preserve, thereby helping protect the Quinnipiac River Watershed in perpetuity.

One example of this engagement is we have partnered with a newly developed Yale course in the School of Forestry & Environmental Studies. The students in this course are learning a variety of environmental sampling and surveying techniques and will be creating a baseline report on the health and needs of the preserve. This will be supremely helpful as we work to incorporate the new property and create the overall management plan.