

# The Watershed Partnership, Inc.

## QUINNIPIAC RIVER FUND - FINAL REPORT- SPRING 2010

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 April 7, 2010.

Date: March 31, 2010

Group/Organization Name: Watershed Partnership, Inc.

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Telephone #: 203-453-8537

Project Name: The Safe Grounds Campaign

Grant Number: 20090109

Name & title of person completing this form: Jerome A. Silbert, M.D., Executive Director

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Please respond to the following statements:

**1. Give a brief summary of what your organization's 2009 project is.**

- ◆ The Partnership will extend our successful Safe Grounds Campaign to reduce non-point source pollution from lawn pesticides and synthetic fertilizers in the Quinnipiac River watershed.
- ◆ The Partnership will continue to work with municipalities in the Quinnipiac River watershed to promote pesticide-free organic lawn and turf care with a concentration on high schools, parks, and playgrounds.
- ◆ The Partnership will educate the public, municipal governments, and school systems on the risks to health and the environment of lawn pesticides and synthetic fertilizers.
- ◆ The Partnership will promote municipal resolutions that encourage the use of organic lawn care and provide assistance to municipalities for lawn care alternatives to reduce this non-point source pollution.
- ◆ The Partnership will gather data on the effectiveness of organic lawn and turf care.

**2. What has been accomplished to date? Please frame your answer in terms of attainment of the outcomes framed in your proposal.**

- ◆ The Partnership's objective was to have all municipalities in the watershed begin to use organic land care. Potential targets are parks, playgrounds, schools, ball fields, and municipal greens.

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As a result of the Watershed Partnership's legislative advocacy, all public and private schools in Connecticut including all in the Quinnipiac River watershed are now prohibited from using toxic pesticides on their grounds (except if there is an immediate threat to human health). By July 1, 2010, this pesticide ban will be extended to all public and private school athletic fields.

The town of Cheshire has extended organic turf care to its parks and the town of Plainville is beginning to do so as well.

Further, as a result of the Watershed Partnership's advocacy in the 2009 legislative session, the Connecticut legislature voted overwhelmingly to extend and strengthen the pesticide ban to include all day care facilities in Connecticut. This not only affects non-point source pollution but also protects Connecticut's most vulnerable population – young children. This day care legislation also calls for the notification of the children's parents should a pesticide application for an immediate threat to human health. This serves an educational purpose by alerting parents about the use of pesticides.

The Watershed Partnership participated in collaboration with the DEP and NOFA in three compost workshops for municipal officials on May 28, June 18, and September 22 and is working with Cheshire and Southington in a cooperative venture to use screened leaf compost on parks, and fields.

The Watershed Partnership has kept in contact with municipal official in the Quinnipiac River watershed towns to see how they are doing with the organic turf transition and to offer assistance.

The Watershed Partnership has put together a display about organic turf care and a photo album documenting successes of organic turf care in Quinnipiac River watershed as well as other municipalities in Connecticut.

- ◆ The organic land care techniques will use only safe organic materials.

No pesticide registered by the EPA is allowed to be used on school grounds or in day care centers except if there is an immediate threat to human health.

The Watershed Partnership and the Connecticut DEP initiated a discussion among stakeholders in landscaping and turf care to see if there might be exceptions to the ban on EPA registered pesticides. This was because there are EPA registered pesticides that are considered safe such as the biological pesticides like milky spoor to control grubs.

However, the talks took an unfortunate turn and opened the door to the use of many pesticides that would not pass the precautionary principle. As a result the discussion ended without agreement and the pro-pesticide interests and their lobbyists introduced legislation that attempted to roll back Connecticut's existing lawn pesticide ban.

Fortunately, the Watershed Partnership was able to block this roll back with a substitute bill that preserved the lawn pesticide ban at elementary and middle schools, and day care centers. The bill is still moving through the legislature and we are keeping a close eye on it.

- ◆ The Partnership will publicize each municipality's switch to organic land care in local media; The Partnership will present talks to parent-teacher associations and garden clubs to activate citizens to advocate for stricter lawn pesticide regulation and a transition to organic lawn and turf care; The Partnership has also produced an 60-minute video on "The Risks and Alternatives to Toxic Lawn Pesticides" that will be shown on public access TV to

educate the public, raise awareness, and recruit advocates for stricter lawn pesticide regulations.

Unfortunately, Dr. Silbert had to be treated for advanced chronic viral hepatitis for 54 months starting in March of 2009. The chemotherapy for this condition is debilitating and he was not able to work on the publicity and outreach objectives of the 2009 Safe Grounds Campaign. Publicity and outreach are planned for 2010 in conjunction with recruiting parents of school children to monitor pesticide use at their children's schools.

### **3. Other relevant developments.**

The Watershed Partnership is working with the staff at the Connecticut Governor's Residence to convert the lawns to organic care. So far, this is working out well. Governor Rell is very pleased with the result and is holding an informal party to thank the Watershed Partnership and others involved in the organic lawn conversion. This is a good opportunity for publicity for organic lawn care.

The town of Branford is converting all of its parks and athletic fields to organic care and has passed an ordinance calling for the voluntary abstention from the use of toxic lawn pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. The Watershed Partnership gave an award this fall to recognize Branford's Board of Selectmen and the Director of Parks and Recreation, Alex Palluzzi. They has been particularly cooperative in adopting and promoting organic turf care.