

**QUINNIPIAC RIVER FUND FINAL REPORT- SPRING 2012
(EXTENDED TO JANUARY 2013)**

Date: 1/4/13

Group/Organization Name: Audubon Connecticut

Address: 613 Riversville Road

City, State, & Zip: Greenwich, CT 06831

Telephone #: 203-869-5272

Project Name: Improving Water Quality and Wildlife Habitat in the Quinnipiac River Watershed

Grant Number: 20110131

Name & title of person completing this form: Michelle Frankel, Deputy Director of Development

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Please respond to the following statements:

1. Give a brief summary of what your group/organization's 2011 project is.

Audubon Connecticut and its partners are raising awareness among legislators, homeowners, and the general public about ways to reduce both non-point and point sources of pollution and to improve habitat for wildlife within the Quinnipiac River Watershed (QRW). We will promote legislative, municipal, corporate, and personal actions to improve water quality and habitat for wildlife in the QRW through a combination of (1) legislative forums in New Haven and Wallingford, (2) a film series coupled with panel discussions to be held at the Yale Peabody Museum in New Haven, and at venues in Wallingford and Cheshire, and (3) outreach materials to be displayed and disseminated at a wide range of venues. As a result of these activities, we will grow the number of bird and wildlife supporters engaged in conservation and advocacy on behalf of the watershed by making the connection between our personal actions, the health of the watershed, and the birds and other wildlife we all enjoy and cherish.

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

Activity/Outcome:

Develop effective partnerships: At the start of the project period, Audubon will host a meeting with project partners in order to ensure that our messages and efforts are coordinated, and that our project supports and amplifies the good work that they are already doing.

Progress to Date:

Audubon staff members organized a conference call with all of the partner organizations to discuss the project goals as well as determine whose expertise would be best utilized for the film series, legislative forum, and outreach messaging. Representatives gave a brief synopsis of their work in the Quinnipiac River Watershed. This was a good way for the partner organizations to familiarize themselves with each other's efforts and understand the variety and breadth of work being done in the watershed community. It also helped to identify gaps in outreach materials that we are working to fill. We have had several calls since that time and partners participated in many of the events.

Audubon staff members now have an ongoing relationship with several key environmental organizations in the state since the start of this project, including The Watershed Partnership, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Wallingford Land Trust, and the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association as well as with the Yale Peabody Museum. There has been an ongoing dialogue since the start of the project about the films and different events in the state pertaining to watershed protection.

Activity/Outcome:

Legislative Forums: In partnership with the Menunkatuck Audubon Society, Yale Peabody Museum, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, and the Watershed Partnership, we will hold two legislative forums to target a diverse group of constituents in the Wallingford, Cheshire, and the Greater New Haven Area.

Progress to Date:

With support from the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven's Quinnipiac River Fund, Audubon Connecticut and its partners worked to raise awareness among legislators, homeowners, and the general public about ways to reduce both non-point and point sources of pollution and to improve habitat for wildlife within the Quinnipiac River Watershed (QRW) including legislative, municipal, corporate, and personal actions to improve water quality and habitat for wildlife in the QRW.

In the wake of Tropical Storm Irene and the October snow storm, the first Quinnipiac River legislative forum was held December 3, 2011 at Yale's Peabody Museum with State Representatives Mary Mushinsky, James Albis and Roland Lemar participating in a panel discussion kicked off by Peabody Museum Director, Professor Derek E.G. Briggs and moderated by Audubon Connecticut's Director of Government Affairs, Sandy Breslin. The roughly 20 partners and participants identified a number of issues ranging from pesticides, riparian buffers, funding for habitat conservation and planning for coastal resiliency and recovery. Staff from Senator Richard Blumenthal's and Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro's offices also participated in the discussion, providing a federal perspective. Audubon Connecticut, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound, Menunkatuck Audubon Society,

New Haven Land Trust, Watershed Partnership, and Yale Peabody Museum co-sponsored the event and provided displays. Soon after the event, Representative Albis was nominated as chair of the Connecticut General Assembly's (CGA) Shoreline Preservation Task Force, bipartisan legislative task force charged with studying the effects of climate change on efforts to preserve the Connecticut shoreline. Since February 2012, the task force has been reviewing sea level rise data; identifying solutions that will protect families, keep businesses open, and give municipalities the tools they need to address these issues. During the 2012 legislative session, the partners worked together successfully to defend Connecticut's landmark law reducing the use of lawn care pesticides at daycare centers, nursery and schools (kindergarten through grade eight), enact legislation aimed at reducing phosphorous discharges into state waters, a particular concern in the QRW, require real-time online public notification of sewage spills, secure state funding for habitat conservation and improve the state's open space acquisition program.

In 2012, we engaged the lobbying team of Murtha Cullina to assist in organizing the forum, which was held December 17th at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven. Roughly 35 people attended including representatives from local municipal governments, land trusts, water utilities and nonprofit conservation groups, as well as members of the general public. Audubon Connecticut, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound, Menunkatuck Audubon Society, and Watershed Partnership co-sponsored the event and provided displays. The pane of speakers included: Representatives James Albis who reported on the findings of the Connecticut General Assembly's Shoreline Preservation Task Force; Representative Mary Mushinsky, who discussed storm impacts to the Quinnipiac River and future threats to the health of the River and its habitats; Audubon Connecticut's Director of Bird Conservation, Patrick Comins, who discussed storm effects on bird habitat and implications for monitoring and stewardship of key species; and The Nature Conservancy's Director of Government Relations, David Sutherland, who addressed potential natural resource benefits of pending federal storm relief legislation. Audubon Connecticut's Director of Government Affairs, Sandy Breslin, moderated the event. Representative Albis was appointed House Democratic Vice-Chair of the CGA's Environment Committee shortly after the event. With the 2013 CGA legislative session set to start January 9th and the final report of the Shoreline Preservation Task Force due January 7th , the partners are poised to once again work together to reduce threats to water quality and improve habitat conservation in the Quinnipiac River Watershed.

Activity/Outcome:

Film Series and Panel Discussions: We will hold a series of film screenings and panel discussions at the Yale Peabody Museum in New Haven and at venues such as the public libraries in Wallingford and Cheshire, to improve awareness about the environmental threats to the QRW, their impacts on wildlife, and the actions needed to address them.

Progress to Date:

The Audubon At Home Coordinator successfully coordinated an environmental film series in towns throughout the Quinnipiac River watershed. Eight dates were set and four different films were screened. A total of 317 people came to the eight screenings. Partner

organizations were on hand to staff tables with information about their organization and the work they are doing within the watershed.

The films shown include: “Vanishing of the Bees”, a 2006 documentary about Colony Collapse Disorder in honeybees, the links to pesticide use as a contributing factor in the collapse and how environmental toxins affect wildlife and people. “The Work of 1,000,” a film about Marion Stoddard, a housewife turned environmental activist who fought to clean up the Nashua River from a toxic, polluted wasteland to a healthier functioning ecosystem. “Living Downstream,” the award winning film chronicling Sandra Steingraber’s experience with environmental toxins and the links to cancer rates in people and even in some populations of wildlife. “Green Fire,” another award winning film about Aldo Leopold, his life and legacy of a conservation ethic. This was a truly inspiring film that people responded to. Each film was prefaced by a short introduction or presentation tying the film’s topic to the Quinnipiac River and the different environmental issues within the watershed. The last film of the series, “The Work of 1000” was screened at the Yale Peabody Museum on April 20th for their annual Earth Day event. As part of this event, we organized 12 environmental organizations to set up informational tables for the full day of Earth Day events at the museum, from 9-3:30, reaching over 200 people.

Activity/Outcome:

Outreach Materials: We will develop outreach materials to educate the public about personal actions we can take in our day-to-day lives to reduce non-point and point sources of pollution to the Quinnipiac River and to improve habitat for birds and other wildlife in the watershed.

Progress to Date:

Each organization represented at the film series had their own materials present which addressed personal actions one could take at home to reduce pollution to the Quinnipiac River and improve watershed health. Our initial plan to develop a tri-fold brochure with a guide to birds of the Quinnipiac River Watershed on one side and actions people can take to improve watershed health on the other side, was not able to be developed because the funds awarded were less than the amount requested. We are still working on developing a simpler joint outreach product with project partners.

3. Expenditure of Grant Funds

Personnel

Salaries	2325	Taralynn Reynolds, Project Coordinator
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Fringe	837	
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Consulting

Stipends	1350	For chapter leader from Menunkatuck Audubon
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Consulting fees	3000	For consultants to organize legislative forums
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Printing

1 Tri-folds 390 For an Audubon At Home fact sheet with info on QRW

Transportation

1500 Travel for Audubon staff from Greenwich to New Haven

Fees

600 For after-hours custodial time at Peabody Museum (space rental fee was contributed in-kind)

Total

10002