

Instructions

QUINNIPIAC RIVER FUND GRANT AWARD - FINAL REPORT QUESTIONS

This form is to be completed by all nonprofit organizations that received a grant through the Quinnipiac River Fund.

Grant Details

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Organization Name

River Advocates of South Central Connecticut

Grant Description

to support the monitoring of state level permits affecting water quality, and then support water quality testing of the Quinnipiac River as well as recruitment and training of a permits observer corps to monitor local land use commissions and screen for testimony local land use permits.

Total Grant Amount

15,769.00

Report Questions

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).

1. monitoring of state level permits--

River Advocates continued to promote municipal compliance with NPDES permits for waste treatment plants, especially improvements to meet CT DEEP's stricter phosphorous standards. The last remaining holdout, the Town of Wallingford, proceeded to order construction for the first upgrade since 1989. They are working to meet phosphorus limits using the additional technology by April 1, 2022.

For industrial NPDES permits, we participated in meetings 6x year as a member of allnex Community Advisory Board to track their progress on addressing spill prevention, phosphorus reduction strategies, handling of discharges from another manufacturer that shares their site, and their stated intention to reduce their wastewater discharge.

2. begin program of water quality testing--

We selected 18 potential sites in the Quinnipiac and adjacent urban watersheds and field-checked accessibility for volunteers to collect samples to analyze for E. coli in freshwater and Enterococcus bacteria in brackish water, the method US EPA uses to classify rivers and their tributaries as "impaired" or "not impaired." We consulted with HarborWatch in Norwalk, CT DEEP, Regional Water Authority (RWA), Soundkeeper and Save the Sound on procedures, available labs and volunteer training.

3. develop recruitment and training of local land use permits observer corps--

We interviewed experts in land use decision making for guidance in setting up the permits observer corps and selecting priority municipalities. Mark Austin, town engineer of Hamden, recommended concentrating effort on Planning and Zoning Commission as they have the power to issue orders. Ron Walters of RWA offered to help teach and categorized the towns with strong and weak land use policies for water quality protection. Bill Lucey, Soundkeeper, recommended prioritizing the towns with their own water and sewer authority (i.e. Wallingford). Erin O'Hare, wetland enforcement officer, advised how to get towns to label land use applications by river, where applicable, to focus attention on priority watershed cases. O'Hare

also reviewed the steps to train citizens to be able to comment on water quality aspects of applications. Due to the eruption of the COVID pandemic and lack of vaccination, we were not able to assemble the volunteers and carry out the group training in 2020.

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?

We became more familiar with the requirements, operations changes and goals for reduction of allnex' discharge to the Quinnipiac River as their permit comes up for renewal by serving on their advisory board and attending briefings that included permit updates and new product lines, which require permit modifications.

We persisted with support for phosphorus compliance and funding until all municipalities discharging treated effluent to the Quinnipiac ceased their opposition and agreed to comply with new NPDES permit requirements. Wallingford will now employ tertiary treatment for phosphorus removal, secondary settling tanks, an improved pump station and ultraviolet disinfection.

We took up the challenge of more frequent monitoring for bacteria in the Quinnipiac and its tributaries because CT DEEP has not tested in many years due to staff shortages. Testing answers the question of which segments are still impaired for public recreation and aquatic life.

Multiple interviews with town regulators and water quality allies helped us target steps in the permit process for citizens participating in local land use decisions. However, COVID disrupted the training of the observer corps and delayed their start.

We did create a training video for residents to track river and tributary low flow problems on their own while they and their families were in COVID lockdown.

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?

There are opportunities to complete the training for interested citizens to influence permits and land use decision making if they are done virtually, and if the volunteers can access training and town land use records on line. One need is for River Advocates to sponsor training using Zoom or a similar provider.