

## 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

### Grant Details

Organization Name

River Advocates of South Central Connecticut

Grant Description

to support the creation of public access on the lower Quinnipiac River, as well as to support advocating on state and local permits affecting water quality and quantity, and carry out bacteria monitoring.

Total Grant Amount

16,500.00

## 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).

The project is designed to re-open the Quinnipiac River for public access paddling by scouting and removing fallen trees and other blockages from Quinnipiac Street, Wallingford through Quinnipac River State Park (QRSP) to Rte 22 in North Haven, the beginning of the treeless salt marsh. Members of the public had expressed frustration that public access to the river in the state park was lost over the last decade due to downed trees. Using professional tree removal services are cost-prohibitive as each tree removal costs approximately \$3,000.

We determined that the 2023 project to clear new blockages should first be scouted and then broken into three segments: (1)Quinnipac Street to Toelles Rd., Wallingford; (2)Toelles Rd., Wallingford to Banton St., North Haven within QRSP; and (3)Banton Street to Route 22, North Haven.

We tested the use of drones, new technology to find the location of log jams from the air. Local realtor Wesley Krombel agreed to provide drone flights for River Advocates. The drone was able to cover about 2 miles at a time before it needed to return to the operator. Except where the canopy completely covered the river, drone flights were able to find numerous log jams which could be visited on foot at a later date.

We also field-checked blockages using footpaths kept open by hikers and hunters. Volunteer river steward Chris McLaughlin of North Haven was helpful in providing access to footpaths from Toelles Rd. and Wilbur Cross Parkway while Bruce Conroy of Wallingford helped us scout park access from Valley Service Rd. There are large sections of impassable wetlands parallel to Valley Service Road.

We coordinated with the park manager at Sleeping Giant State Park, who also supervises QRSP.

River Advocates chose to begin with segment 3. We recruited volunteer chainsaw and lopper cutters including Larry Kellogg and Dave Bedell to create passage through fallen trees from Banton Street in the park to south of the Route 22 bridge in North Haven.

We successfully opened segment 3 from the dead end of Banton Street south to Rte 22 for paddling. As taught by DEEP, we cut only a slot through each logjam sufficient to pass a boat, leaving the rest of woody debris in place for fish habitat and streambank stabilization.

Permit monitoring and local advocacy, 2023

Of the NPDES permits:

allnex and its site partner Rohm were able to meet the more strict maximum daily phosphorous limit. Previously they were close to the limit, which DEEP tightened in April 2022. They are still under their interim NPDES permit. The VP of Operations has called for a high standard of environmental excellence and a zero discharge goal "to secure our future" in Connecticut. River Advocates continues to serve on allnex Community Advisory Board.

All other permits are unchanged (Nucor, Pharmacia, municipal sewage treatment plants).

Bacteria monitoring

River Advocates participated in group leader training in 2023 to learn to process our own bacteria samples at USDA Southwest Conservation District. We also reached out to new community allies including Boys and Girls Club to seek additional river monitors among high school aged students and their instructors.

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?

Use of drones for scouting

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#### Results and recommendations

We successfully opened segment 3 from the dead end of Banton Street south to Rte 22 for paddling. As taught by DEEP, we cut only a slot through each logjam sufficient to pass a boat, leaving the rest of woody debris in place for fish habitat and streambank stabilization. The volunteer cutters recommend that we cut the next segment using a jon boat for better leverage and stability. In 2023, we used a canoe. This year, we used a rechargable rather than gas-powered chainsaw. It is lighter, and a second battery can be carried on the trip.

There are multiple access points to enter the forest to work on the log jams, including Dwight St., Defco Park Rd. and Valley Service Rd. in North Haven. Foot travel to blockages would be easier with cutting equipment. The volunteer steward recommends we upgrade brush cutting equipment before attempting to open the next segment.

While we recruited organized partners such as the Sea Cadets and Nucor professional chainsaw workers, we were unable to use them due to weather constraints. Most of these partners are limited to weekends, but in 2023 we experienced rain on 13 of 15 summer weekends. The Quinnipiac is unsafe for cutting when the river is rising. We used volunteer cutters instead because they could work during the week.

#### Next Steps

For 2024, we would like to cut segment 1 (Quinnipiac St. to Toelles Rd.) or segment 2 (Toelles Rd. to Banton St.). This paddle trail will need continuous maintenance because the urbanized Quinnipiac River rises and falls rapidly, undermining tree roots and toppling trees. However, it is a beautiful ride through the Quinnipiac River State Park and therefore worth maintaining. We will investigate the possibility of DEEP staff assisting the volunteer teams. We believe we can add to our bacteria monitoring teams through the use of community teams such as the Boys and Girls Clubs from Wallingford to New Haven.

### 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?

River Advocates has opportunities to expand our river protection projects through alliances with other community organizations. However, certain specialties are limited and we will continue to rely on the generous services of chainsaw volunteers and drone operators. The pool of these skilled volunteers is very small.

The organization would benefit from a second person to assist with organizing programs and we will investigate interns who can organize teams as well as carry out existing roles as River Guides.

We must replace our deteriorated computer. River Advocates may be forced to find a new, secure warehouse for boat storage in 2024 because our landlord appears to want a new use for our storage building.

## Attachments

**Financial information (required):** Please provide a detailed accounting of how the specific grant dollars were spent based on the budget submitted in the grant application.

Detailed Accounting

Project Budget Sheet 2023 River Advocates.docx

**Pictures (optional):** Please attach one to three pictures in JPEG format, in the highest resolution possible, of activities that have occurred throughout the grant period as a result of grant funding. By providing pictures, your organization is consenting to unlimited use of the pictures by The Community Foundation for Greater New Haven and/or the Valley Community Foundation in publications in print and online (including [www.thequinnipiacriver.com](http://www.thequinnipiacriver.com)). Please include a description of each photo and, when known, the photographer to be credited.

Picture 1

Photos 2023.docx

Description and Photo Credit

Several photos show skilled volunteers who donated their expertise to scout using drones or who opened up blockages for boat passage while protecting river habitat.

photos by Mary Mushinsky, River Advocates of South Central CT

Picture 2

Description and Photo Credit

Picture 3

Description and Photo Credit