NRWA Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.
New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT; Lewisboro, NY

**Norwalk POCD**
**Areas of Concern and Possible Solutions from Norwalk River Watershed Association**
NRWA's focus is threats to water quality and water quantity (both surface waters and ground water) as well as to open space and wildlife habitat, especially degradation of riverbanks and wetland areas, including:

***Storm water runoff degrading water quality and warming rivers and streams:***
The Norwalk River continues to fail to meet the minimum water quality standards as set by the State for class B waterways. Storm-water runoff is the primary source of the pollution in the river. To protect Norwalk's rivers and Long Island Sound, the city should:

- Adopt the model other municipalities use of **charging a storm water utility tax** to business owners and industrial sites requiring them to pay by the square foot for impervious surfaces on their sites or employ LID to control runoff.
- Reduce impervious surfaces by adopting impervious coverage allowances for all zoning districts and/or amending regulations to decrease the need for impervious surfaces.
- **Require Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for all new development**, including city projects and road projects.
- Ensure expert engineering review of projects with potential storm water impacts.
- Prevent industrial wastes and effluent generated from septic and sanitary systems from going into the city's storm drainage system.
- Assist property owners along the Norwalk River to **retrofit properties using LID** principles.
- **Ensure that redevelopment**, especially along wetlands and waterways, incorporates measures to **improve storm water quality and reduce its quantity.**
- Continue the City's laudable record of supporting the work of Harbor Watch, following up on reports of water pollution and making repairs.
- Continue programs to rehabilitate the existing sanitary sewer network including trunk lines, interceptors, force mains and pump stations, and provide capital funding
- Continue to provide capital budget funds for drainage projects to solve drainage problems
- Adopt regulations or incentives to decrease runoff by reducing the clearing of woody vegetation especially along riverbank and wetland buffer zones.
- Use and maintain natural drainage and wetland areas in lieu of structures to the greatest extent possible; protect natural flood storage areas; utilize Department of Environmental Protection "Primary Treatment Practices"
- Protect open space and encourage acquisition of wetlands beneficial to the City
- Continue a policy of no net loss of wetlands and enact mitigation measures for the disturbance of wetlands, including the restoration of wetlands along the Norwalk River;
- Encourage landowners to reduce storm water runoff, such as with rain gardens, rain barrels and other measures.

- Continue to educate public on proper disposal ("Flows to Sound").

***Old and leaking septic systems*:**
New findings by the Nature Conservancy have linked high levels of nitrogen in Long Island Sound to septic systems in CT and on Long Island. Ground water, rivers and the Sound are threatened by older septic systems that are not well maintained. Some solutions:

- Education about the issue
- A septic management ordinance requiring residents to pump their systems regularly.

***Brownfields and other contaminated sites leaching toxins into waterways:***
Encourage the implementation of remedial measures at sites contaminated with hazardous wastes as identified in the most recent inventory, which seems to be 2006, and which numbered about 240.

- Update the inventory of Norwalk's contaminated sites if necessary
- Take advantage of (and help the owners of contaminated sites take advantage of) the new brownfield land bank and revitalization legislation passed in June 2017: An Act Concerning the Creation of Connecticut Brownfield Land Banks, Revisions to the Brownfield Remediation and Revitalization Program and Authoring Bonds of the State for Brownfield Remediation and Development Programs.
- Support the functioning of the Norwalk redevelopment agency.
- Support the work of the Manresa Association to remediate that site

***Drought and reduced streamflow*:**
CT has seen a 5-year drought and now experiences "flash droughts" commonly which has resulted in the creation of a draft State Water Plan for the first time. Some measures necessary to protect drinking water supplies:

- Water conservation education! Use of tools already available such as the 40 Gallon Challenge, Pollinator Pathway lawn reduction plans…
- A drought ordinance equipping the city to enforce conservation measures
- Drought action plan (Aquarion has asked that POCDs include this).
- Support continued remedial action by the United States Environmental Protection Agency for the Kellogg-Deering Wellfield Superfund Site, to protect the wellfield from further contamination
- Protect the Betts Pond Brook, Five Mile River, Silvermine River, Norwalk River, and other aquifers to guarantee quality groundwater for future generations
- Require conservation measures to ensure public sector water usage (building department, public works, parks and rec., etc.) does not exceed safe yield standards

***Fragmentation of open space and loss of wildlife habitat:***
The solution to fragmentation is managing and connecting habitat on existing open space and promoting habitat creation and enhancement in already-developed areas.

- Encourage backyard habitat, especially through the Pollinator Pathway which focuses on reducing lawns and invasive plants, avoiding pesticides and fertilizer, connecting open space and private property in one stewardship plan. More information at Pollinator-Pathway.org. NRWA is helping to launch the Norwalk Pollinator Pathway this summer, and more information is attached.
- Continue to support the Norwalk River Valley Trail
- Continue to support the Norwalk Land Trust and work to protect remaining open space and improve parks.
- Restore and maintain habitat where possible, for example by restoring the vegetative buffer zone along the Norwalk River. Enhance existing publicly owned shorelines by removing invasive weeds, replanting with native plants, and reconstructing wetland areas where possible
- Mandate use of native plants in development and redevelopment projects on city property
- Increase access points to the Norwalk River, both physical and visual access.
- Regulate the process by which contractors may bring in construction fill which may contain seeds of invasive plant species and other contaminants.
- Replace trees downed in storms or by the DOT or power company with native trees; consider joining the Community Canopy Program, sponsored by Arbor Day Foundation.

***Development of areas critical to protection of water resources***

The city needs to protect, and to enforce protections, of its precious and irreplaceable drinking water resources. Critical areas for natural resource protection include • Watercourses and wetlands • Very steep slopes (>25%) • Floodplain (100 year and 500 year) • Areas of high ground water availability • Identified aquifers and recharge areas • Unique or special habitat areas. The city should continue to support the Aquifer Protection Agency.
Water quality classifications map for Norwalk:
http://cteco.uconn.edu/maps/town/wtrqualcl/WtrQualCl_Norwalk.pdf

***Continued loss of open space***

As outlined in the 2008 POCD, the city should

- Evaluate and protect coastal and other fragile natural resources
- Pursue protection of riparian buffers along the Norwalk River, Five Mile River, and Silvermine River through purchase, donation, or conservation easement of land abutting these rivers
- Encourage the preservation of undeveloped lands within the 100-year flood zone with the use of Open Space purchase, donation or conservation easement
- Encourage the preservation of already-protected open space, and encourage the protection of existing “transitory” open space (land that functions as open space but is not formally protected from development) within these environmentally sensitive areas
- Encourage protection of existing Open Space within the Kellogg-Deering site
- Recommend modification of land use regulations, with assistance from the Conservation Commission, to consistently meet the goals of the Open Space Plan and the Plan of Conservation and Development

- Encourage private landowners to establish conservation easements for protecting wetlands and open space (e.g., Dolce Norwalk Center)

- Commit to stewardship of City-owned wooded areas, natural areas, and environmentally sensitive areas

***Continued degradation of the banks of the Norwalk River:***
For previously developed sites ("greyfields"), ensure that site conditions are improved over current conditions when redeveloped.

***Accumulation of plastic in the rivers and Long Island Sound:***
The city should consider a ban on plastic bags, straws and possibly other single-use plastic following the model of Westport, Greenwich and Stamford.

***Loss of the NRWI funding and the need for that group to help facilitate the Norwalk River Action Plan:***
With the de-funding of the Southwest Conservation District, the NRWI lost funding for its executive director. However, the city needs to continue to participate in regional efforts to implement the Norwalk River Action Plan and to assess future cumulative impacts on the river due to development in the region, to work with the State to gain their assistance in protecting the river, and to work with other towns on the cumulative effect of development. Action Plan: https://www.norwalkct.org/DocumentCenter/View/1902/Norwalk-WBP-Chp1-4

**Attached:**

**NRWA is launching the Pollinator Pathway in Norwalk this summer**
The Pollinator Pathway is a pesticide-free corridor that connects public and private properties that provide native plant habitat and nutrition for pollinators. We plant model gardens and meadows on protected open space and educate residents about how to do the same in their yards. All are encouraged to join, but we reach out to those along the designated pathway. The pathway encompasses land that has been identified by the Hudson-to-Housatonic Conservation Initiative (H2H) to have critical conservation value. The goal is to reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizer and to encourage the use of native plants and removal of invasives to protect wildlife and water quality. Residents learn they can make a positive impact on the environment and on water quality through the stewardship of their own yards. The pathway reduces fragmentation of open space and helps protect the land most critical to water quality, wildlife habitat, scenic beauty, rare species, climate resiliency…