

in the mainstream

Norwalk River Watershed Association
Spring 2022 Newsletter

Road Salt Causes Water and Soil Pollution... Here's a Solution

By Elizabeth Craig

More than 20 million metric tons of salt, mostly sodium chloride (table salt) are poured on the northern US roads each winter.



That's a lot of salt, and like other roadway pollutants, the chloride salts used for de-icing roads are carried from the pavement into local streams and rivers by melting snow and stormwater. Road salt use in the US has increased dramatically and salt is being applied at ever increasing rates. Sodium chloride contaminates waters and is toxic to fish, birds, frogs, invertebrates and vegetation. Salt contamination can become a serious problem for groundwater and wells--for our drinking water.

The Connecticut Training & Technical Assistance Center (T2 Center) at UConn is turning this problem around by offering Green Snow Pro Certification to train municipalities and private contractors to safely reduce the amount of salt applied. The CT program is voluntary and modeled after a highly successful program in New Hampshire. The savings each town can see with

smarter, more calibrated, and reduced salt use can add up to many thousands of dollars annually.

With Green Snow Pro training, the public works staff at UConn Storrs used 2,600 fewer tons of salt during the 2017-2018 season resulting in savings of \$313,000--while maintaining safety.

The CT program, which started in

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We are thrilled to announce that Eco Evolution, a new sustainable goods marketplace and coffee shop in South Norwalk, has chosen NRWA as its 1% for the Planet partner. Eco Evolution will donate 1% of its gross revenues to NRWA! So everything you buy helps us protect the Norwalk River.

2017, has now certified more than 60 municipalities as Green Snow Pros, saving taxpayer dollars while protecting the environment! CT towns in the Norwalk River Watershed who have already received Snow Pro certification include Norwalk, New Canaan and Ridgefield.

But state and municipal salt application is only half the problem, more than 50% of the salt load comes from private roads and parking lots. Private applicators working at commercial parking lots and private driveways may make heavy salt applications to reduce call backs and to protect themselves from liability.

A key component of the successful New Hampshire program is a limited liability release: a property owner who hires a Green Snow Pro certified contractor has liability protection from slip and fall litigation in New Hampshire. We need to offer this protection in Connecticut too, the limited liability needed may be compared to that used at ski resorts.

Currently CT Green Snow Pro does not have the resources to conduct additional training sessions to meet demand. Additional funding would provide UCONN the opportunity to develop curriculum and best management practices to address the specific needs of private applicators and to deliver the training on a statewide basis. **Please write and/or call to urge your state representative to support SB 240: An Act Concerning the Use of Sodium Chloride to Mitigate Snow and Ice Accumulations, now, during the 2022 legislative session.**

How to Reduce Your Road Salt Use Safely

- Shovel first—before applying any de-icing agents
- Maintain 3-inch spacing between grains of salt
- Sweep up extra salt for re-use
- Know the temperature--rock salt only works down to 16°F
- Ask private contractors to limit salt use and to use a 23% salt-water mixture ahead of a storm (called anti-icing) to prevent a bond from forming between the ice and the pavement. Anti-icing can reduce salt use by as much as 45%.
- Shovel driveways and sidewalks to allow the sun to heat the surfaces and melt the snow and ice.
- Consider limiting the driveway area you salt to steep grades and curves or just the sections where you typically lose traction

Turf to Tap: Where Does Your Water Go?

By Jayme Soyak

Seventy percent of Connecticut's Rivers are impaired, according to the Dept. of Energy and Environmental Protection. A number of factors contribute to the problem including sewage system overflows, leaking or illicit sewage lines, leaking or improperly maintained septic systems, and stormwater runoff from paved areas and lawns. The pollutants that impair the rivers include nitrogen, phosphorus, E. coli, road salt, PFAS, drugs and hormones, pesticides, microplastics, sediment from construction and erosion, and oils from roads and roofs.

So why are lawns on that list of areas causing problems? Their root systems are too shallow to effectively



A Norwalk lawn during No Mow May.

filter stormwater runoff. Not to mention lawns use tons of water (9 billion gallons a day in the US). So when chemicals like pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are added to lawns or gardens, they don't stay put. When it rains, these chemicals wash into storm drains that lead to streams, lakes,

Rethink Your Lawn

- Mow less frequently
- Reduce the size of your lawn by adding shrubs, trees or a pollinator garden
- Let part of your yard go natural
- Avoid pesticides and synthetic fertilizers
- Leave the leaves
- Go electric
- Take the No Mow May Challenge

NRWA Joins a Multi-Partner Project to Restore and Protect Land and Water from the CT Coast to Vermont

We are thrilled to announce that NRWA is the lead facilitator for 12 Pollinator Pathway projects which will be a small part of a multi-million-dollar grant to connect land from the coast in Connecticut and New York through Massachusetts to the forests of Vermont. Thank you to the Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2H) for including NRWA in this project. The federal government’s NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program awarded just over \$6 million to 10 Northeast land trusts working in partnership.



Two projects will help restore this section of the Norwalk River Valley Trail near Rt. 123 in Norwalk. Step one, conquer the Japanese knotweed.

The Uplands to Lowlands Climate-Resilient Cores and Connectors grant will support land conservation and restoration projects on a regional scale through a partnership of three Regional Conservation Partnerships: The Berkshire Taconic Regional Conservation Partnership, Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) Regional Conservation Partnership, and Litchfield Hills Greenprint Collaborative. Over 5 years, the partner organizations will conserve land through easements, protect pollinator pathways, restore buffers along streams and other waterways, and more.

NRWA will help organize six New York and six Connecticut Pollinator Pathway projects which will receive roughly \$5000 each for removing invasives and planting native plants along waterways. Five of these projects will be in our watershed in Wilton, Weston, Ridgefield and two in Norwalk. Others are happening in Darien and Hastings-on-Hudson, Irvington, Yonkers, and Pound Ridge, NY.

Membership Form

Becoming a member helps NRWA continue to protect local water quality, hiking trails, and wildlife habitats.

Riparian Society

Steward	\$1000+
Protector	\$500 – \$999
Patron	\$100 – \$499

Membership

Supporter	\$50 – \$99
Friend	\$30 – \$49
Other	\$_____

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Donate Online at NorwalkRiver.org

Or mail your tax-deductible Annual Membership gift of \$_____ to
NRWA, Inc. PO Box 7114, Wilton, CT 06897. Please make check payable to NRWA, Inc.

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I would like to receive updates and events info. My email is: _____

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Trees for Bees Spring 2022

South Norwalk! We are getting to work this spring planting 70 native trees and over 100 shrubs and grasses along the river and the waterfront in South Norwalk. We are working to connect Woodward Avenue Park and Oyster Shell Park by helping restore the tree canopy in and between the parks.

This work is supported by a \$30,000 grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF), the City of Norwalk, and donations of volunteer labor and financial support from our friends at One Tree Planted, Allbourne America, FactSet, and Empire Portfolio. Join us at Oyster Shell Park every Wednesday and Saturday mornings 9:30-11:30AM and check the events page at NorwalkRiver.org for planned workdays at Woodward Park.



Wilton! Join us April 30, 10AM-12PM to help plant 6-8 trees and a dozen native understory shrubs **along the Norwalk River Valley Trail at the intersection of Sharp Hill Road and Autumn Ridge Road.** We are taking this area back from the invasive Japanese knotweed and wisteria vines. Work on this area is supported by NFWF, One Tree Planted, and Melissa & Doug.