



Housatonic River Management Plan



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Prepared for:

Housatonic River Commission

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February 2025

Funded in part by the National Park Service, Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program.

Cover photo: A Great Blue Heron (*Ardea Herodias*) rests on a boulder along the Housatonic Wild and Scenic River. Photo credit: Barton Jones.

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Section I: Executive Summary

The Housatonic River Commission (HRC) was created by the Towns of Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, New Milford, North Canaan, Salisbury, and Sharon and held its first meeting in July 1979. In July 1981, the Commission completed a River Management Plan that outlined objectives and duties of the Commission and defined the corridor boundaries. The River Management Plan also included regulatory language that was incorporated into the zoning regulations of all towns except North Canaan. The River Management Plan, and its subsequent 2006 update, has been effective in aiding HRC in monitoring development and environmental impacts along the corridor and in advocating for the scenic, historic, and natural resources of the River. This updated Management Plan (Plan) reflects the current conditions within the Housatonic River Valley, changes over time, and management strategies and goals within Wild and Scenic context.

Since the completion of the 2006 Plan, several land use and environmental issues have had major impacts on the River corridor. The most significant among these are pressures from increased development, herbicide spraying along the railroad, water quality, and visitor use management concerns at varying river access sites. The impact of these issues on the River's health is discussed and incorporated into the goals for each relevant section.

To help gauge opinions on conditions in the Valley, a survey was sent to town land use commissioners and board members in all seven towns. The questions covered a variety of issues including greatest threats to the River, the HRC corridor boundaries, and current zoning and regulatory practices. The survey results have been used in developing this Plan.

The updated River Management Plan includes sections on natural resources, recreation management, water quality, and Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR). Within each section is a discussion of existing conditions, significant issues or threats, management recommendations, HRC goals for implementation, and WSR considerations. The Plan includes a set of overall recommended actions for HRC to continue its mission and expand its outreach within the region.

The Plan's natural resource section provides a series of inventories that document existing conditions in the Wild and Scenic Corridor regarding land coverage and natural, scenic, cultural, and recreational resources. These inventories have been mapped in a collaborative effort between the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), HRC, and the National Park Service (NPS) (see Section IX: Maps). This section also contains a land use analysis and a discussion of current land protection practices in the region.

The Housatonic River has been a major asset for recreation in the Housatonic River Valley for many years. HRC has pursued and promoted effective and sustainable local management of recreational facilities along the River starting with the 1989 Recreation Management Plan and continued via the 2006 Plan. This Plan's recreation management section pulls from these two original Plans, highlighting and expanding upon current recreation conditions, management concerns, recommendations, and WSR considerations. The most significant occurrence since the preparation of the 2006 Plan has been the drastic increase in recreation and river access use along the Housatonic River during the COVID-19 Pandemic starting in 2020. HRC, along with various partners, have taken action to ensure that environmental and recreational issues have been addressed, which are expressed in this section.

The Plan's water quality section highlights current water quality conditions within the Housatonic River Valley and recurring and emerging threats. The most significant issues currently facing the River Corridor are the polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) remediation and restoration efforts starting in Pittsfield, MA, non-point source pollution, increasing development pressure, rise of aquatic invasive species, and indiscriminate herbicide application along the railroad. HRC will continue to be a strong advocate for consistent water quality monitoring, among other actions, to alleviate some of these pressing issues.

Lastly, the Plan's WSR section provides an overview of the National WSR System, the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program (PWSR), the Outstandingly Remarkable Values for which the Housatonic River was designated, and the WSR Act Section 7 Authority. The Housatonic River achieved WSR designation in December 2022 after many years of local advocacy. With designation not only comes possible funding towards local town-led initiatives, but also NPS staff support and regulatory authority under Section 7 of the WSR Act. HRC has made great strides in being the voice of, and the greatest advocate for, the Housatonic River.

The Plan's overall goals in the sections related to natural resources, recreation management, and water quality provide HRC with an updated strategy for the protection and stewardship of the River. Ultimately, the Plan provides a snapshot of existing conditions within the Housatonic River Valley and outlines goals and objectives related to the management and protection of the River.

Section II: Introduction

Background and History

The story of National WSR designation for the Housatonic River in Connecticut began in 1979 when the NPS conducted a Congressionally authorized study of the Housatonic River to be included in the National WSR System. At this time, most WSRs were located within federal lands under federal management, which did not apply to the Housatonic, making the case for designation difficult. Despite this, though, the Housatonic River was identified in the study report as having many Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs) including scenic, historical, archaeological, water quality, vegetation and wildlife, and recreation. Of note was the remarkably charming rural character, historical heritage, and natural beauty considering the Housatonic River Valley's proximity to the northeastern megalopolis. The 1979 study found that the 41-mile segment of the Housatonic River from the Massachusetts-Connecticut border to Boardman Bridge in New Milford met the eligibility criteria and therefore qualified the River for designation as a WSR with specific determination as a scenic and recreational river. Due in large part to this study effort, HRC was formed in 1979 to work to maintain an environmentally healthy and scenic River Corridor. With the development of the PWSR model years later, a system which fit the Housatonic more consistently, came an opportunity for local management and federal recognition.

In 2016, local efforts were made to pursue designation. Then Connecticut Governor Dannel Malloy wrote a letter to then Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell petitioning for national designation as a State-Administered component of the WSR System under Section 2(a)(ii) of the WSR Act. This section of the WSR Act allows the Secretary of the Interior to designate a river if a state governor requests designation and if the river meets certain criteria congruent with nationally designated rivers. NPS was tasked with developing an evaluation of the nomination, as required by the Act. The Evaluation found that the

Housatonic continued to support necessary WSR values (see Appendix 1 for the complete evaluation), and that in many instances those values have been enhanced and further protected since 1979.

Designation as a State-Administered River pursuant to Section 2(a)(ii) of the WSR Act did not come to fruition. In 2021, local efforts switched gears to pursue Congressional Designation and to be included into the National System as a PWSR. In a letter written to then Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland from Connecticut Governor Ned Lamont in September 2021, Governor Lamont writes:

The Housatonic River's popularity has dramatically increased since 2016, and community leaders are working with state and federal officials to provide safe, equitable and environmentally sound river access. Designation as a Partnership Wild and Scenic River will qualify the Housatonic River for resources to assist in this endeavor. I believe that inclusion of this 41-miles of Housatonic River in the National Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers System will protect this natural treasure for generations to come.

The Housatonic Wild and Scenic River Act of 2022 was introduced in the Senate by Senator Chis Murphy in September 2022. The Housatonic River was officially designated as a National WSR with the passing and signing of the Consolidated Appropriations Act (H.R. 2617) in December 2022, roughly 43 years after first being studied by NPS.

Purpose

The Plan is a guidance document for protection and enhancement of exceptional river values and provides a framework for HRC to follow in planning its conservation work. The legislation that designated the Housatonic specified that the River be managed in accordance with the original 2006 Management Plan prepared by the HRC, together with appropriate amendments to reflect the WSR designation. Town citizens, elected officials, local organizations, and the state have endorsed this advisory Plan and have committed to participate in its implementation.

Objectives

The Plan accomplishes the following:

1. Provides stakeholders clear recommendations to protect and enhance the watershed's river values and the role WSR has in implementing such recommendations.
2. Presents measurable indicators and guidance to future decision-makers about what constitutes sufficient protection if goals of this Plan are to be met.
3. Establishes management recommendations that rely principally on locally led and locally implemented strategies.
4. Creates a blueprint for the long-term protection of the Housatonic River's unique natural, recreational, scenic, cultural, and archaeological resources.

The Plan will require occasional updates and adaptations to account for changing resource protection needs, as new priorities arise, and projects are completed. Revisions to the Plan could also incorporate new or preferred methods of protecting resources as indicated by emerging research or new information.

Section III: Housatonic River Commission

Purpose

The HRC's purpose is to coordinate, on a regional basis, the local management and protection of the Housatonic River Valley in northwestern Connecticut. HRC is a non-regulatory advisory commission that was originally formed by local communities and was recognized in the federal WSR designation legislation as the local coordinating body for the River. The purpose of the Commission is to lead and coordinate implementation of the Management Plan by:

- Bringing together, on a regular basis, various parties responsible for river management;
- Facilitating agreements, cooperation, and coordination among them;
- Monitoring development in the River Corridors and reviewing and commenting on development applications;
- Providing a focus and a forum for all river interests to discuss and make recommendations regarding issues of concern;
- Advising and assisting NPS in implementation of the WSR designation and expenditure of potential federal funding for Management Plan implementation; and
- Advising and assisting NPS in the review of potentially adverse federal water resource development projects.

It is vital for the Commission to develop and maintain local and regional partnerships with towns and other conservation organizations to achieve short and long-term Plan goals. It will also be the Commission's responsibility to monitor the natural, scenic, and recreational values with respect to the degree they are protected, degraded, or enhanced during the implementation of this Plan.

HRC will have no regulatory or land acquisition authority. It may advise, complement, or support existing entities that have management or regulatory authority affecting the River, but will have no power to dictate the actions or decisions of those entities.

Responsibilities

The Commission holds the following responsibilities:

- Recommend each member town adopt standards for protection of the River Corridors.
- Provide inter-town coordination of a regional Housatonic River Management Plan with each of the Towns involved.
- Promote and support river enhancement initiatives (e.g., river access sites, scenic values, etc.).
- Monitor development in the Corridors and review and comment on development applications.
- Support gifts of land and conservation easements to the individual towns and local or regional land trusts to protect critical ecological, archeological, or wildlife habitat areas.
- Encourage towns in the River Corridor to actively carry out the goals of this Management Plan.
- Promote public involvement and education related to issues that affect the River.
- Report to the member towns and organizations on the activities of the Commission.
- Review and update the Management Plan.

- Disperse funding provided through the cooperative agreement, as appropriate (i.e., relates to this Management Plan) and available.
- Address river-related issues, for example:
 - Zoning changes for lands along the River or its tributaries that potentially impact river values.
 - Development projects or other land use activities that potentially affect river values.
 - Applications for state permits (e.g., point source discharges or water withdrawals).
 - Changes to state programs or policies (e.g., statewide water quality standards).
 - Applications for federal permits (e.g., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Section 404 permits; Federal Energy Regulatory Commission certification for pipeline crossings).

Commission Members

The membership of HRC will include representatives from seven river towns, other stakeholder groups, and NPS. The following entities constitute the membership of HRC. Each member will have one representative and one alternate. Each town entity will have one vote. Partner entities are non-voting members but contribute to discussion as needed.

- Town of Canaan
- Town of Cornwall
- Town of Kent
- Town of New Milford
- Town of North Canaan
- Town of Salisbury
- Town of Sharon
- Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG)
- Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP)
- FirstLight Power
- HVA
- NPS

Appointments

Representatives and alternates will be appointed as follows. Where appropriate the Commission may recommend candidates for appointment:

- Town representatives by the town board of selectmen or town council
- HVA representatives as appropriate
- NHCOG representatives as appropriate
- FirstLight Power representatives as appropriate
- State representatives by the Commissioner of the CT DEEP
- Department of the Interior representatives by the PWSR Program Northeast Team Leader, NPS

Cooperative Agreements between HRC and NPS

Cooperative Agreements are formal written agreements between NPS and a local partner to enable the distribution of federal funding or other federal assistance for supporting the implementation of river management plans. In this instance, the local partner would act as the fiscal agent for HRC and NPS, a legal necessity as HRC is not an incorporated body. Decisions on how funds are allocated remain with HRC in consultation with NPS.

Since WSR designation has occurred, NPS has entered into a formal cooperative agreement with NHCOG, to serve as fiscal agent for HRC. This complies with Sec. 10(e) and/or Sec. 11(b)(1) of the WSR Act. Like other PWSRs in the Northeast, cooperative agreements are typically established with local non-profit organizations, such as a land conservation group or a watershed association.

The following passages from the WSR Act describe the basis for this arrangement.

Section 10(e):

The federal agency charged with the administration of any component of the national wild and scenic river system may enter into written cooperative agreements with the Governor of a State, the head of any State agency, or the appropriate official of a political subdivision of a State for State or local government participation in the administration of the component.

Section 11(b)(1):

The Secretary of the Interior...shall assist, advise, and cooperate with States or their political subdivisions, landowners, private organizations, or individuals to plan, protect, and manage river resources. Such assistance, advice and cooperation may be through written agreements or otherwise...Any agreement under this subsection may include provisions for limited financial or other assistance.

Corridor Delineation

The Housatonic River Corridor covered by the Commission stretches 41 miles from the Massachusetts border to Boardman Bridge in New Milford. The Corridor boundaries were identified in the original River Management Plan and have not been altered since that time. They consist of an inner boundary, an outer boundary, and village centers (see Map 7: Corridor Boundaries & Environmentally Sensitive Areas).

Inner Corridor

The inner corridor boundary was initially defined by the combined stream belt limits based on soil type as determined by the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service and the 100-year flood hazard limit based on topography as mapped by the Federal Flood Insurance Program, whichever is greater. The inner corridor boundary combines wetland and hydric soils and the 100-year floodplain boundary.

Outer Corridor

The outer corridor is defined as that portion of the river watershed lying between the inner corridor boundary and the River Valley's ridgelines, or as determined by individual communities. In the Town of Kent, for example, the existing boundary extends to include a significant portion of Macedonia Brook.

Village Centers

All village centers located within the watershed boundary are considered significant. Village centers are important to the Region's historical and scenic character and are included in the development of land use regulations affecting the Corridor. Village centers contain the most intensively developed areas along the River as well as the greatest potential for future development. Unless carefully managed, storm water runoff from the existing and future development could negatively impact the River's water quality.

Section IV: Natural Resources

Natural Resource Goals

The Housatonic River Commission will:

1. Promote native biodiversity and discourage non-native plantings to protect valuable wildlife and critical habitat while addressing and controlling invasive species.
2. Promote the protection of forestland habitat for flood mitigation and climate resiliency.
3. Seek to improve collaboration between cultural and historical resource agencies, municipalities, Indigenous groups, and other agencies to manage significant cultural and historical resources.
4. Support land conservation and stewardship efforts by communities, land trusts, and other conservation organizations to protect important habitat and natural resources.
5. Raise public awareness about the Housatonic River as a vital ecological resource, and the cultural and financial benefits of resource protection.
6. Encourage community resiliency via nature-based approaches to stormwater management.
7. Protect important fish habitat, like thermal refuges, by monitoring thermal changes.
8. Encourage local zoning and land use boards to consider and value unique scenic vistas and viewsheds within the River Valley in their land use decisions and reviews.

Natural Resource and Land Use Analysis

CT DEEP maintains a Natural Diversity Database (CT NDDDB), which contains information on the location and population status of endangered species of flora and fauna in Connecticut. The CT NDDDB is designed to improve the quality of all State management decisions related to rare and endangered species and critical habitats. As of the 2024 data, there are 7 distinct areas that fall within the WSR corridor boundary (1/4-mile). The CT NDDDB lists one area as the entire Housatonic River.

CT DEEP also monitors Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species on a county-by-county basis. Based on 2022 data, the following types and number of species have been identified in Litchfield County (a complete list of species can be found here: [Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species in Connecticut](#)):

- Amphibians: 7
- Birds: 33
- Fish: 4
- Invertebrates: 65
- Mammals: 8
- Plants: 182
- Reptiles: 9

Natural communities and habitat areas of note include marble ridges in Canaan and Kent, highly unusual riverside seeps along sections of the River’s inner corridor, patches of floodplain in North Canaan, Kent, and especially at the mouth of the Hollenbeck, and caves in Salisbury.

According to data from the United States Geological Survey National Land Cover Database for both 2006 and 2021, the seven HRC towns have seen an overall increase in developed land (roughly 250 acres) and a decrease in forest land (about 300 acres). This is a common trend not only through Connecticut, but also throughout the United States. Woody wetlands, however, have seen an increase of roughly 340 acres throughout the seven HRC towns.

Wetlands provide critical habitats for insects, wildlife, and plants. Robbins Swamp, in Canaan and North Canaan, is the largest inland wetland in Connecticut and is considered one of the best examples of a calcareous (sweet) water wetland by The Nature Conservancy.

Land Use

Development has been a critical issue within the River Corridor for many years. There has been a rise in developed land use including residential, commercial, and industrial development throughout the seven-town region with most growth occurring in established village centers and along major roads. As previously noted, the growth in development is reflected in the loss of forested land.

Based on the Land Cover data, agricultural land in the region has not changed significantly (an increase of 6%) and continues to be primarily within the River Valley bottom and along its major tributaries. There have been several recent State and Federal programs that encourage the continuance of farming and offer incentives for environmentally friendly farming operations. Initiated through the enactment of the Federal 1996 Farm Bill, there are a variety of programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State of Connecticut. In addition, the State of Connecticut has several programs aimed at preventing the loss of farmland (e.g., the Farmland Preservation Program where the farmer sells the land’s development rights to the State).

Land Protection

Protected Ownership Type	Acres
Federal	6,139
Municipal	907
Private	29,854
State	36,763

Table 1: Protected lands within Housatonic River Wild and Scenic towns in Litchfield County (2024).

Public

Through a combination of easements and fee simple ownership, the Federal government has protected approximately 6,139 acres in the seven HRC towns. The most significant Federal presence is the land along the Appalachian Trail corridor protected by the NPS. Also, within the HRC towns, the State of Connecticut owns approximately 36,763 acres in the form of State Parks, Forests, and Wildlife Management Areas. Additionally, 907 acres of land are owned by the municipalities including, but not limited to, parks, cemeteries, conservation areas, and school land.

Private

Approximately 29,854 acres of open space within the seven towns are permanently protected and owned by a variety of local land trusts and national conservation organizations like The Nature Conservancy. Local town-based land trusts are active in acquiring and managing open space. For example, the Cornwall Conservation Trust owns, either in fee or holds easements on, properties totaling over 2,400 acres just in Cornwall alone. The largest of these is 300 acres of Trinity Forest which is managed by the State of Connecticut.

The most visible national organization is The Nature Conservancy, through its Berkshire Taconic Program and Northwest Highlands Program. The Nature Conservancy has extensively documented and researched the natural resources and environmental issues affecting this area and recognizes the Berkshire Taconic Landscape as one of the “Last Great Places” on earth.

Private corporations, principally FirstLight and Eversource, own significant amounts of undeveloped land within the seven HRC towns. These holdings include large parcels directly on the River that have the potential for river access opportunities and are integral to the health of the Housatonic River. Development of these large private parcels would have a significant impact on the ecological and ecosystem health of the River. FirstLight continues to be a participating non-voting member on HRC.

Changes

The amount of publicly protected open space has increased in the past twenty years, especially through conservation organizations and NPS. Local land trusts have also become increasingly active in identifying and acquiring parcels for conservation and protection. The State of Connecticut has begun placing more emphasis on protecting regional resources and areas surrounding high priority resources through land classifications like Wildlife Management Areas.

At the federal level, the HRC towns are part of a four State region covered by the Highlands Conservation Act, which authorizes \$100 million in federal matching funds over ten years to help the States purchase land and easements. Since the passage of the Act in 2004, \$28 million in federal funds, matched by \$53 million in non-federal funds, have been awarded to permanently protect almost 13,000 acres of land. Projects supported by the Highlands Conservation Act grant program are pioneered by state agencies and address key conservation issues like clean drinking water, healthy forests, thriving wildlife populations, productive agriculture, and abundant recreational opportunities.

The HRC towns have also benefited from other Federal conservation programs like the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program. The program, which is administered by the State

DEEP, focuses on acquiring the development rights to important forest areas throughout the State. CT DEEP, similarly, operates the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program which provides financial assistance to municipalities and nonprofit land conservation organizations to purchase land.

Cultural Resources

The Housatonic River Valley encompasses the traditional homelands for both the Mohican and the Schaghticoke people. The Schaghticoke Indian Tribe holds a 400-acre reservation along the river in Kent. Northwestern Connecticut's significant iron industry heritage is represented in many sites and areas throughout the River Valley. An interpretive trail has been developed that follows these sites and guides the public through the history of the iron industry. Many of these sites and areas with cultural, spiritual, and archaeological significance have been permanently protected or have been identified as significant and in need of conservation and/or protective measures.

The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (Housatonic Heritage) was designated by Congress in 2006 under Public Law 109-338. Housatonic Heritage aims to illuminate the diverse, rich identity of the Upper Housatonic River Valley region and to preserve and promote its historical, cultural, and natural resources. Housatonic Heritage encompasses twenty-nine towns in Connecticut and Massachusetts and includes all the towns in HRC except New Milford.

Eight National Register Historic Districts currently exist within the seven HRC towns. National Register designation is honorary in nature and does not provide restrictions on property located within the district. However, four of the eight are also local historic districts. Local historic district designation allows for protective measures for these resources through local historic district regulations. The specific districts are as follows:

- Falls Village Historic District, Canaan: National Register (NR)
- Flanders Historic District, Kent: NR and Local historic district
- Canaan Village Historic District, North Canaan: NR
- Lime Rock Historic District, Salisbury: NR and Local historic district
- Lakeville Historic District, Salisbury: NR and Local historic district
- Salisbury Center Historic District, Salisbury: NR
- Sharon Historic District, Sharon: NR
- Sharon Valley Historic District, Sharon: NR and Local historic district

Located in Falls Village is the home of the oldest continuing summer chamber music festival in the United States and has made its way onto the National Register of Historic Places. Music Mountain, founded in 1930, offers a series of chamber music concerts, jazz concerts, and baroque music each season.

The Housatonic River Valley also contains significant national natural landmarks scattered throughout the designated reach of the WSR. In Salisbury, for example, is Bingham Pond Bog, an incredibly rare and undisturbed cold northern spruce bog. The Cathedral Pines of Cornwall are home to old-growth white pine and hemlocks – the most massive stand in the New England-Adirondacks region. Despite the

tornadoes of 1989 mostly destroying the larger pines in Cornwall, the white pines that remain are approximately 120 to 140 feet tall.

Environmentally Sensitive Areas

Environmentally sensitive areas are those that should be a high priority for protection based on their ecological value as prominent natural features within the River Corridor. These include water-related resources such as major and minor tributaries and wetlands, geologic resources such as caves and ravines, and ecologically significant habitat areas.

There are also environmentally sensitive areas that currently fall outside of the outer corridor. While some of the areas are afforded protection in whole or part, from development, others are not. All these environmentally sensitive areas should be considered for some form of long-term preservation. These areas include, but are not limited to, the following:

Water Related

- Major Tributaries: Hollenbeck River, Blackberry River, Salmon Creek, Macedonia Brook, Ten Mile River, Morrissey Brook, Furnace Brook, Mill Brook, Sages Ravine
- Great Falls, Canaan (Falls Village)
- Robbins Swamp, Canaan and North Canaan
- Kent Falls, Kent
- Chapel Pond, Kent
- Fuller Pond, Kent

Geologic

- Deans Ravine, Canaan
- Barrack Mountain, Canaan (Falls Village)
- Dark Entry Ravine, Cornwall
- St. John's Ledges, Kent
- Lime Quarries, New Milford

Habitat Areas

- Schaghticoke Reservation, Kent
- Bulls Bridge, Kent
- Pond Mountain Natural Area, Kent
- Floodplain Forests, Salisbury

The Housatonic River Corridor contains some spectacular scenery. Views from the River along designated scenic roads and throughout the surrounding areas are unique in quality and should be considered as an integral part of the land use decision-making process.

Scenic Roads

One of the primary scenic experiences through the Housatonic River Valley is the view from the roadways. The State of Connecticut has designated Route 7 from the Kent-New Milford Town line north to the Canaan-North Canaan Town line as a scenic road. In Sharon, Route 4 from the River to Dunbar Road is also designated as scenic. State designation as a scenic road provides for a higher level of scrutiny of all State projects affecting the road.

Several towns within the HRC corridor including Canaan, Kent, New Milford, and Sharon have a local scenic road ordinance that gives them another significant tool toward scenic resource protection. More can be accomplished to preserve the scenic integrity through linking these resources and identifying key viewpoints that will enhance the experience.

Vistas and Viewsheds

The town of Kent has adopted a Horizon-Line Conservation Overlay District. The purpose of this overlay district is to conserve and protect the hill summits and ridges that form the high horizon visible from the town's system of roads while allowing reasonable, appropriate, and compatible uses of the land. The goals are to preserve scenic views and vistas that are critically important to the rural landscape and character of Kent, including the minimization of erosion and sedimentation hazards caused by the development and use of steep hillsides and ridges.

Preserving the Housatonic River Valley's unique scenic quality should be a priority for the Commission towns as it not only benefits the overall enjoyment of being in the River Valley but also is listed as an Outstandingly Remarkable Value. The most significant threats to that scenic quality are residential development along the Valley's ridgelines including cell towers and wind generators.

Communication towers are governed by the Connecticut State Siting Council with input from the towns. The Towns and HRC need to be active participants in the Siting Council process to monitor this issue. Residential development on ridgelines can be addressed in the form of erosion control on steep slopes and the protection of property values. In addition to regulatory measures, scenic and viewshed protection can also be addressed by scenic easements.

Greenways

The development of greenways has become a significant component to resource protection and open space planning. The State of Connecticut defines greenways as "linear open spaces that can help conserve native landscapes and ecosystems by protecting, maintaining and restoring natural connecting corridors". While providing significant recreational opportunities, the benefits of establishing greenways for individual communities can also be demonstrated in other ways. They can provide buffers between incompatible land uses, promote economic development and tourism, and contribute to the protection of valuable historic, cultural, and natural resources.

Housatonic Riverbelt Greenway

In 1992, HVA began its Housatonic Riverbelt Greenway program to increase the shoreline land available for public recreational use and comprehensive land protection and management along the River. In

2001, the State of Connecticut Greenways Council designated the Riverbelt as an official State Greenway. HVA's program has two important goals. These are: to provide public recreation while promoting river stewardship by establishing a "greenway" of continuous walking and biking paths linking open spaces, parks, community centers, and river access points; and to encourage development strategies within the River Corridor consistent with both river conservation and community growth needs. As of 2023, HVA has protected over 40 miles of riverfront throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Trails

There are many significant trails that contribute to the greenways within the Housatonic River Valley. Among these are the Appalachian National Scenic Trail protected by the NPS and the Mohawk Trail which is one of many "Blue Trails" maintained by the Connecticut Forest and Park Association. These trails are discussed in greater detail in the Recreation section of this Plan.

Invasive Vegetation

By outcompeting and displacing native species, invasive plants have a detrimental effect on the native habitat and environment of the River. HRC and partners, such as HVA, have been integral to the identification, management, and mapping of invasive plant species throughout the Housatonic River Valley. One of the greatest threats to the River's edge that has been of particular focus throughout the last decade has been Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) (see Map 13: Japanese Knotweed Locations).

The State of Connecticut Invasive Plant Working Group has been active in the world of invasive vegetation research and education since 1997. The Council is responsible for research on invasive plants as well as public outreach and education efforts. Invasive plants continue to cause ecological and ecosystem damages in Connecticut and especially the Housatonic River Valley. The current emerging challenges identified by the CT Invasive Plant Working Group are species such as: *Hydrilla*, water chestnut, toxic algal blooms, Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*), *Phragmites*, Quackgrass (*Elymus repens*), Japanese angelica tree (*Aralia elata*), and the barberry-deer tick Lyme disease relationship.

Section V: Recreation Management

Recreation Management Goals

The Housatonic River Commission will:

1. Promote the development and improvement of sustainable river access sites for all users.
2. Develop an understanding of current visitor use trends and plan for future use across the WSR stretch of the River.
3. Convene, support, and coordinate with landowners along the River to achieve mutual beneficial river-based recreation.
4. Encourage the management of recreational use and improving the user experience, to maximize recreational equity, safety, and sustainability.
5. Promote responsible recreation on and along the Housatonic River (e.g., "Leave No Trace" practices, multi-use principles, etc.).

6. Support the upkeep and development of adequate signage for both wayfinding and education.
7. Identify and help protect important scenic views, including those contributing to historic contexts and rural character.

Current Recreational Use

Recreation on the Housatonic River has changed over the last twenty years. Current types of recreational uses seen in and around the River range from passive to active recreation including, but not limited to, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, camping, picnicking, swimming, hiking, hunting, and general tourism. The conversion of the hydropower dams at Falls Village and Bulls Bridge from “pond and release” to “run of the river” beginning in June 2004 has had a long-term effect on boating and fishing.

Data from the River Information & Outreach (RIO) Program, led by HVA, in 2021 shows that activities like hiking, fishing, and boating have increased since 2018 at public river access sites. Passive recreation activities like picnicking, sunbathing, and swimming, while steadily increasing over time since 2018, drastically decreased from 2020 to 2021, perhaps due to the COVID-19 Pandemic amongst other things. Many of the visitors the RIO Stewards encountered were largely from Connecticut (commuting from both rural and urban centers), with fewer representation from New York and even fewer visitors from Massachusetts. HRC will continue to work with HVA to develop a more in-depth understanding of current recreational use on the River.

Managing for Sustainable Use

Visitor capacity, or carrying capacity, is a component of visitor use management and is the maximum amounts and types of use that an area (e.g., a river access point) can accommodate while maintaining desired natural resource conditions and visitor experiences that are consistent with the purposes for which the area was established. The physical and ecological capacity of a resource can have a direct impact on the health of the resource, but aesthetic capacity can have a significant impact on the River’s character. While physical and ecological impacts can be measured objectively, the aesthetic impacts are more subjective and “in the eye of the beholder.”

Across the country, managers of public recreation facilities and areas are turning from abstract planning to more specific planning based on public perception and shared goals. While capacity planning was characterized by long-term processes, capacity decision-making has shorter time frames and made the management process more public. NPS, HVA, and others, have developed methodologies for involving the public in this sort of decision making, which is designed to build a consensus among the many different (and often competing) groups that share a River Corridor. There exists visitor use management frameworks, developed by the Interagency Visitor Use Management Council, that address planning and implementation of carrying capacity management techniques. The Interagency Visitor Use Management Council is a group of representatives from six federal agencies (Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NPS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) who provide guidance on visitor use management policies and develop effective interagency implementation tools for effective visitor management.

Fishing

Fishing is popular throughout the length of the designated section of the River and along its major tributaries. The CT DEEP Fisheries Division currently regulates two special management areas designed to provide good river access, and higher angler catch rates over a longer period for trout and bass compared to waterbodies with no special management. Along the northern stretch of the designation in Salisbury, Canaan, Cornwall, and Sharon, a Trout Management Area (TMA) extends from the Route 112 bridge to the Routes 4 and 7 bridge. Fishing for trout in this section is restricted to catch and release only. A Bass Management Area (BMA) extends from Dawn Hill Road (Sharon) to Skiff Mountain Road (Kent), and statewide regulations apply (may harvest up to six bass in aggregate per day [largemouth and smallmouth] with no minimum length requirements). Additionally, fishing methods are restricted to fly fishing only from the Route 4 bridge to upstream three miles, as posted, which is very popular among anglers for its challenge but effectiveness. The Bull's Bridge TMA/BMA is the second management area and extends from the Bulls Bridge Impoundment Dam (Kent) to the Route 7 bridge (New Milford). This section lies outside of the WSR designation. Fishing for trout and bass is catch and release only and no gear restrictions apply. Lastly, Kent Falls Brook in Kent Falls State Park (Kent) is managed as a Trout Park, which is designed to enhance trout fishing opportunities and successes for novice anglers as well as those with mobility challenges. Anglers may harvest two trout per day with no minimum length restrictions. Fishing within TMAs and Trout Parks requires a Trout and Salmon Stamp in addition to a CT fishing license.

During the summer months when river temperatures in the Housatonic often become stressful and/or lethal for trout, CT DEEP restricts fishing in and around designated “thermal refuges” where trout congregate and seek cold water inputs from tributary streams. Fishing is prohibited from June 15 to September 15 within 100-feet of signs indicating such closure posted by CT DEEP. The following tributaries are classified as thermal refuges: Furnace Brook (Cornwall), Mill Brook (Cornwall), Pine Swamp Brook (Sharon), Kent Falls Brook (Kent), and Powerhouse Brook (Kent). These cold-water resources are vital to the survival of trout in the Housatonic and help sustain excellent year-round fishing opportunities. For up-to-date fishing guidance, please visit CT DEEP's [Fishing Guide \(ct.gov\)](#).

Canoeing and Kayaking

Non-motorized boating in the form of canoes, kayaks, and rafts is a major recreational activity along the River. The numbers of boaters have been increasing with the highest rates of users during April through October. The River has stretches of flatwater intermixed with stretches of Class I, II, III, and IV rapids. For example, just below the dam in Falls Village is Rattlesnake Rapid, a 0.25-mile stretch with intense Class IV whitewater rapids with large rock outcroppings and dangerous undercurrents. There are a multitude of put ins along the stretches of the River. The largest concentration of put in and takeout point is between Falls Village and Housatonic Meadows. For the most up to date information related to river paddle guidance, visit the HVA website: hvatoday.org.

Since the change to run-of-river operations at the Falls Village and Bulls Bridge hydropower dams, commercial boating operations have no longer been able to rely on the scheduled releases of water. Local boaters can take advantage of high water when it occurs and have described no issues since the switch to run-of-river in the early 2000s.

Hiking

Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail runs 51.4 miles in Connecticut, all of which is within the Housatonic River Valley. There is a 4.9-mile stretch through Kent and Sharon that runs along the river edge. NPS owns approximately 7,000 acres of Appalachian Trail corridor in the State and protects hundreds of additional acres with conservation easements. Through an agreement with the NPS, the Connecticut Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) maintains and manages the Trail and the corridor lands in Connecticut.

According to the most recent statistics from the Connecticut Chapter of the AMC, roughly 75,000 hikers per year use the Connecticut section of the Appalachian Trail.

Mohawk Trail in Connecticut

The 24-mile Mohawk Trail extends from the Appalachian Trail on Breadloaf Mountain in Sharon, crosses the River, and runs along the eastern side of the Housatonic River Valley back to the Appalachian Trail on Warren Turnpike in Canaan. The Mohawk Trail is part of the State's Blue Trail system.

Local Trails

From the Massachusetts border to the end of the designation in New Milford, there are roughly 194 miles of trails, excluding the Appalachian Trail. This total is a combination of 93 different State, Land Trust, and municipality managed trail head sites.

Other notable sites include a one-mile Historic Trail to the Ames Iron Works site in Falls Village, the 2.5-mile Pine Knob Loop that connects back to the Appalachian Trail on the west side of the River near Cornwall Bridge, and the river walk and picnic area in Kent.

Camping/State Parks

Camping is a popular recreational activity with the Appalachian Trail a prominent feature throughout the Housatonic River Valley. The State Park/Forest lands that allow camping seasonally are Housatonic Meadows State Park in Cornwall, Housatonic State Forest in Cornwall, Macedonia Brook State Park in Kent, and Mohawk State Park/Forest in Goshen/Cornwall. Both the Housatonic State Forest and Mohawk State Park/Forest offer backcountry backpacking experiences with limited (2-3) campsites. Alternatively, Housatonic Meadows State Park and Macedonia Brook State Park offer 61 and 51 tent/RV sites, respectively. Housatonic Meadows also has four rustic cabins available for reservation outside of the traditional camping season (Spring-early Fall).

Hunting

There are a variety of public hunting areas throughout the Housatonic River Valley. The Centennial Watershed State Forest (Wangum Lake Block) in Canaan, Housatonic State Forest in Sharon (among other towns), Robbins Swamp Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Canaan, and Wyantenock State Forest in Kent and Cornwall are all open to the public for hunting deer, turkey, small game, and waterfowl. East Twin Lakes Water Access Area in Sharon, Housatonic River WMA in Kent, Mount Riga

State Park in Salisbury, and Whiting River Flood Control Area in North Canaan are designated deer bowhunting only areas, however. Eversource Skiff Mountain Cooperative WMA in Sharon and Stanley Works Cooperative WMA in Kent and Cornwall both require special daily/season permits. Lastly, Mohawk State Forest Clark Pond Tract in Cornwall is designated as an archery only hunting area. For the most up-to-date information about hunting in the Housatonic River Valley, please visit CT DEEP's [Public Hunting Areas \(ct.gov\)](http://www.ct.gov/deep/publications/publications.cfm?cat=1&subcat=1).

Birding

The Housatonic River Valley offers multiple opportunities for birders including recommended sites along the River in Kent and Falls Village. Birding lists for the area are available through organizations such as the Connecticut Ornithological Association and Sharon Audubon Center.

Tourism

The Housatonic River Valley is one of the most beautiful places in the Northeast and is easily accessible from Hartford, Boston, and New York City. Sightseeing and visiting historic and cultural attractions are significant activities in the area. The opportunities for boating, fishing, camping, hiking, and other active pursuits draw tourists to the Northwest Hills of Connecticut.

The designation of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area in 2006 paved the way for increased tourism to the Housatonic River Valley of Connecticut. Prior to receiving this designation, NPS prepared a Feasibility Study and Environmental Assessment. The Study produced the following information relating to tourism in the region:

- It was estimated, based on tourism data from the Litchfield Hills Visitors Bureau (LHVB), that the tourism industry generates around \$67 million annually in the upper eight towns.
- Designation will bring added economic contributions but will increase crowding and impacts on natural and recreational resources.
- The LHVB survey results indicate that the main reasons that visitors come to the region are "culture/heritage, romance, and to 'take a break'". A State of Connecticut Study in 2000 also confirmed that visitors come from northeast urban areas to enjoy the natural, cultural, and recreational value of the Housatonic River Valley.

Wild and Scenic Considerations

The greatest goal related to recreation is the lack of public access to the Housatonic River and to the lands within the inner and outer corridor. "Access" to public spaces can be viewed as simply as physical access to the waters and land or seen as more broadly to also include public knowledge about access points and recreational opportunities.

It is imperative to provide up-to-date information on recreational resources (e.g., paddling, greenways, birding, hiking, picnicking, etc.) to encourage local river use. There exists the potential to develop materials that link recreation along the River to educating the public about the Housatonic River values and WSR.

Section VI: Water Quality

Water Quality Goals

The Housatonic River Commission will:

1. Encourage consistent water quality testing and monitor the water quality and quantity conditions of the Housatonic River and its tributaries.
2. Address impaired waters throughout the Housatonic and its tributaries.
3. Continue to track the remediation of PCBs related to the General Electric Company (GE) Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Site Cleanup in Pittsfield, MA.
4. Monitor and report (if incorrectly completed) the implementation of protocols established in CT Statute HB #5219/Public Act #24-9, to assure all railroad herbicide spraying is given apt notification and completed in accordance with stated regulations.
5. Ensure the Housatonic PWSR and associated tributaries continuously meet CT water quality standards.
6. Preserve riparian buffers within the inner and outer corridor to prevent erosion, excess sediment, and stormwater pollution.
7. Work with Federal, State, and local partners to ensure the successful implementation and monitoring of water quality policy and regulations (e.g., National Pollution Discharge Elimination System [NPDES], Clean Water Act, etc.).

Water Quality Standards and Classifications

Rivers are dynamic systems characterized by interactions among climate, flow, sediment, and hydrogeological processes. Land use practices and other human activities in the watershed of a river will also greatly affect its water quality. As a result, water quality is constantly changing, from season to season, year to year, and from point to point along a river's course. Water quality monitoring and data collection over the long-term is necessary to oversee trends, determine if practices are working, and to choose the most cost-effective and sustainable resource protection strategies for the benefit of the River.

For the purposes of this Plan, water quality conditions and goals within the WSR Housatonic River Corridor are presented as per [CT DEEP's 2015 Water Quality Standards](#) as they are the most recent as of 2024. The Water Quality Standards set overall policy for management and guidance of Connecticut's waters. CT DEEP assesses water quality in two distinct areas: ground water and surface water. The classifications that apply to the Housatonic River have been depicted in Map 4: Water Quality Classifications.

Ground Water Classifications

The CT DEEP has six main ground water classifications. These classifications indicate water quality criteria and designated uses for each class. The region within the designated reach of the Housatonic is identified as GA for groundwater classification. This means there are existing private wells and potential public or private supplies of water suitable for drinking without need for treatment.

In partnership with municipalities and water companies, CT DEEP administers the Aquifer Protection Program to protect major public water supply wells in sand and gravel aquifers that serve more than 1,000 people. The objective of this program is to protect water supplies by identifying land areas contributing groundwater to wells and by regulating land use within those areas. Local municipalities must adopt state land use regulations to minimize the potential for contamination of the well field. North Canaan, Salisbury, and New Milford are the only three HRC towns containing Aquifer Protection Areas through this program, although the New Milford section falls just south of the designated reach of Wild and Scenic.

Surface Water Classifications

The CT DEEP has five main surface water classifications. The entire designated stretch of the Housatonic River is classified as B for surface water quality. The B surface water classification indicates the River is safe for recreational use, aquatic and wildlife habitat, agricultural and industrial water supply, and other legitimate uses including navigation. Since the 2006 Management Plan, the water quality classification has improved from D to B. This is likely due to much of the work of CT DEEP, EPA, and others who have combatted water quality problems and threats over time.

Water Quality Problems and Threats

General Electric PCB Remediation and Restoration

PCBs originated in Pittsfield, Massachusetts due to transformer manufacturing between 1932 and 1977 by GE. In 2000, a Consent Decree was approved in Federal Court requiring GE to remediate and restore specific portions of the River and to investigate and implement cleanup measures for additional downstream areas. This document calls for remediation and restoration to be completed in three phases: (1) remediation and restoration of the upper ½ mile nearest the GE plant in Pittsfield (completed in 2002 by GE); (2) remediation and restoration of the next 1 ½ mile stretch (completed in 2006 by EPA); (3) cleanup of the Rest of River (ROR) (confluence of the East and West Branches, which form the mainstem of the Housatonic, down through MA and CT to Shelton, CT). As of the writing of this document, the third phase is ongoing.

All "active remediation" sites lie within a 30-mile stretch of the Housatonic River between Pittsfield, MA and the Rising Pond Dam in Great Barrington, MA. However, for the WSR designated reach of the Housatonic River (considered part of the "Rest of River" section), the strategy is "Monitored Natural Recovery (MNR)," described as "ongoing, naturally occurring processes to contain, destroy or reduce the bioavailability or toxicity of contaminants in sediment. These processes may include physical, biological, and chemical mechanisms that act together to reduce the risk posed by the contaminants. MNR may also include enhancements, such as thin layer capping, to accelerate the rate of recovery." This is not anticipated to influence the free-flowing character of the designation.

In 2020, EPA proposed revisions to the remedial action for the Housatonic River "ROR" in a "two-pronged solution." This proposal includes a protective Upland Disposal Facility, removing two dams downstream of Woods Pond, riverbank stability analysis, and a floodplain remediation plan, to name a few. The construction is anticipated to begin in 2027 and take 13 years to complete once remediation is underway. The proposed remediation plan should further reduce PCB levels in fish in both

Massachusetts and Connecticut which may, over time, allow for the consumption of additional fish-related meals and/or increased consumption of other biota. Currently, it is not recommended to consume fish-related meals coming from the Housatonic River. The EPA maintains a website to keep the public apprised of the clean-up and its progress which can be accessed at: <https://www.epa.gov/ge-housatonic>.

Non-point Source Pollution

Perhaps the most prevalent type of non-point source pollution is polluted storm water runoff. As water flows over land, it collects pollutants such as fertilizer, pesticides, sediments, and bacteria and discharges them to waterbodies and streams. More intensively used land has the potential to create more polluted runoff. However, all types of land uses including commercial, industrial, residential, and agricultural properties can contribute to non-point source pollution. Loss of vegetated buffers along streams allows runoff to enter streams without the benefit of filtration. An increase in impervious surfaces within the watershed compounds the runoff by allowing water to race over heated, impenetrable surfaces, picking up pollutants and increasing water temperatures along the way. In addition, the altering or filling of streams and wetlands, especially in headwater areas can also be considered a significant threat.

Railroad companies often use pesticides and herbicides as a cost-effective method of clearing railroad right-of-way. Indiscriminate herbicide application is not approved, however, especially near bodies of water. Toxic chemicals from this non-point source pollution can eventually end up in our waterways affecting not only fish and other wildlife but also humans who rely on the waterbodies for drinking water. In 2024, Connecticut Governor Lamont signed Connecticut House Bill #5219 (Public Act #24-9), an act concerning the standards for the spraying of herbicides along railroad rights-of-way. The bill mandates that any railroad company applying pesticides along rights-of-ways must provide 21-day notice to the Department of Transportation and the chief elected official or board of selectmen of each municipality where the spraying will be taking place. Likewise, the bill also requires railroad companies to develop, subject to a 45-day public comment period, and file a vegetation management plan, including target vegetation and management methods, with the Department of Transportation and each municipality by February 1 of each year. The monumental bill establishes standards consistent with the requirements for such plans in the state of Massachusetts. The State Commissioners of Transportation and Energy and Environmental Protection have the authority to enforce the application restrictions and violations.

Aquatic Invasive Species

Invasive non-native plants and animals can be detrimental to the water quality of the Housatonic River. These species crowd out native plants and animals and can be very expensive and nearly impossible to eradicate once established. Examples of aquatic invasive species found in and around the Housatonic River include zebra mussels, curly leaf pond weed, hydrilla, and water chestnut. Zebra mussels were first found in the Twin Lakes in Salisbury in 1998 and have since been found in the mainstream Housatonic River. Zebra mussels are known for their effect on public water supply and hydroelectric facilities due to their ability to restrict flow in pipes. Curly leaf pond weed, first discovered in Connecticut in 1932, can produce dense mats that interfere with and alter the ecosystem of the waterbody they are in. Hydrilla, an extremely aggressive plant that can outcompete native and invasive species, was first discovered in

Connecticut in 1989 and has also been identified in East Twin Lake and Lake Lillinonah more recently in 2023. Water chestnut has been spotted at the confluence of the Still River and Housatonic. Water chestnut is a rooted, annual aquatic plant that can make recreation like boating and fishing difficult. CT DEEP is working with various partners to investigate and determine methods for eradicating each aquatic invasive species. Anglers, boaters, and other recreationalists are encouraged to inspect their gear, clean, drain, and dry all equipment, if possible, to slow the spread of these invasive species.

Section VII: Wild and Scenic

Wild and Scenic River Goals

The Housatonic River Commission will:

1. Advance and advocate for the WSR Outstandingly Remarkable Values for which the river was designated.
2. Ensure that WSR-related resources and networks are available for the towns' and River's benefit.
3. Build capacity and knowledge among the towns' board and committee members and staff to identify and protect resources.
4. Improve landowner knowledge of resources and stewardship opportunities.
5. Promote and sustain activities that support the local character of the Housatonic River Valley.
6. Support town-led initiatives for the benefit of the River.

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System

The National WSR System was established by Congress in 1968 to protect outstanding rivers from the harmful effects of new federally assisted projects such as dams and hydroelectric facilities. To be considered "Wild and Scenic" a river or river segment must be free-flowing and have at least one ORV. The ORV must be natural, cultural, or recreational in character and have unique, rare, or exemplary qualities on a regional or national scale.

Over 228 rivers or river segments have been protected nationwide (representing over 13,000 river miles), including 13 rivers in the Northeast. The most recent to be designated in Connecticut, besides the Housatonic River, was the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook in 2019.

Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program

PWSRs make up a subset of the National WSR System. The PWSR program was developed in response to the need for a WSR designation that is tailored to rivers that are characterized by historical alterations, extensive private land ownership along the river, and well-established local control of river management. This program has a proven track record of effectively creating river protection strategies that bring communities together in protecting, enhancing, and managing local river resources. NPS recognizes 18 PWSRs along the east coast that share some common management approaches including:

- No reliance on federal ownership of land.
- River and land use management that is regulated through existing local and state authorities, the same as before a designation.
- Administration and implementation of the advisory Plan.

- Responsibility for managing and protecting river resources that is shared between local, state, federal, and non-governmental partners.
- Reliance on volunteerism as a key to success.

Benefits of a Wild and Scenic Designation

Through NPS funding and staff support, resources are available to help the Commission, and its partners, achieve management and resource protection goals, as outlined in this Plan and overseen by HRC.

- Preservation of a clean water supply for residents.
- Protection of the character that defines the local communities.
- Robust and diverse plant and animal populations that reflect a healthy ecosystem.
- Possible funding to help towns achieve their open space conservation goals, including a small grants program.
- Information and technical support that assists local land use commissions and town staff in making decisions.
- National recognition associated with a designation.
- Outreach and education materials and initiatives related to HRC river values.
- NPS is responsible for implementing Section 7 of the WSR Act to ensure federal consistency in preserving the Housatonic's river values for which it was designated.

Principles

The WSR Act Section 10(a) explains that designated rivers should be managed according to the following principles:

Each component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values. In such administration primary emphasis shall be given to protecting its aesthetic, scenic, historic, archaeological, and scientific features. Management plans for any such component may establish varying degrees of intensity for its protection and development, based on the special attributes of the area.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

There are many ORVs present throughout the watershed's rivers and streams, including historic resources, scenic qualities, water quality, biodiversity, exemplary natural communities, rare and endangered species, and watershed ecosystem resilience. ORVs are river-related features or resources that are unique, rare, or exemplary on a regional or national scale. The ORVs for which the Housatonic was designated are detailed in the NPS Report: *Housatonic River Wild and Scenic River Evaluation* (2019), which can be found as an appendix to this Plan. A summary of the ORVs are below.

Recreation

The Housatonic remains notable in its region for canoeing, kayaking, trout and bass fishing, and fly-fishing. State parks that run along the River provide ample opportunity for hunting, camping, hiking, and

wildlife viewing. The Appalachian Trail runs along the Housatonic in Kent and Cornwall. The Western New England Greenway/U.S. Bicycle Route 7 is a long-distance bicycle route that connects Norwalk, CT and Montreal, Québec, Canada.

Cultural/Historical

There are several historically significant locations within the designated stretch of the Housatonic. The covered bridges at West Cornwall and Bull's Bridge, and the wrought iron Boardman Bridge are in the National Register of Historic Places for their engineering significance. Likewise, the 19th Century Railroad Station at Cornwall Bridge and the Union Depot in North Canaan are also listed on the National Register.

Scenic

The Housatonic River flows through forested mountains and rolling hills to broad floodplains dotted with picturesque tiny villages. Portions of Route 4 and Route 7 have been designated scenic roads by the State. Kent Falls State Park is one of the most visually stunning and dramatic places in Connecticut, featuring a series of cascading waterfalls over 250 feet long. A stairway path along the falls offers views of the falls from top to bottom.

Ecological

The Housatonic River Valley is a unique ecosystem that is home to a variety of plants and animals, some not found in other parts of the state. Much of this is owed to the diverse habitats of the area's agricultural lands, woodlands, wetlands, and open space. These critical habitats include marble ridges and ledges, and calcareous wetlands whose vegetation is uniquely suited to the marble or carbonate rocks that occur in the Housatonic River Valley yet are of extremely restricted occurrence in the rest of the state.

Wild and Scenic Rivers Action Section 7 Authority

Designation provides WSR communities with special federal protections under Section 7(a) of the WSR Act. Hydropower electric companies that operate run-of-river dams, like FirstLight, are regulated by the Federal Energy Regulatory Authority (FERC) and the Federal Power Commission. As described in the legislation that designated the River as Wild and Scenic (H.R. 2617 Sect. 402):

The designation of the river segments . . . shall not (i) impact or alter the existing terms of permitting, licensing, or operation of – (I) the Falls Village Hydroelectric Generating Station located in Falls Village, Connecticut (FERC P-276); or (II) the Bulls Bridge Hydroelectric Generating Station located in New Milford, Connecticut (FERC P-276); or (ii) preclude the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission from licensing, relicensing, or otherwise authorizing the operation or continued operation of the facilities named in clause (i) . . .

These legislative provisions are consistent with and based upon the NPS Report: *Housatonic River Wild and Scenic River Evaluation* (2019) (see Appendix 1 for full text), as follows:

New protection for the designated segment would be provided under Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for new federally-licensed hydroelectric development projects or potentially adverse impacts of federally assisted water resource development projects.

The Federal Power Commission [FERC] shall not license the construction of any dam, water conduit, reservoir, powerhouse, transmission line, or other project works under the Federal Power Act, as amended, on or directly affecting any river which is designated in section 3 of this Act as a component of the national wild and scenic rivers system or which is hereafter designated for inclusion in that system, and no department or agency of the United States shall assist by loan, grant, license, or otherwise in the construction of any water resources project that would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which such river was established, as determined by the Secretary charged with its administration. Nothing contained in the foregoing sentence, however, shall preclude licensing of, or assistance to, developments below or above a wild, scenic or recreation river area or on any stream tributary thereto which will not invade the area or unreasonably diminish the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values present in the area on the date of the designation of a river as a component of the national wild and scenic rivers system.

Based upon application of Section 7(a), no new hydroelectric developments could be licensed by FERC on the designated river segment. The existing FERC licensed (FERC Project No. 2576) Falls Village and Bulls Bridge, run-of-river facilities would be expected to continue to operate, and could be licensed/re-licensed in the future as long as the new license did not involve changes in operations or facilities that would have new, direct adverse effects on the WSR. The term of the FERC license issued in 2004 is 40 years. As such, the existing baseline relating to hydroelectric developments would be effectively “grandfathered” as a part of the wild and scenic designation. Changes to the operation of the two existing FERC licensed facilities, as well as departures to the existing license requirements, would need to be reviewed by the National Park Service for compatibility with the Wild and Scenic River designation. In particular, any changes that either inundated additional free-flowing river areas (raising of dam height) or changed downstream flow patterns (away from instantaneous run-of-river operation) would likely not pass Wild and Scenic review, and therefore not be allowed. Other sorts of project changes (modernization of turbines, changes to FERC license conditions or requirements, etc.) would be reviewed by NPS under FERC agency consultation procedures to determine whether the changes would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which the river was established.

FirstLight is the power company that operates both the Falls Village and Bulls Bridge run-of-river dam facilities on the Housatonic River. HRC approved including FirstLight Power as a non-voting member upon receiving WSR designation. HRC will be the focal point of enhanced communication and coordination related to hydropower on the Housatonic River.

Other potential federally assisted water resources projects (non-FERC hydropower) that could trigger review under Section 7(a) of the Act would include streambank stabilization projects or similar in-stream work requiring permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers). Such projects/permits would be reviewed for consistency with the designation, and NPS would generally

promote natural stream channel design principles and techniques in their review/consideration (e.g., soil bioengineering techniques, incorporation of vegetation, etc.).

Bridge replacement projects often require Section 404 permits, as well, and may have federal funding associated with them, thereby triggering WSR review. Such replacements have been a frequent and routine occurrence on PWSRs throughout New England and the Northeast region. Often, there may be opportunities to improve free-flowing condition through removal of instream piers or other design changes. Opportunities, also, sometimes exist to improve recreational access associated with bridges. Scenic and historic qualities may also be involved in reviews, with NPS as a party to review historic resource evaluations under the National Historic Preservation Act Section 106. NPS is expected to advocate for the protection and enhancement of WSR values (i.e. free-flow, natural, cultural, and recreational values) in association with bridge replacement projects. Overall, NPS WSR Act Section 7(a) review has the potential to impact how projects are completed along the designated Housatonic River.

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Housatonic River WILD AND SCENIC RIVER EVALUATION

**Findings regarding the State of Connecticut's
application for the Housatonic River Wild and Scenic
Designation as a State Administered Unit**

National Park Service Northeast Region
Boston, Massachusetts



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Cover Photo: Housatonic Valley Association

Executive Summary

The Proposal

On behalf of the State of Connecticut, Governor Dannel Malloy on November 16, 2016, proposed to the Secretary of the Interior that the Housatonic River, from the Massachusetts/Connecticut border to the Boardman Bridge in New Milford, be included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (WSRA) (16 USC § 1271-1287). This proposal builds off the previous findings and recommendations of the 1979 congressionally authorized Wild and Scenic River study of the Housatonic River in Connecticut, which found 41 miles of the river eligible but recommended that designation under Section 2(a)(ii) be pursued subject to certain conditions.

As required by Section 2(a)(ii), future river management would be accomplished through state and local mechanisms. The federal government's role would be to ensure federal consistency with state and local protection efforts.

This report is the National Park Service's (NPS) evaluation of the State of Connecticut's proposal.

Evaluation Procedure

Section 2(a)(ii) provides for administrative designation by the Secretary of the Interior if the river in question meets the following requirements:

1. the river must have been designated as a state wild, scenic or recreational river by or pursuant to an act of the state legislature;
2. the river must be administered by an agency or political subdivision of the state;
3. the river must meet the eligibility criteria required of all national wild and scenic rivers, i.e. it must be free-flowing and possess one or more "outstandingly remarkable" value (ORV);
4. it must be demonstrated that the values that make the river worthy of designation, i.e. its free-flowing character, water quality, and ORVs will be permanently protected and enhanced.

In addition, the proposal must be evaluated for potential impacts as per the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Findings

The following are the NPS' findings regarding each of the above four technical requirements:

- 1) The proposed river segment meets the requirement of having been designated into a state river protection system with the approval of State of Connecticut Senate Bill No. 81, Public Act No. 16-38 (May 25, 2016).
- 2) The management strategy currently being proposed meets the requirement that the river be administered by the state or a political subdivision. Assignments for administration and

management are described in the draft Memorandum of Agreement for Protection of the Housatonic River. The federal role is limited to processing the Governor's application and, after designation, reviewing federal water resources and hydropower projects as required by Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

- 3) The proposed Housatonic segment meets National Wild and Scenic River eligibility requirements as this section is generally free-flowing and hosts a high concentration of outstanding natural, recreational, and cultural values – including canoeing and kayaking, fishing, hiking the Appalachian Trail, three bridges and two railroad depots listed in the National Register of Historic places, and habitat for rare and endangered species of plants and animals.
- 4) Protection of the river will be guided by the Housatonic River Commission (HRC) and its **updated** River Management Plan (2006). There are state statutes (Title 22a **and through** Title 26), town regulations, assistance from the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and Northwest Hills Council of Governments, which collectively provide a robust framework to ensure future protection of the river and its outstanding natural, recreational, and cultural values.

Public Attitudes

As demonstrated by public statements, letters of support, and protective local regulations, there is strong support for river protection and the proposed designation on the part of local governments, state agencies, elected officials, environmental organizations, and private citizens. The aforementioned stakeholders recognize the importance of the river to the local communities, and seek Wild and Scenic status to protect and enhance the outstanding qualities of the river. As one of the leading advocates for river protection, the Housatonic River Commission (formed in 1979) has provided guidance on local river management to the towns of Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, New Milford, North Canaan, Salisbury, and Sharon. The commission produced an advisory management plan in 1981, which was updated in 2006, and routinely consults with municipal land use decision makers.

Impacts of Designation

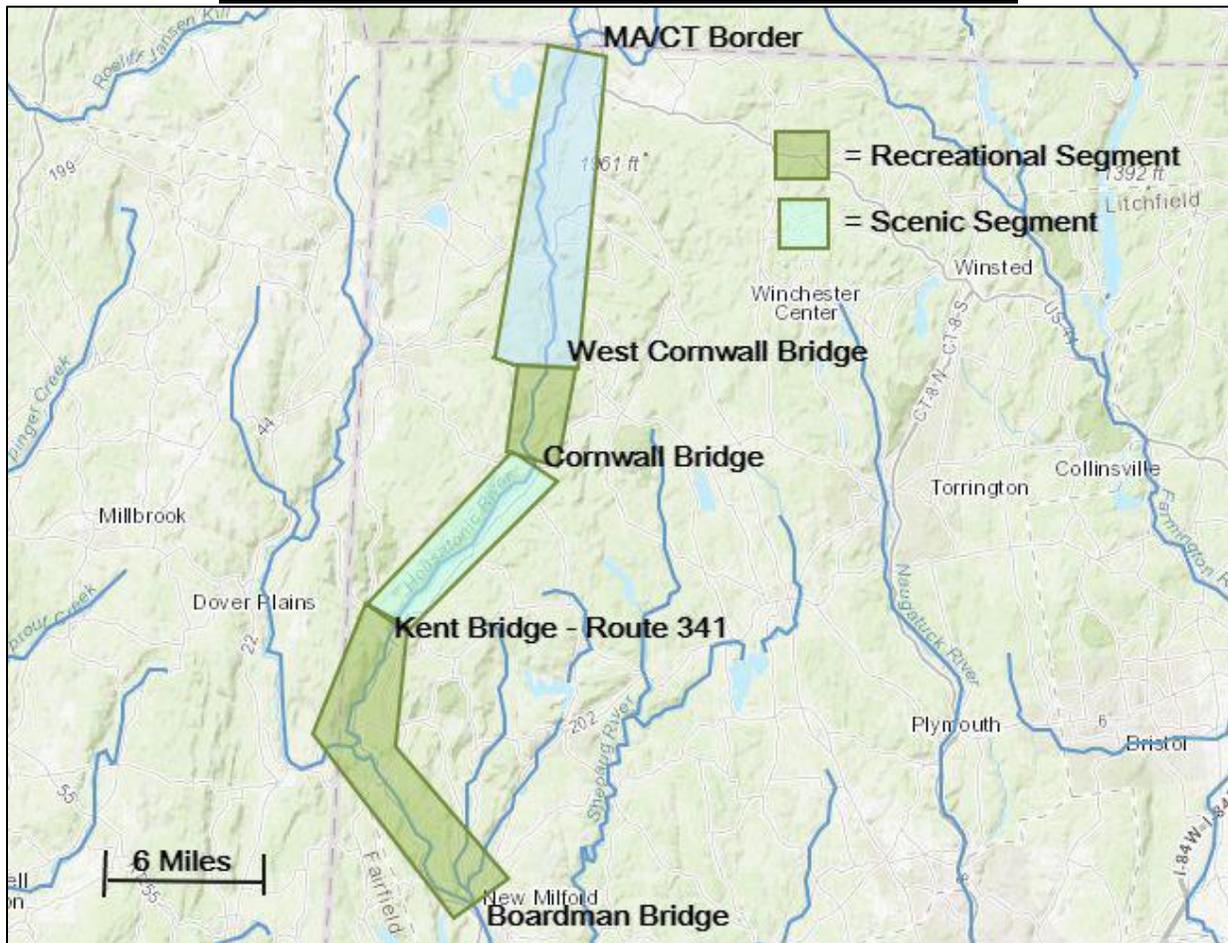
The NPS' evaluation of the potential impacts of designation to the Housatonic River concludes that Wild and Scenic designation would provide modest and sustained support to the existing framework of programs and initiatives promoting stewardship and protection of natural, cultural and recreational values associated with the Housatonic River. This includes the Falls Village and Bull's Bridge hydroelectric generating facilities (Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Project No. 2576) which would be effectively "grandfathered" as prior existing facilities whose operation and license terms are found to be compatible with the proposed designation.

Conclusion

The NPS evaluation concludes that 40.3* miles of the Housatonic River from the Massachusetts/Connecticut state line to Boardman Bridge in New Milford, Connecticut as proposed by CT Governor Malloy, meet the criteria for designation as a State Administered component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System pursuant to Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Impacts of the designation would primarily result in a modest, sustained strengthening of an existing and well established local, state, federal and non-governmental framework recognizing and seeking protection and enhancement of the Housatonic River's free-flowing condition, water quality, and natural, cultural and recreational values.

* Stated mileage of the proposed segment was updated from the 1979 Wild and Scenic River study (41.0 miles) based on Geographic Information System data available from CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). The following map reflects that change as well as changes to the classifications compared to the 1979 study.

Map of NPS Revised Segment Classifications



Chapter I: Introduction

In August 1979, the National Park Service completed a Wild and Scenic eligibility and suitability study of the Housatonic River from the Massachusetts/Connecticut border to the confluence of the Shepaug River (P.L. 94-486). The study found that the segment from the Massachusetts/Connecticut border to the Boardman Bridge in New Milford was eligible, but the remaining stretch to the confluence of the Shepaug River was not, due to the adverse effects of impounded water and shoreline development.

As part of the study, the NPS found that if Wild and Scenic status was desired, the surrounding towns needed to develop an acceptable management plan to guide land use, recreation, and water quality. The National Park Service also identified a need to appoint a managing agency. Based on these findings, the surrounding towns and State of Connecticut did not seek designation at the time.

More than three decades later, on November 16, 2016, Connecticut's Governor Dannel Malloy petitioned the Secretary of the Interior to approve Wild and Scenic status as a state administered component under Section 2 (a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, implementing the recommendation of the 1979 study. The Governor's petition consists of the following main elements:

- A cover letter signed by Governor Dannel Malloy
- Connecticut Public Act 16-38, an Act concerning the designation of certain areas of the Housatonic River as a Wild and Scenic river.
- The Housatonic in Connecticut - A Wild and Scenic River Study by the National Park Service (August 1979)
- A report excerpt (pgs. 67-68) from the U.S. General Accounting Office, Wild and Scenic Rivers (GAO/RCED-87-39) (December 1986)
- Map of Wild and Scenic Designations requested
- Documents on administering the Wild and Scenic Housatonic River including a draft Memorandum of Understanding, Housatonic River Commission Rules of Procedure, the Housatonic River Commission's 2006 Management Plan, and a draft of the Coordinating Committee By-Laws.
- Letters of Support from the Communities Affected
- Letters of Support from Connecticut Congressional Delegation (Sen. Blumenthal, Sen. Murphy, Congresswoman Esty)

This evaluation report documents the NPS' assessment of the extent to which the proposed segment of the Housatonic River meets designation requirements as identified in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and subsequent agency guidelines. It also looks at changes on the river since

the National Park Service concluded that the river was eligible for Wild and Scenic status in the 1979 study. This evaluation utilizes the findings of the 1979 study as a baseline for analysis. Standardized guidance on identifying ORVs was developed in the interim, as documented in the Interagency Wild and Scenic River Coordinating Council (IWSRCC) “The WSR Study Process” white paper, 1999. For components such as natural resources and settlement patterns that changed little since the original study, refer back to ‘The Housatonic in Connecticut - A Wild and Scenic River Study, NPS 1979’ for more detail.

Chapter II: Housatonic River Environment

Massachusetts/Connecticut Border to Boardman Bridge

(Towns of Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, New Milford, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon)

The Housatonic River basin lies principally in western Connecticut and southwestern Massachusetts with small sections extending into southeastern New York. Of the river's total 132 miles, 40.3 miles in Connecticut were identified for this evaluation. This area is well known for its charming rural character, historical heritage, and natural beauty which are remarkable considering its proximity to the northeastern megalopolis.

Hydrology

The Housatonic River basin extends from Connecticut into Massachusetts and New York, and is comprised of 1,950 square miles. The river itself is formed by the confluence of the East Branch and West Branch Housatonic Rivers at Pittsfield, Massachusetts. It follows a generally southerly course for thirty-six miles through Massachusetts and thirty miles through northwestern Connecticut to the vicinity of Bulls Bridge, where it turns and flows southeastward for fifty-three miles to tidewater at Derby. It then continues for thirteen more miles to its mouth at Long Island Sound, four miles eastward of the city of Bridgeport.

The study segment of the river stretches 40.3 miles south from the Massachusetts border to the Boardman Bridge in New Milford, Connecticut. Locally identified river corridor boundaries were named in the original **HRC** 1981 River Management Plan and have not been altered since that time. They consist of an inner boundary, an outer boundary, and village centers. The Hollenbeck River, Blackberry River, Salmon Kill, Macedonia Brook, and Ten Mile River are tributaries that enter the Housatonic within the proposed Wild and Scenic stretch. Other tributaries below the proposed W&S area are: Rocky River (Candlewood Lake), Still River, Shepaug River, **Pomperaug, and Naugatuck**.

The Rocky River (Candlewood Lake outlet) confluence with the Housatonic River is downstream of the proposed designation. The flow regime from this hydropower project is the baseline condition and NPS does not anticipate that future FERC licensing actions will violate WSR standards.

Geology

During the most recent Ice Age, masses of ice moved into Connecticut, advancing and retreating at least twice and quite likely four times. As the ice left each time, the path cut by the river was altered, especially within the less resistant marble areas. One interglacial stage diverted the river through the large lakes in Salisbury and then looped into New York State in the Ten Mile River System before rejoining the present course near Bull's Bridge. Evidence also exists of an earlier path north of Falls Village through the Hollenbeck River, east of the present Housatonic and eventually back to the current valley at Cornwall Bridge.

The glaciers also created various landforms which are evident in the valley. Those composed of sand and gravel deposits and in the form of sinuous ridges or mounds are known as terraces, eskers, and kames. The hard packed material below these sand and gravel deposits is consolidated glacial till which forms elongated hills in some places known as drumlins.

There are two spectacular waterfalls within the proposed designated area. The first are the Great Falls in Falls Village, Canaan. The second are Kent Falls in the Town of Kent, where a series of cascades drop 250 feet in under a quarter of a mile, the highest being 70 feet. Also in Kent, the Bull's Bridge area contains a smaller, scenic gorge.

Soils

Soils in the Housatonic Valley have been formed by the weathering and erosion action of the area's climate on its bedrock materials and glacial deposits. Generally, the soils of the valley can be grouped into six major associations which are defined by the pattern of soils in the area, and which are described according to general location, slope, permeability, depth to bedrock, and parent material. These characteristics are important in understanding the soils of an area because of their direct relationship to land use and vegetation patterns.

The floodplains and terraces of the Housatonic Valley north of Kent are occupied by the Copake-Groton Genesee Association. These well drained soils are generally level to sloping or undulating, and have been derived from limestone and schist. About sixty percent of this association has been cleared and is used mainly for farming or is idle. In fact, these soils are among the better ones for farming on terraces and floodplains in Litchfield County. The rest of the association is in forest, home sites, estates and industrial development.

The area to the west of the river and above Falls Village is occupied by the Stockbridge-Farmington-Amenia Association, most of which is gently sloping to steep, well drained, deep soils formed in limestone glacial till and schist. This association includes some of the better upland soils for farming in Litchfield County and are generally well suited to crops grown in support of the dairy industry. About sixty percent of the acreage consists of open fields for dairying, but some areas are used for summer cottages, camps, and year round residences.

Most of the uplands of the river valley south of Falls Village are occupied by the Hollis-

Charlton Association and the Charlton Paxton-Hollis Association. Both of these soils are generally gently sloping to steep, and include rocky soils which are shallow to bedrock, and deep, well drained soils formed in glacial till. The Hollis soils are most notable in the area for their shallow nature which produces prominent bedrock outcrops in the ridges along the river. Most of the land in these two associations is covered with cut over forest, although forty percent of the Charlton-Paxton-Hollis Association was cleared and is used for dairy farming and orchards.

From Kent downstream to Lake Lillinonah, the Housatonic River valley lowland is occupied by the Hinckley-Merrimac-Hartland Association, while the uplands continue the Hollis-Charlton and Charlton Paxton-Hollis Associations described above. Soils in this area are nearly level or undulating to sloping, but commonly they are steep on terrace breaks, developed in deep deposits of sand and gravel, and are excessively well drained. A large percentage of this association was cleared and is used for vegetable crops, nursery stock, and crops for dairy farming. The rest of the cleared area is idle or used for housing and industrial sites. A small upland portion of the river valley near the village of New Milford is occupied by the Paxton-Woodbridge Association. These soils are gently sloping to steep, well drained, formed in glacial till, have a fragipan layer, and are located in an area of elongated drumlins. Much of this acreage is used for crops in support of dairy farming, and the rest is cutover forest used for homesites or is idle. These soils are severely limited for onsite sewage disposal systems.

Climate

The Housatonic River valley has a humid continental climate, classified as a snow-forest type with warm summers. The prevailing westerly wind, blowing from the southwest in the summer, but from the northwest during other periods, is often interrupted by the arrival of maritime air from the Atlantic Ocean to the south and east. Mean temperatures generally average about seventy degrees (F) in July and twenty-four degrees (F) in January. The average annual rainfall ranges from forty-four to fifty-two inches. Snowfall varies considerably from year to year and averages about forty-five inches in the Lake Lillinonah area to about seventy-five inches above Falls Village.

In the Housatonic River Basin, climatic conditions differ quite markedly from north to south. The southern portion of the basin has fairly hot summers and relatively mild winters; whereas the northern portion has shorter, cooler summers and much colder winters.

Although the climate of an area is not expected to alter much in a short time span (less than forty years since the original study), climate change has been noticeable in the study area. The original study stated that "Weather is seldom excessively hot, and prolonged periods of extreme cold are rare. Rainfall is plentiful in the area and well distributed throughout the year." While this statement is still generally true, northwest Connecticut has seen changes in its weather patterns. As in other areas of the country, storms have become more severe. This

increases the risk of flash flooding, as well as contaminants from impervious surfaces being washed into the river. Risk of drought is also increasing. In 2016, the CT Interagency Drought Workgroup issued a first-ever drought watch for the state, and the proposed Wild and Scenic area in the northwest corner was listed as extreme drought.

CHAPTER III: EVALUATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND CLASSIFICATION

Eligibility and Classification Criteria

The criteria described here have been developed and refined largely since the time of the original Housatonic 1979 Study. These criteria will be considered in the context of re-visiting the 1979 Housatonic Study conclusions.

Eligibility and Classification Criteria

The subsections below describe the relevant eligibility and classification criteria as set forth in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, in the USDA/USDI Interagency Guidelines for Eligibility, Classification, and Management of River Areas as published in the Federal Register on September 7, 1982, in the Technical Report of the Interagency Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinating Council on the Wild & Scenic Rivers Study Process, IWSRCC, December 1999, and the NPS Director's Order 46 of May 1, 2015.

Free-flowing

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers System is designed to protect eligible “free-flowing” rivers and sections of rivers that support outstandingly remarkable resource values from the adverse impacts of federally-assisted water resource projects, such as construction of new dams. The Act's definition of “free-flowing” is outlined in Section 16:

“(b) “Free-flowing”, as applied to any river or section of a river, means existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, rip-rapping, or other modification of the waterway. The existence, however, of low dams, diversion works, and other minor structures at the time any river is proposed for inclusion in the national wild and scenic rivers system shall not automatically bar its consideration for such inclusion: Provided, That this shall not be construed to authorize, intend, or encourage future construction of such structures within components of the national wild and scenic rivers system.”

Rivers that have dams above, downstream, or on a tributary to the study segment, including those that regulate flow through the segment, along with the existence of minor dams, rip-rap, and other diversions within the segment, may still be eligible as long as the river is otherwise free-flowing and supports at least one ORV.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values

To be considered eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System a river

segment, together with its adjacent lands, must support one or more “outstandingly remarkable” natural, cultural, or recreational resource values. Such resource values must be directly related to, or dependent upon, the river and its adjacent lands (generally $\frac{1}{4}$ mile or another geographic area as defined by the study team). The “outstandingly remarkable” threshold is met if a value is found to be unique, rare or exemplary within a region of comparison, as based on the professional judgment of the study/evaluation team.

The descriptions below provide examples to help interpret this “outstandingly remarkable” eligibility requirement:

National Values

Resource values which are nationally significant clearly meet the “outstandingly remarkable” threshold. A nationally significant resource would be rare, unique, or exemplary at a national scale. For example, a recreational boating experience that draws visitors from all over the nation would qualify as a nationally significant recreational resource.

Regional Values

Based upon the desirability of protecting a regional diversity of rivers through the national system, a river segment may qualify based on regionally rare, unique, or exemplary resource values. The area, region, or scale of comparison is not fixed, and should be defined as that which serves as a basis for meaningful comparative analysis; it may vary depending on the value being considered. For example, physiographic regions are appropriate for geologic resources and ecoregions for biologic resources, while the region occupied by a particular culture is appropriate for archaeological resources.

Aggregate Values

A river may qualify for a given resource value based upon an aggregate of important values, which when taken together are regionally exemplary. For example, a series of unusual and distinctive river-related geologic features may together qualify a segment as exhibiting an “outstandingly remarkable geologic value” even though no one element meets the criteria alone.

Defining “River-Related” Values

The IWSRCC has characterized the determination as to whether a given resource value is river-related as based on three criteria. To be river-related a resource value should:

- 1) Be located in the river or in its immediate shorelands (generally within $\frac{1}{4}$ miles on either side of the river);
- 2) Contribute substantially to the functioning of the river ecosystem; and/or
- 3) Owe their location or existence to the presence of the river.

Classification Criteria

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act requires that all eligible or designated river segments be classified as Wild, Scenic, or Recreational. These classifications are based solely on the amount

of human impact, access, and development of the waterway and shoreline present at the time of the study or designation. The Act defines them as follows:

Wild river areas: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted. These represent vestiges of primitive America.

Scenic river areas: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.

Recreational river areas: Those rivers or sections of rivers that are readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.

The IWSRCC Guidelines provide additional direction relevant to the Housatonic, including:

In segmenting the river the study team should take into account the management strategies necessary to administer the entire river area and should avoid excessive segmentation.

The basis of classification is the degree of naturalness, or stated negatively, the degree of evidence of man's activity in the study area. The most natural rivers will be classified wild; those somewhat less natural, scenic; and those least natural, recreational.

The classification criteria provide uniform guidance for professional judgment, but they are not absolutes. It is not possible to formulate criteria so as to mechanically or automatically classify river areas. Therefore, there may occasionally be exceptions to some of the criteria.

Free-Flowing Condition

In the 1979 study, the eligible segment of the Housatonic River was found to be generally free flowing as it runs through a natural and largely undeveloped corridor:

"This free-flowing character is not significantly affected by the two run-of-the river hydropower dams at Falls Village and Bulls Bridge. In the Lake Lillinonah area, the Shepaug hydro power project includes a 1,870 acre impoundment of the river's free-flowing condition. This large impoundment, plus the presence of industrial and other structures on the shoreline in New Milford are the reasons why the ten miles of the river below Boardman Bridge were found ineligible for National Wild and Scenic River designation."

- NPS, 1979 Study

Since the 1979 study was completed, FERC relicensing in June of 2004 (FERC Housatonic River Project No. 2576) substantially improved aquatic habitat and river flows within the proposed Wild and Scenic segment by requiring a change in hydropower plant operations to true run-of-river (so that the outflow from the project shall equal the inflow on an instantaneous basis) for the Falls Village and Bulls Bridge facilities. Even though the original study described the dams as run-of-river operations, they did in fact employ elements of "pond and release"

operation. The new license puts in place numerous additional enhancements to fish and wildlife, river health and recreation including maintenance of bypassed-reach minimum flows at Falls Village and Bulls Bridge. Utilizing the 1979 study as a baseline, free-flowing conditions within the proposed designation area have been markedly improved, and will continue over the 40 year term of the FERC license. Future relicensing will require consideration of Wild and Scenic River designation, as appropriate. (See below: **Impacts on Federally Assisted Water Resource Development Projects**)

The Governor's application did not include downstream areas impacted by other hydroelectric facilities licensed under P-2576 (Rocky River, Shepaug and Stevenson), which have no impact upon the free-flowing condition of the proposed Wild and Scenic segment.

Water Quality

"Efforts to return this river segment to its class "B" rating by 1979, are being made by the State of Connecticut in coordination with similar efforts in New York and Massachusetts. This situation is acceptable under the National Wild and Scenic River criteria since reasonable efforts are being made to return the river to its original excellent class "B" rating". - NPS, 1979 Study

Since the original study, the Housatonic River segments in this evaluation are fully supporting aquatic life but remain under monitoring and remediation for PCBs from upstream contamination in Massachusetts. The latest CT DEEP data from 2016, shows continued efforts to reach the goal of the "B" water quality ~~rating~~ **classification**. According to the most recent US EPA reports, "cleanup of PCBs and other hazardous substances in Pittsfield and the Housatonic River has progressed under an October 2000 Consent Decree entered into by US EPA, Massachusetts, Connecticut, the City of Pittsfield, the General Electric Company, and the Pittsfield Economic Development Authority. Cleanup was required for twenty contaminated areas outside the River, five groundwater management areas, and three River segments—the Upper ½-Mile Reach, the 1.5 Mile Reach, and Rest of River."

At the time of this evaluation, all "active remediation" sites lie within a 30-mile stretch of the Housatonic River between Pittsfield, MA and the Rising Pond Dam in Great Barrington, MA. Within Connecticut (which is part of the "Rest of River" section), the strategy is "Monitored Natural Recovery (MNR)," described as "ongoing, naturally occurring processes to contain, destroy or reduce the bioavailability or toxicity of contaminants in sediment. These processes may include physical, biological and chemical mechanisms that act together to reduce the risk posed by the contaminants. MNR may also include enhancements, such as thin layer capping, to accelerate the rate of recovery." The US EPA maintains a website to keep the public apprised of the clean-up and its progress which can be accessed at: <https://www.epa.gov/ge-housatonic>.

The following are some of the milestones reached under the above-mentioned October 2000 Consent Decree:

- Cleanup required for twenty contaminated areas outside the Housatonic River in Pittsfield, MA, five groundwater management areas, and three river segments—the upper ½-mile reach, the following 1.5-mile stretch, and “Rest of River.” A large portion of the cleanup is complete on nineteen of these twenty sites.
- Nine floodplain residential properties in Pittsfield, MA, cleanup substantially completed in 2018.
- As of this evaluation, 181,000 cubic yards of soil and sediment have been removed from the twenty cleanup sites in Pittsfield.
- Cleanup is complete for the two miles of river immediately below the General Electric Plant in Massachusetts.

Outstanding Remarkable Values

Recreational Resources

“The Housatonic River supports a full range of river-oriented activities and is well known in the Southern New England-New York region for canoeing, kayaking, trout and bass fishing, and fly-fishing. State park and forest lands in the area provide public access to the river and accommodations for camping, hiking, and hunting.” - NPS, 1979 Study

Since the 1979 study, the section of the Housatonic being evaluated continues to be a well-visited recreational area due to its many offerings in a picturesque setting. However, the change of flow regime (true run of river) at the FERC licensed dams in 2004 soon thereafter turned the area from almost an amusement park atmosphere (reportedly up to 450 boats per day during pond and release) to one of mostly tranquility. According to the HRC, most sections of the evaluated river segment are hardly ever crowded. The one commercial outfitter in the area has adapted to the new style of river use providing more canoes, kayaks, and tubes rather than rafting trips. Activities continue to vary according to the weather and seasonal flows. Some days there are more anglers than boaters, other days the opposite is true.

Concerns about the Bulls Bridge area remain, however, there is a concentrated effort by the Appalachian Trail Council, CT DEEP, and the NPS in providing management support to control crowding, remove litter, and monitor safety.

The 2006 Housatonic Management Plan provides this overview:

“From the MA border to Falls Village Power Station

The Housatonic River in this segment runs primarily through farmland. Access points for boaters are at Rannapo Road in Ashley Falls, Dutchers Bridge in Salisbury, and above the Falls Village dam on the West side of the River. There is a short Class 5 kayaking run (“Rattlesnake Rapids”) south of the Great Falls. The Appalachian Trail crosses the River at the Amesville Bridge in Falls Village. Robbins Swamp, the State’s largest inland wetland, is east of the River in Canaan and North Canaan and is a popular duck hunting area. The Blackberry and Hollenbeck Rivers enter the Housatonic in this segment and the Hollenbeck Preserve, owned by The Nature

Conservancy, encompasses 182 acres along the River and provides a habitat for significant rare plant and animal species including the State's declining grassland bird species.

Falls Village Power Station to Kent Center

This section of the River is heavily used for boating and fishing particularly from spring through early fall. Housatonic Meadows State Park along the west side of the River offers convenient camping, access to the River, and parking for anglers. The CT DEEP Trout Management Area, which DEEP stocks annually, runs for 9 miles through Sharon and Cornwall and includes a 3.5-mile fly-fishing only area. Macedonia Brook State Park also offers seasonal camping. The Kent Falls State Park is a popular site for hiking, fishing and picnicking. A section of the Appalachian Trail runs for five miles along the west side of the River between Kent and Cornwall Bridge. Notably, it is the longest stretch of river walk between Georgia and Maine. There are also access points for fishing and boating at Amesville, CL&P field in Sharon, Covered Bridge in West Cornwall, Housatonic Meadows State Park, and Swifts Bridge in Sharon and Cornwall. Commercial boat rental operations conduct business in this segment.

Kent Center to Bulls Bridge

This wide stretch of River is good for flat water canoeing and rowing. The Appalachian Trail runs along the ridge line in Kent, parallel to and west of the River. The Schaghticoke Reservation is on the west side of the River. Route 7 runs along the east side of this River segment offering scenic views for tourists. A canoe/kayak take-out is just north of Spooner Dam on Bulls Bridge Island.

Bulls Bridge to Boardman Bridge

Bulls Bridge is an area for experienced kayakers offering the only true Class 4-5 run in Connecticut according to the Housatonic Area Canoe and Kayak Squad (HACKS). The Bulls Bridge Gorge area is also environmentally and historically significant and contains rare species as well as historic resources such as the site of the 1826 Bulls Bridge Iron Furnace. Scenic overlooks are located on the Bulls Bridge utility property but access and parking is an issue due to congestion. The Appalachian Trail follows the River in the area of Bulls Bridge. Protecting this sensitive area from overuse is a major concern. The Tenmile River, a major tributary, enters the Housatonic just below the Gorge. Rafting is common in this segment and there are access points at Bulls Bridge, the west bank of River south of Gaylordsville Bridge, the west bank south of the new Boardman Bridge, and Young's field at New Milford Center (just south of current Housatonic *River Commission* boundary). The State DEEP has designated a bass management area and a trout management area in this segment."

Proposed Houbike Trail

Aside from the many scenic paved and dirt roads that can be biked on, the planned Houbike Trail proposes to link existing river roads next to or near the Housatonic to produce a continuous 45-mile multi-use biking and hiking route from Massachusetts/Connecticut border to the center of New Milford. The proposed Houbike Trail route includes approximately thirty-five miles of existing publicly maintained paved and dirt roads directly adjacent to the Housatonic.

The additional ten miles will initially be on roads that are not adjacent to the Housatonic. The

project proposes least impact options for moving those ten miles to locations adjacent to the Housatonic.

Scenic Resources

“The visual and spatial experiences of the river valley are highly diverse as the river flows through areas of steep forested mountains with prominent bedrock outcroppings near their summits, to areas of gently rolling hills and broad floodplains covered with agricultural fields and dotted with tiny villages”. - NPS, 1979 Study

Although there has been some development over the years, especially towards the southern portion of the study segment, the charm and beauty of the area remains. The Housatonic River corridor contains some outstanding scenery. Portions of Route 4 and Route 7 have been designated scenic roads by the state and afford views of the river. Several towns within the Housatonic corridor including Canaan, Kent, New Milford and Sharon have a local scenic road ordinance.

Cultural Resources

“The Housatonic Valley originally developed as a river oriented agricultural area in colonial times and eventually played a prominent role in the 19th Century iron industry. Reminders of these historical periods are evident today in the general appearance of the valley with its picturesque river side villages of colonial homes and stores, and its old stone fences running through fields of crops.” - NPS, 1979 Study.

It is generally held that the Housatonic Valley was first occupied by Paleo-Indians in approximately 10,000 BC, and since that time has been occupied by three distinctive Indian cultures before the first Europeans explored the area. The Schaghticokes still have a reservation along the River in Kent. Preliminary investigations indicate that the valley itself also has a great potential to yield significant archaeological finds due to the deeply stratified layers of soils which has isolated the remains of various cultures in sequence.

Within the river segment proposed for designation, two wooden covered bridges and one wrought iron bridge are listed on the National Register of Historic Places for their engineering significance. These are the covered bridges at West Cornwall and Bulls Bridge, and the wrought iron Boardman Bridge. In addition, the National Register includes the 19th Century Railroad Station at Cornwall Bridge on the east bank of the Housatonic River, and the Union Depot in North Canaan.

Furthermore, the remains of an old iron furnace in Kent have been given recognition as a State historical resource and have been nominated to the National Register. The State has also given recognition to a 60-acre historical district in the town of Kent which borders on the river.

Wildlife and Vegetation

The Housatonic Valley is a unique ecosystem that is home to a variety of plants and animals, some not found in other parts of the state. Much of this is owed to the diverse habitats of the

area's agricultural lands, woodlands, wetlands, and overgrown abandoned fields.

The original study found:

“ The Housatonic Valley contains certain unique environmental conditions that create suitable habitats for rare and endangered species of both plants and animals. Several of these sites are recognized as "critical habitats" by the State of Connecticut and are of scientific and educational significance to New England as a whole”. - NPS, 1979 Study

The 1979 study documented a variety of rare, threatened and endangered species, and critical habitats associated with the Housatonic Valley. The landbase supporting these species and habitats remains mostly intact. For the purposes of this evaluation, more current information was reviewed including the 2009 “Natural Resource Inventory” prepared by the Town of Salisbury’s Conservation Commission, and the “Report of the Critical Habitat Inventory for the Proposed HouBike Trail between Cornwall Bridge and Kent (August 1, 2017)” prepared by Michael W. Klemens LLC for the Northwest Hills Council of Governments.

Some of the species listed by these studies as either ‘threatened’, ‘endangered’, or ‘of special concern’ by the state include: Blue Spotted Salamander, Jefferson Salamander, Northern Spring Salamander, Northern leopard Frog, Bog Turtle, Wood Turtle, Eastern Hognose Snake, Eastern Ribbon Snake, Timber Rattlesnake, Silver Haired Bat, Red Bat, Hoary Bat, Southern Bog Lemming, Eastern Meadowlarks, Brown Thrashers, Longnose Sucker and several species of butterflies. The federally protected Bald Eagle also makes its home here along the river.

The major vegetation associations of the Housatonic Valley reflect the patterns of geology, soils and climate in the area as they gradually change from the northern to southern limits of the study area, and as they provide habitats for several species which are rare in Connecticut and New England as a whole. These qualities of the valley's vegetation provide a visually pleasing setting for the river and add to the ecological and educational value of the area.

From the Massachusetts state line south to the Cornwall Bridge, the Housatonic River passes through a transition Hardwoods-White Pine Hemlock zone, whose dominant hardwoods are Red Oak, Basswood, White Ash, and Black Birch. Hemlock and White Pine are also frequent and locally dominant. A number of northern bog and forest species reach their extreme southern range limits in this area's cooler habitats. Some rare plant species of this region include Bog Rosemary and Canada Violet.

Below the Cornwall Bridge is the Central Hardwoods Hemlock-White Pine zone, which continues downstream through Kent and into New Milford. The dominant species in this association are oaks and hickories. White Pine and Hemlock are also frequent and locally abundant to dominant. Some characteristic rare plants in this area are Hairy Wood-Mint and Wiegand's Wild Rye.

Segment	ORV	Contributing Resources
Entire Study Segment from MA/CT state line to Boardman Bridge, New Milford	<i>Recreation</i>	Proposed Houbike Trail along much of river
		Hiking and hunting on adjacent state forest lands
		Canoeing along most of this stretch of river
		Fishing (see segment descriptions for details)
	<i>Scenic</i>	Outstanding views along the river
	<i>Cultural/Historic</i>	Valley first occupied by Paleo-Indians around 10,000 BC
		Historic agricultural area and then played a significant role in the 19th century iron industry
	<i>Ecological</i>	Home to a variety of plants and animals not found in other parts of the state
		Several 'critical habitat' sites recognized by State of CT
MA/CT Border to West Cornwall Bridge	<i>Recreation</i>	Fishing - Bass, carp above Falls Village; brown, brook and rainbow trout below Falls Village
		Appalachian trail passes by the Great Falls
		Class III/IV kayaking below Great Falls, site of former kayak slalom race
		Hiking - Mohawk Trail meets the Appalachian Trail in this segment
		Popular birding area below Great Falls
West Cornwall Bridge to Cornwall Bridge	<i>Recreation</i>	Fishing - Pool and riffle trout fishing (brown, brook, rainbow)
		Camping at Housatonic Meadows State Park
		Class II/III kayaking below West Cornwall Bridge
	<i>Cultural/Historic</i>	West Cornwall covered bridge
Cornwall Bridge to Kent Bridge	<i>Recreation</i>	Fishing - Pool and riffle trout fishing (brown, brook, rainbow)
		Appalachian Trail along much of river in this section
		Hiking and scenic views at Kent Falls State Park
		Popular birding area above Kent near Appalachian Trail
Kent Bridge to Boardman Bridge	<i>Recreation</i>	Fishing - New fish management areas (both trout and bass)

<u>Segment</u>	<u>ORV</u>	<u>Contributing Resources</u>
		Class III-IV kayaking on much of this section, Class V right below Bull's Bridge dam
	<i>Cultural/Historic</i>	covered Bull's bridge
		wrought iron Boardman Bridge
		Schaghticoke Reservation

The ecological and educational value of the vegetation in the Housatonic valley is attributed to the occurrence of critical habitats which support a variety of plants that are scarce to absent over the rest of the state and parts of New England. These critical habitats include marble ridges and ledges, and calcareous wetlands whose vegetation is uniquely suited to the marble or carbonate rocks that occur in the Housatonic Valley, yet are of extremely restricted occurrence in the rest of the state. Several of these sites have been proposed for Connecticut's Critical Biological Area status.

Table Summarizing the ORVs on the Housatonic River by Segment

Classification

Based on the classification criteria described at the beginning of this chapter, the NPS evaluated the proposed Wild and Scenic stretch for appropriate classifications.

Proposed Classification from the 1979 Study

In addition to determining eligibility, the 1979 study team classified the river into one scenic and two recreational segments.

Scenic Section - The 20.5-mile segment of the Housatonic River from Falls Mountain Road in Canaan to Kent Bridge was classified as scenic. In this area the river is free-flowing and runs through a generally undeveloped corridor with steep forested valley walls and prominent bedrock outcroppings. The Berkshire Railroad, Appalachian Trail and Route 7 highway provide good access to much of this area and are generally screened from the river by natural streambank vegetation.

Recreational Sections - The 8.5-mile recreational river segment from the Massachusetts/Connecticut border to Falls Mountain Road is a slow moving meandering stream through flat agricultural land with limited access by road, railroad, or trail. At the time of the original study, the Falls Village hydroelectric power dam in this area impounded water for less than one mile and altered the natural flow of the river over Great Falls. The streambanks showed evidence of human modification as a two to three foot mud bank was exposed by the daily hydropower operations. Furthermore, agricultural activities had caused gullyng of the stream banks and hindered the growth of natural streambank vegetation in places.

The 12-mile recreational river segment from Kent Bridge to Boardman Bridge flows through a steep forested valley, yet it contains several elements of human modification. The following description is from the original study: “The Bulls Bridge hydro power project in this area creates a 4.5 mile pool of impounded water and has altered the natural flow of the river through a spectacular rock gorge. The streambanks along this pool are exposed for 2-3 feet below their natural water level by the daily hydropower operations. The Berkshire Railroad, Route 7 highway and residential developments are obviously exposed along the shoreline in places without sufficient streambed screening.”

Revised Classification

Scenic Sections

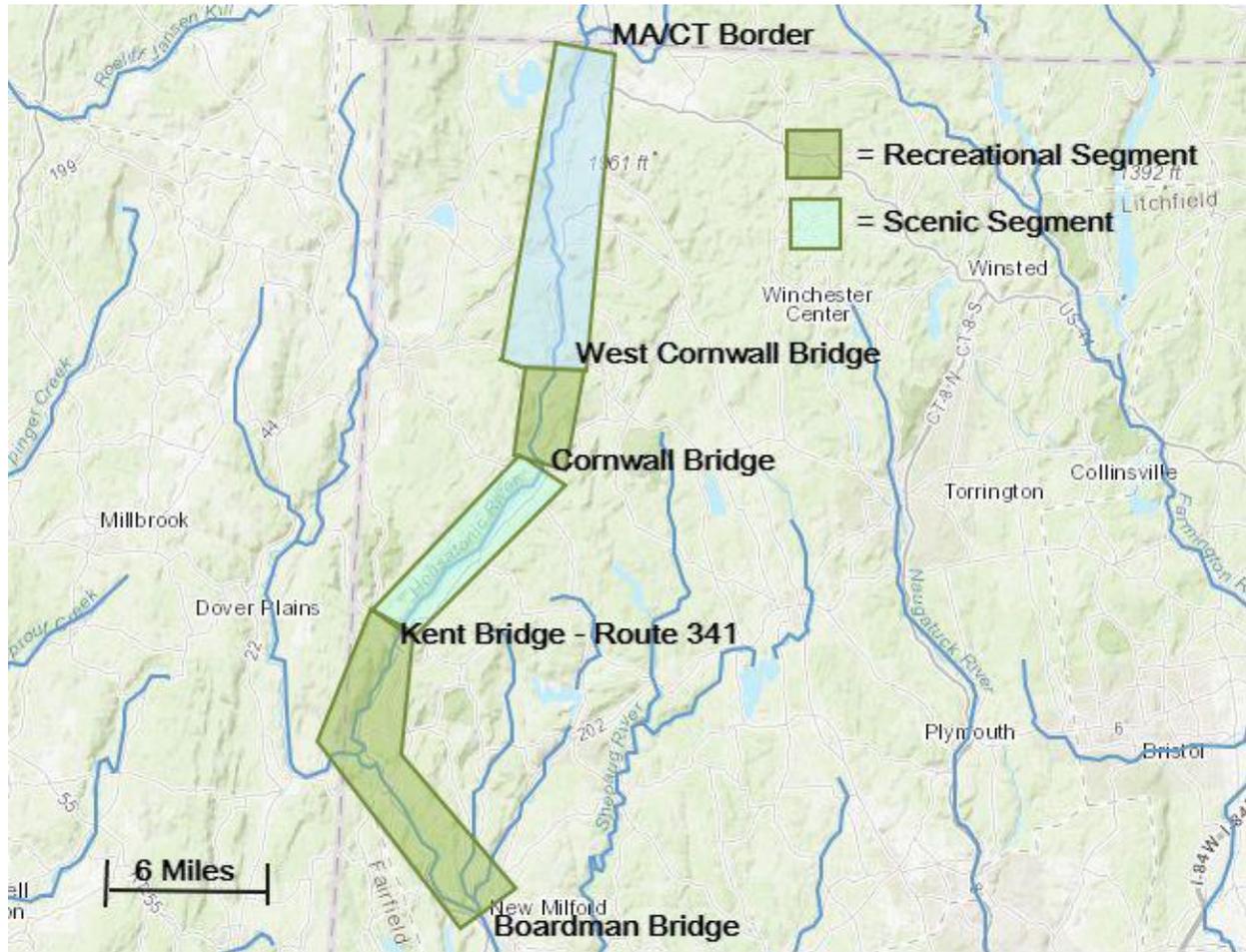
The 14.9 mile segment from the Massachusetts/Connecticut border to the covered bridge in West Cornwall is classified as ‘Scenic.’ The river flows through remote areas and is not easily accessed by roads. Development through this stretch is still sparse, although in some areas the river is not far from Route 7. Access is difficult and the river is mostly hidden from view. The FERC relicensing, as previously mentioned, has improved the streambanks by changing from a pond-and-release operation to true run-of-river at both the Fall’s Village hydro facility (included in this segment) and the Bull’s Bridge hydro facility further downstream. Although both dams still exist, less of an environmental impact is seen, and recreational boating opportunities have improved. The Berkshire Railroad tracks are near the river, but the rail line is infrequently utilized and does not intrude on the secluded nature of the river.

The 9.1-mile segment from the Cornwall Bridge to the Route 341 Bridge in Kent is also classified as ‘Scenic’ (this stretch was also part of the original 1979 study’s scenic segment). Here Route 7 is far enough away from the river on the east side to make access virtually impossible. On the west side, there is only minimal road access going north from Kent, and south from Cornwall Bridge. The roads in both directions end after approximately 2 miles, leaving only the Appalachian Trail to follow the river. This is a very beautiful section of the Housatonic River, and contains St. John’s Ledges, where the Appalachian Trail has a several vistas looking down to the river.

Recreational Sections

The 4.1-mile segment from West Cornwall Bridge to Cornwall Bridge and the 12.2-mile segment from the Route 341 Bridge in Kent to the Boardman Bridge in New Milford are classified as ‘Recreational.’ The river here is paralleled by Route 7, making access very easy for most of this segment. Where the river is not right next to the road, access can be found by going through the Housatonic Meadows State Park.

Proposed Segment Re-classification



Conclusion

Eligibility

Based upon the application of the Wild and Scenic eligibility criteria, the NPS' evaluation of the current designation proposal concludes that the 40.3 mile section of the Housatonic River from the Massachusetts/Connecticut border downstream to Boardman Bridge is eligible for inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic River System. The Housatonic River continues to support Outstandingly Remarkable Values that warrant preservation, including scenic beauty, recreational opportunities, historic value, and wildlife/vegetation, consistent with the 1979 Study findings.

Classification

The NPS recommends a slight change to the proposed classifications scheme of the 1979 study for a total of 24.0 miles 'Scenic' and 16.3 miles 'Recreational' as described in the previous section.

CHAPTER IV: EVALUATION OF DESIGNATION AND MANAGEMENT

State Designation and Management Requirements

As described in the Introduction, to be considered for the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Act, proposed rivers must be designated a state wild, scenic or recreational river by or pursuant to an act of the state legislature. The proposed river must also be administered by an agency or political subdivision of the state. This section describes how the proposed segment of the Housatonic River meets these requirements.

State Scenic River Designation

The portion of the Housatonic River being evaluated for federal Wild and Scenic designation was proposed for “Local Scenic River” designation under Connecticut’s Senate Bill No. 81 - Public Act No. 16-38. This bill was approved by the General Assembly and signed into law on May 25, 2016.

State and Local River Management

Management and administration of the proposed Wild and Scenic Housatonic River segment would be accomplished through a management framework authorized by the proposed Memorandum of Agreement for Protection of the Housatonic River. The key mechanisms all serve as non-regulatory management strategies, and are described below.

Housatonic River Commission Coordinating Committee

The state’s application for Wild and Scenic designation proposes the creation of a new Housatonic River Commission Coordinating Committee (HRCCC). The purpose of the HRCCC is to promote the long-term protection of the Housatonic River from the Massachusetts/Connecticut border to the Boardman Bridge by bringing together interested parties on a regular basis, stimulating cooperation between those parties, by providing a forum to discuss and resolve issues that concern the river, and coordinating implementation of the Housatonic River Management Plan. The Committee will have an advisory role only. It will not have land acquisition or regulatory authority.

The “Memorandum of Agreement for Protection of the Housatonic River” (MOA) serves to establish the advisory HRCCC with representatives from the Housatonic River Commission, Northwest Hills Council of Governments, National Park Service, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP), and Housatonic Valley Association (HVA). Each of their roles are spelled out in this agreement. It also identifies actions that will not be taken, such as federal land acquisition. Meetings of the HRCCC are to be held every quarter. This proposed structure builds off a long and successful history of the Housatonic River Commission (HRC) since 1979. The HRC continues to meet on a monthly basis.

The Housatonic River Commission

The Housatonic River Commission was formed in July 1979 with a goal of providing guidance on local river management to the towns of Canaan, Cornwall, Kent, New Milford, North Canaan, Salisbury and Sharon. The Commission produced an advisory management plan - The River Management Plan, in 1981, updated that Plan in 2006, and routinely consults with municipal land use decision-makers.

The 1981 Plan spelled out the Commission's objectives and duties. With minor modifications, the updated plan reaffirms those original objectives and duties:

Objectives of the Housatonic River Commission

- Promote the retention of the free-flowing and scenic character of the Housatonic River;
- Promote the protection and improvement of water quality, through:
 1. the elimination of toxic waste discharges and waste discharges lacking tertiary treatment;
 2. the adoption of measures to assure the proper performance of septic systems, including control of minimum lot sizes in relation to their soil characteristics;
 3. the adoption of measures for aquifer protection, ridgeline protection, erosion and sediment control, and the regulation of gravel and topsoil mining;
 4. the adoption of best management practices by farms within the watershed; and
 5. the adoption of measures to minimize non-point source pollution.
- Promote the preservation of significant ecological areas, including protection of fish and wildlife habitats and the continued stocking of indigenous game birds and fish.
- Promote the adoption of measures to control density of recreational activity in the River Corridor.
- Consult and cooperate with State agencies, the Towns, and local groups in Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New York, and Federal agencies, for the achievement of these objectives.

Duties of the Commission

- Recommend each member town adopt standards for protection of the River Corridors.
- Provide inter-town coordination of a regional Housatonic River Management Plan with each of the towns involved.
- Explore and develop, when required, means to limit and/or regulate the recreational use of the River.
- Monitor development in the Corridors and review and comment on development applications.
- Consult with the State and Federal agencies, e.g. the Northwest Conservation District, the US Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and comment on their plans affecting the River.
- Encourage gifts of land and conservation easements to the individual towns, local land

trusts or to a regional land trust to protect critical ecological, archaeological, or wildlife habitats.

- Encourage towns in the River Corridor to actively carry out the objectives of this Management Plan.
- Educate the general public on the importance of the River.

The updated 2006 River Management Plan includes guidance on land use, recreation management and water quality, which are the three biggest concerns for the future. Within each section is a discussion of existing conditions, significant issues or threats, and a series of recommendations to be addressed by both the HRC and the individual municipalities. The Plan includes a set of overall recommended actions for the HRC to continue its mission and expand its outreach within the region. Designation supports HRC efforts in managing increased recreational use of the river.

In 1989, the HRC prepared a Recreation Management Plan to assess the impact of recreation on the River. The recreation management goals listed below are based on that Plan:

- Promote effective local management of existing recreation facilities and resources for their best use.
- Preserve the Housatonic River environment and its unique and fragile natural features from overuse.
- Minimize conflicts among various recreational users and promote a balanced blend of uses appropriate to the River environment.
- Promote education of the general public in the safe and responsible recreational use of the Housatonic River.

To achieve these goals, the following had been identified in the 1989 Recreational Plan and then modified to fit into the 2006 Housatonic River Management Plan. The HRC is tasked with their implementation:

1. Encourage a Carrying Capacity Study that will provide the appropriate information for local management decision-making regarding recreational use and capacity in the region.
2. Develop a means of monitoring the recreational use of the River by segment; the monitoring system will be used to alert the towns when the River segments carrying capacity is being exceeded.
3. Advocate for appropriate safety-related signage.
4. Encourage the development and distribution of River guides and safety brochures.
5. Encourage the State, the Towns and private property owners to keep existing access points open and clean.
6. Encourage coordination of educational and recreational programs within the River Corridor.

7. Participate actively in all planning studies that FERC has required NGC to undertake as a condition of the hydropower re-licensing for the Falls Village and Bulls Bridge Dams. These include the Recreation Plan, Shoreline Management Plan, Critical Habitat Management Plan and Programmatic Agreements.
8. Encourage inter-town agreements for a coordinated, in-river, accident response system.
9. Encourage inter-town agreements for policing of riverside activity, where appropriate.
10. Monitor conditions of lands along the River to detect and report areas where environmental problems are occurring.
11. Work with the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area to encourage appropriate tourism and recreational management decision-making that preserves the long-term health of the River.

Some accomplishments since the 2006 HRC Plan include:

- All towns have considered and/or adopted zoning updates which include: permitted uses within four areas within the corridor- inner corridor, outer corridor, village centers, and sensitive areas zone.
- Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) has created a model guide for low impact development for use in the river corridor.
- Several of the towns have completed Natural Resource Inventories (NRI).
- Towns are addressing Flood-prone Conservancy Zones (no build flood zones) in revised zoning regulations.
- HRC has been working with local sod farms to reduce nutrient runoff.
- A new Housatonic Valley Association River Stewards program is underway to begin addressing user capacity and behavior issues.
- HVA has developed and distributes river guides and safety brochures.
- Established an eradication program for Japanese Knotweed along the river and tributaries.

Northwest Hills Council of Governments

The Northwest Hills Council of Governments will act as the administering agency for the river on behalf of the Housatonic River Commission and its constituent Towns as required by Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. It will also assist the Housatonic River towns in meeting their responsibilities under this Memorandum within available resources.

Conclusion

The proposed management and protection framework builds off and strengthens an already impressive and functioning framework at the local, state, and non-governmental level, and provides a strong foundation for 2(a)(ii) wild and scenic river designation.

CHAPTER V: EVALUATION OF RESOURCE PROTECTION

This section describes a set of criteria used by the National Park Service to determine whether the values that make the Housatonic worthy of designation (free-flowing, water quality, and ORVs) are adequately protected through private, local, and/or state level actions to warrant designation as a state-administered Wild and Scenic River under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Protection Mechanisms

In order for a river to be appropriate for designation as a national Wild and Scenic River under Section 2(a)(ii), there must be long-term protection of the river's WSR values and a workable management framework that does not rely on active federal management, apart from review of water resources and FERC hydropower projects under Section 7 of the Act..

This section will evaluate the following protection mechanisms:

- Local, State and Federal Programs, Laws and Regulations;
- Non-Governmental Initiatives, Programs & Partners;
- Land Protection for Conservation Purposes; and,
- Physical Limitations to Development.

Local, State and Federal Programs, Laws and Regulations

Local Ordinances and Programs

All seven of the river corridor towns have approved the formation of the previously mentioned Housatonic River Commission, and proposed river management plan. They have begun cooperative planning and established an overlay zone on a uniform basis to guide and regulate development. This Housatonic River Overlay Zone, which includes flood-prone and environmentally sensitive areas, possesses many natural resources and historic sites, and is defined by an inner and outer corridor, plus village centers and sensitive areas. These local zoning regulations will help guide future recreation, water quality, and land planning on the river.

The inner corridor is defined by the 100-year flood zone and a streambelt area based on soil types as established by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. This is the most sensitive area of the river corridor. Regulations here are designed to prevent alterations to the natural flow of the river, establish standards for land conservation, prevent water pollution, encourage a shoreline buffer zone, conserve flood storage functions of the floodplain, protect wildlife, and to conserve the natural conditions and environmental quality of the overlay zone.

The outer corridor is the portion lying between the inner corridor to the top of the river valley ridge, and is delineated by lines drawn from peak to peak along the ridge line, minus any village centers. Regulations here are primarily aimed at guarding against pollution, erosion, and sedimentation, and to establish safeguards on development.

Projects in the overlay zone have a layer of review in addition to that required by the local ordinances. Although having an advisory role only, except as noted, all applications for special exceptions, site plan approval, zoning permits, variances and zone changes affecting the zoning districts within the overlay zone are referred to the Housatonic River Commission for review and comment. The Housatonic River Commission has thirty-five days to report its recommendations to the referring board or commission.

State Laws, Regulations, and Programs

There are several state laws, regulations, and programs that offer some form of protection for open space, water quality, in-stream flows, and habitat along the Housatonic River. The more significant state level controls include:

- Housatonic Riverbelt Greenway (1984) - The Housatonic Riverbelt Greenway, launched by the Housatonic Valley Association in 1984, extends along both sides of the Housatonic River from Pittsfield, Massachusetts to Stratford and Milford, Connecticut on Long Island Sound. The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection designated the entire Connecticut portion as a State Designated Greenway in 2001. It comprises the entire Wild and Scenic Study area and extends south to the Long Island Sound. Envisioned primarily as a measure to help protect the river and its surrounding open spaces and scenic vistas, the greenway also provides opportunities for a variety of recreational activities.
- Connecticut State Statute, Title 22a - An excerpt from 22a-1 reads "...the General Assembly hereby declares that the policy of the State of Connecticut is to conserve, improve and protect its natural resources and environment and to control air, land and water pollution in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state. It shall further be the policy of the state to improve and coordinate the environmental plans, functions, powers and programs of the state, in cooperation with the federal government, regions, local governments, other public and private organizations and concerned individuals, and to manage the basic resources of air, land and water to the end that the state may fulfill its responsibility as trustee of the environment for the present and future generations...." Section 22a-6b goes on to give the state the right to impose civil penalties for water pollution violations, which helps hold companies accountable for their discharges that affect water quality.
- Connecticut State Statute, Title 26, Sec. 26-3 - The Commissioner of Energy and Environmental Protection shall enforce all laws relating to fish and wildlife in the state. The commissioner may allocate and expend for the protection, restoration, preservation and

propagation of fish and wildlife all funds of the state collected, appropriated and acquired for the purpose.

- River Protection Commissions Act (1984) - Connecticut created this act to recognize established river conservation commissions as being responsible for defining river boundaries, inventorying resources, and developing and implementing river management plans.

Federal Laws and Regulations

There are multiple federal regulations that offer protection for the Housatonic River.

The Clean Water Act (CWA) provides substantial protection for the Housatonic River's water quality by restricting all discharges into the river. The CWA was created to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's surface water. It requires states to adopt surface Water Quality Standards and an Anti-degradation Policy and establishes the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, administered by the State of CT, which requires all entities to obtain a discharge permit from the appropriate authority. In addition, the Section 404 Permit requires approval from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for any project that would discharge dredged or fill material into waters of the U.S.

The National Flood Insurance Act established the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to protect against flood losses. States can require more stringent measures. The CT DEEP is the designated coordinating agency that recently adopted new requirements that establish a higher regulatory standard that is more protective of floodplains. In addition NFIP encourages communities to engage in better floodplain management and also allow municipalities to adopt more restrictive ordinances than the Federal government. All towns of the Wild and Scenic Study Area engage in some form of floodplain management through their town regulations and policies.

The Safe Drinking Water Act - The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) is the federal law that protects public drinking water supplies throughout the nation. Under the SDWA, EPA sets standards for drinking water quality and with its partners implements various technical and financial programs to ensure drinking water safety.

Additionally, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the Rivers and Harbors Act provide some protection to the streams.

The Wild and Scenic Rivers Act provides the strongest protection available for the watercourses by protecting designated rivers from any federally assisted or licensed water resource development project that would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which the river was designated.

Federal Programs

Since the original study in 1979, there have been several programs which are federally funded and focus on the protection and conservation of lands specifically in Connecticut. These include:

- Protection of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail - The Appalachian Trail (AT) in Connecticut parallels the Housatonic River for much of the fifty-six miles in the State. From Falls Village to Bulls Bridge (approximately 25 miles), the AT traverses the ridgeline to the west of the Housatonic, and makes several incursions to the immediate river vicinity. The first section is approximately 2 miles long and stretches from below the Great Falls in Falls Village to the intersection of Route 112 and Route 7. Within this section, 0.75 miles of the trail is wheelchair accessible. The second and longest segment spans roughly 5 miles from Swift's Bridge (below the Cornwall Bridge) to St. John's Ledges. Finally, the Appalachian Trail makes a quick appearance again next to the river just below Bull's Bridge.

In 1979, the Appalachian Trail in Connecticut was one-third on private land, one-third on state land, and one-third on public highways for a total of fifty-six miles. Between 1980 and 1990, many significant purchases and relocations were made. The two largest purchases by the National Park Service in Connecticut were 1,200 acres in Salisbury from the Mt. Riga Corporation and 2,000 acres along the Housatonic River in Kent and Sharon from the Stanley Works.

The most significant relocation was the so-called "western route," opened in 1986, which completely removed the Appalachian Trail from the Town of Cornwall and placed it on Sharon Mountain west of the Housatonic River, shortening the Appalachian Trail by ten miles and providing a permanent, stable home for the Trail on the ridges to the West of the Housatonic.

Today, within the 25 miles abutting the proposed Wild and Scenic River segment, the AT and all but the road crossings are on protected land, and there is generally a right-of-way easement for visitors to cross or walk-along all of them. Management is accomplished in a coordinated, partnership fashion between the NPS, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, State of Connecticut, Appalachian Mountain Club, and other state and local partners. NPS provides overall coordination and oversight of the Appalachian Trail as directed by Congress. However, the duties of monitoring and maintaining the CT portion of the trail will fall upon the AMC and the ATC for all CT State owned lands, as well as lands acquired by the NPS for the trail in Connecticut.

- Forest Legacy Program - This is a USDA Forest Service program implemented in partnership with CT DEEP. The entire Housatonic Wild and Scenic study area now falls within a Designated Forest Legacy Area in Connecticut. The Forest Legacy Program protects working forests and other minimally managed woodlands primarily through

conservation easements held by state agencies. The Forest Legacy Program has protected 8,125 acres in Connecticut with federal contributions totaling \$8.4M. Within the eligible Housatonic Wild and Scenic river communities, Forest Legacy funding has protected 892 acres in Kent and Sharon and 1,666.13 acres in Canaan.

- Highlands Conservation Act - The Highlands Conservation Act of 2004 covers portions of four states in a region which provides clean drinking water, large forest habitats, biological diversity, farmland and recreation benefits to major metropolitan centers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York and Connecticut. It provides federal funding to these states that can contribute up to fifty percent of the purchase price of land or easements for eligible projects. Connecticut has received more than \$6M in Highlands funding to date. The HCA in Connecticut covers twenty-eight towns, including all seven towns that comprise the eligible Wild and Scenic river sections in Northwest CT. Since 2007, HCA funding has protected 638 acres in four of these towns, including 304.4 acres directly adjacent to the Housatonic River in Canaan and Cornwall.
- Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area - The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (UHVNHA) designated in 2006, encompasses twenty towns in Massachusetts and nine in Connecticut, including all of the eligible communities under the Wild and Scenic Study except the northern section of New Milford from Boardman's Bridge to the town line with Kent. The UHNHA actively promotes the cultural, historic, recreational and scenic values of the study area, and is especially active enhancing the recreational assets. Its proposed HouBike Trail traverses the entire Wild and Scenic study area along trails and secondary roads near the river corridor.
- Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge - The Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge includes the Northern Housatonic Refuge Acquisition Focus Area in portions of Sharon, Connecticut but more than one-quarter mile from the proposed Housatonic Wild and Scenic area. The land acquisition goal of the Focus area is to protect 2,000 acres through purchase or donation to the US Fish and Wildlife Service. Of primary interest to the Refuge is the creation and protection of young growth forest habitat, and to bring back certain species that thrive there like the Eastern cottontail rabbit. Since its creation in 2016, this Refuge has only acquired one parcel.

Non-Governmental Programs, Initiatives and Partners

Housatonic Valley Association

The Housatonic Valley Association, Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3), works to conserve the natural character, environmental health and the economies of the region by protecting and restoring its land and waters. It provides information and expertise in order to assist landowners along the Housatonic River who may want to make a voluntary donation of a conservation restriction on riverine lands. The HVA also serves as a resource and liaison to individuals or organizations

which desire to participate in the protection of the Housatonic River. Some of the major accomplishments of the HVA include protecting 1,500 acres of wilderness, 200 acres of Conservation Fund land and 100 acres of prime farmland in the heart of the scenic Housatonic River corridor from Kent to Cornwall and Sharon. The HVA is also very active in leading river cleanups and water quality monitoring efforts.

Trout Unlimited

The Connecticut Council of Trout Unlimited is a grassroots conservation organization dedicated to protect, reconnect, restore and sustain Connecticut's coldwater resources. There is a Northwestern CT Chapter which has been in existence since 1963. From its website - "The Trout Unlimited mission is to conserve, protect and restore North America's trout and salmon fisheries and their watersheds." The Northwestern CT Chapter specifically targets the upper Housatonic River watershed as its primary area of focus.

Audubon Connecticut

Audubon Connecticut—a state office of the National Audubon Society—is one of Connecticut's premier conservation and environmental education organizations. With the support of its Board of Directors, its staff of seasoned professionals works hard to carry out the Audubon mission within the state—protecting birds, other wildlife, and their habitats through education, research, advocacy, and land protection. The Audubon's Sharon Center and its protected land encompasses 1,147 acres in the Town of Sharon.

The Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a worldwide organization whose mission is "Protecting the Lands and Waters on Which all Life Depends." Since 1957, TNC has had a presence in northwest CT addressing development threats, invasive species, and protecting some of the waterways like the Hollenbeck River near Canaan Mountain that are in the Housatonic River basin.

Land Protection for Conservation Purposes

In 1979, the only permanently protected lands adjacent to the Housatonic River were part of Housatonic Meadows State Park and the Housatonic State Forest, a small section of the Appalachian Trail and a very small number of conservation easements held by local or regional land trusts.

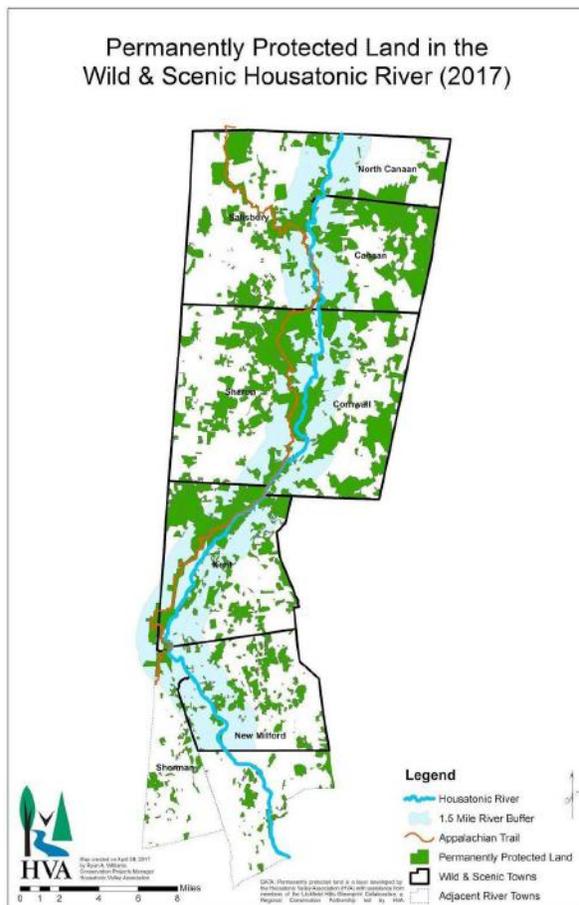
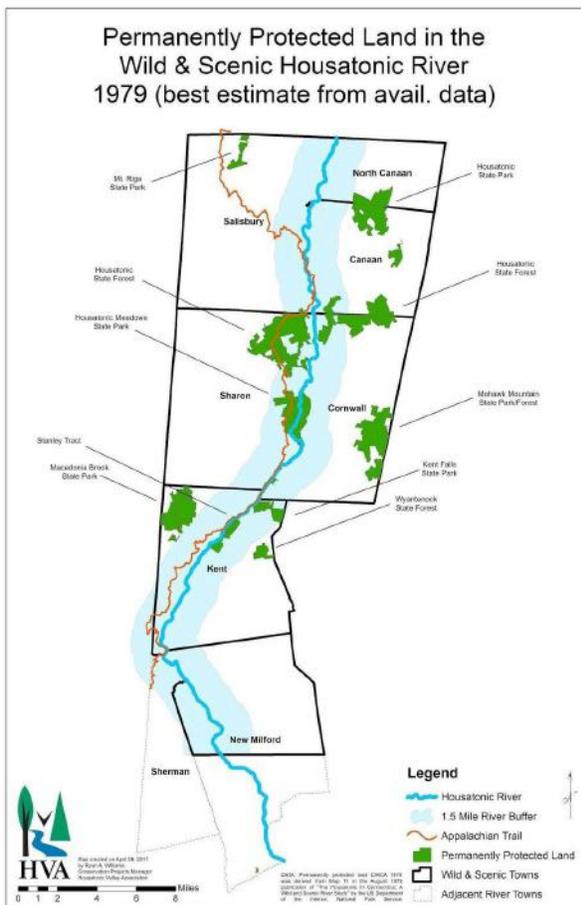
Since then, acquisition of land and easements by the National Park Service, the State of Connecticut, the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA), and a robust local land trust network has created the impressive 34 plus miles of protected riverfront today within the proposed Wild and Scenic area. HVA led negotiations that protected more than five miles of Appalachian Trail corridor along the west bank of the Housatonic River in Kent and Sharon – the longest stretch of riverfront trail on the entire Appalachian National Scenic Trail – and conserved another five miles along the east bank in Kent and Cornwall.

In 2017, HVA calculated the miles of riverfront protected on each side of the Housatonic River within the proposed 40.3-mile Wild and Scenic River segments in the Connecticut portion of the study area and identified 34.33 miles of protected riverfront. The breakdown by town is as follows:

- Kent: 12.06 miles (6.68 miles on the west bank and 5.38 miles on the east bank)
- Salisbury: 6.86 miles on the west bank
- Cornwall: 6.63 miles on the east bank
- Sharon: 5.12 miles on the west bank
- Canaan/Falls Village: 2.25 miles on the east bank
- New Milford: 1.0 miles on the east bank
- Sherman: 0.41 miles on the west bank (100 foot buffer along golf course required by permit)

The longest contiguous section of protected riverbank is on the west in Sharon and Kent (6.5 miles). The longest sections of along the eastern shore are 4.28 in Kent and 2.88 miles in Sharon and Cornwall.

Maps of Land Protected in 1979 and 2017



Physical Limitations to Development

The area being proposed for designation hosts significant physical limitations to additional development. These include steep slopes, wetlands, and physical barriers such as a railroad. While no comprehensive analysis of these factors is included in this evaluation, it is clear from site visits that physical limitations to development are significant and will continue to play an important factor in the long-term protection of the existing outstanding river resources and the proposed Wild and Scenic River area.

Conclusion

In combination, local bylaws, state and federal legislation, and the various programs to protect land near and along the river indicate that there is a high likelihood that the Housatonic's WSR values will be protected in the future. Substantial protections were implemented in this area since the original study. In 1979 only a small percentage of land was protected near the river. By 2017, over thirty-four miles of riverfront had permanent protection under local land trusts, HVA, the State of Connecticut, and NPS (through the Appalachian Trail). Therefore, the nominated segment of the Housatonic River meets the protection and management requirements for designation under Section 2(a)(ii) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

CHAPTER VI: SUPPORT FOR DESIGNATION

For a river where protection and management of the river corridor are to be achieved through a partnership among public and private interests rather than through federal ownership, broad-based support for Wild and Scenic River designation is essential.

Connecticut's application to designate the 40.3-mile stretch of river as Wild and Scenic has strong support from local residents, regional planning boards, all adjacent towns, state and local legislators, and agencies. The following sections describe the efforts made to achieve this designation.

Local Government

There are seven towns through which the proposed Wild and Scenic segment flows. Each town was extremely supportive in seeking designation. All provided a representative to the Housatonic River Commission and are active participants in the river's protection. Each town also sent support letters for designation that are included in the State's application. Lastly, the formation of uniform overlay districts by all seven towns shows their commitment of protecting the river into the future.

State Government / Legislators

The commitment by the State of Connecticut to designate the Housatonic River into the National Wild and Scenic River System was demonstrated by Governor Malloy first giving it state protection, and then filing the nomination to the Department of the Interior. Richard Blumenthal

(U.S. Senate), Christopher Murphy (U.S. Senate), and Elizabeth Etsy (Member of Congress) echoed their support with individual letters to the Secretary of the Interior, expressing the importance of protecting this valuable natural resource.

Regional Planning Boards

Much of the river management falls under the purview of the Housatonic River Commission, which is responsible for monitoring and advising the towns in northwest CT on issues involving the Housatonic River. Ever since 1979 when the NPS identified the eligibility of this river for its ORVs, HRC has been dedicated to maintaining an environmentally healthy and scenic river corridor. The Northwest Hills Council of Governments has pledged to help HRC by acting as the administering agency for the river.

The Housatonic Valley Association, Inc. is committed to providing valuable information and expertise in order to assist landowners along the Housatonic River, and to individuals or organizations who desire to participate in the protection of the Housatonic River.

Conclusion

The long history of local interest in river protection, combined with demonstrated support for the current WSR designation proposal provides strong evidence of support both for river protection and the designation.

CHAPTER VII: CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES AND IMPACTS

Alternatives

The purpose of this document is to evaluate the application of the Governor of Connecticut for Wild and Scenic River designation against the eligibility and suitability criteria of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The review of eligibility and suitability, as described in previous chapters, did not produce any findings or results that would warrant consideration of any other alternative than designation or non-designation of the entire nominated river area. As such, no other alternatives are evaluated.

Impacts of Designation

Designation of the Housatonic River as a “state-administered” component of the National Wild and Scenic River System would have modest impacts to the administration and management of the designated river segment.

Administrative Impacts

The designation as proposed would build off of a successful and long standing local river administration tradition established by the communities through the Housatonic River

Commission. The addition of new partner organizations through the proposed Memorandum of Understanding, together with the added significance of the Wild and Scenic River designation, would likely enhance and build off of the strong established local governance tradition. National Park Service technical assistance would add a federal partner with substantial expertise in locally-administered Wild and Scenic River management and protection gained through twenty-five years of experience with the “Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers,” which, though designated by congressional action, have very similar locally-based management and administration. Similarly, increased state level focus and attention is anticipated. It is envisioned that these effects would be modest, but potentially significant and positive over the long term.

Impacts on Federally Assisted Water Resource Development Projects

New protection for the designated segment would be provided under Section 7(a) of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act for new federally-licensed hydroelectric development projects or potentially adverse impacts of “federally assisted water resource development projects.”

The Federal Power Commission [FERC] shall not license the construction of any dam, water conduit, reservoir, powerhouse, transmission line, or other project works under the Federal Power Act, as amended, on or directly affecting any river which is designated in section 3 of this Act as a component of the national wild and scenic rivers system or which is hereafter designated for inclusion in that system, and no department or agency of the United States shall assist by loan, grant, license, or otherwise in the construction of any water resources project that would have a direct and adverse effect on the values for which such river was established, as determined by the Secretary charged with its administration. Nothing contained in the foregoing sentence, however, shall preclude licensing of, or assistance to, developments below or above a wild, scenic or recreational river area or on any stream tributary thereto which will not invade the area or unreasonably diminish the scenic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values present in the area on the date of designation of a river as a component of the national wild and scenic rivers system.

Based upon application of Section 7(a), no new hydroelectric developments could be licensed by FERC on the designated river segment. The existing FERC licensed (FERC Project No. 2576) Falls Village and Bulls Bridge, run-of-river facilities would be expected to continue to operate, and could be licensed/re-licensed in the future as long as the new license did not involve changes in operations or facilities that would have new, direct adverse effects on the WSR. The term of the FERC license issued in 2004 is 40 years. As such, the existing baseline relating to hydroelectric developments would be effectively “grandfathered” as a part of the wild and scenic designation. Changes to the operation of the two existing FERC licensed facilities, as well as departures to the existing license requirements, would need to be reviewed by the National Park Service for compatibility with the Wild and Scenic River designation. In particular, any changes that either inundated additional free-flowing river areas (raising of dam height) or changed downstream flow patterns (away from instantaneous run-of-river operation) would likely not pass Wild and Scenic review, and therefore not be allowed. Other sorts of project changes (modernization of turbines, changes to FERC license conditions or

requirements, etc.) would be reviewed by NPS under FERC agency consultation procedures to determine whether the changes would have a “direct and adverse effect on the values for which the river was established.”

NPS is already a partner recognized by FERC under P-2576 in the review and development of the Recreation Management Plan (adopted under license article 408 in 2006 and reviewed on a regular schedule for potential amendment). This Plan contains provisions for construction and maintenance of various recreation enhancement facilities (parking, signage, trails, etc.) which should not be impacted by Wild and Scenic designation. Other potential, future construction related to the current license provisions could include upstream or downstream fish passage facilities (Section 18 Fishway Prescriptions). The license also includes a Shoreline Management Plan and Critical Habitat Management Plan with provisions that apply to the Bulls Bridge and Falls Village plants. NPS interprets that little or no disruption to such provisions would occur as a result of designation.

The prohibition against new hydroelectric project licensing is not likely to have any significant impact over the status quo, as there are no known, pending or likely proposals within the proposed Wild and Scenic segment of the Housatonic River. Similarly, Wild and Scenic River review of future, project changes to the two existing facilities is not likely to have a major impact on the future of these projects. All indications are that these facilities will continue to operate as run-of-river facilities at their current crest heights for the foreseeable future with or without a Wild and Scenic River designation.

While it is impossible to know what, if any changes to these facilities could be proposed in the future, existing constraints of the physical plants and the existing local, state and federal regulatory environment would probably limit these facilities to operations similar to the existing conditions with or without a Wild and Scenic River designation. It is possible that the designation could have a minor impact on the potential future licensing/relicensing of these facilities by the FERC due to an emphasis on the protection of Wild and Scenic River values as a part of the review process.

NPS does not foresee any impact of the proposed designation to the other generating facilities associated with P-2576 and the Housatonic basin, namely Shepaug, Rocky River, and Stevenson.

NPS will seek the concurrence of the FERC on these conclusions as a part of the required 90 day agency review period.

Other potential federally-assisted water resources projects (non-FERC hydropower) that could trigger review under Section 7 of the Act would include streambank stabilization projects or similar in-stream work requiring permits under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (US Army Corps of Engineers). Such projects/permits would be reviewed for consistency with the designation, and NPS would generally promote natural stream channel design principles and techniques in their review/consideration (soil bioengineering techniques, incorporation of

vegetation, etc.).

Bridge replacement projects often require Section 404 permits and may have federal funding associated with them, thereby triggering Wild and Scenic River review. Such replacements have been a frequent and routine occurrence on the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers throughout New England and the Northeast. Often there may be opportunities to improve free-flowing condition through removal on instream piers or other design changes. Opportunities also sometimes exist to improve recreational access associated with bridges. Scenic and historic qualities may also be involved in reviews, with NPS a party to historic resource evaluations under National Historic Preservation Act Section 106. NPS can be expected to advocate for the protection and enhancement of WSR values (free-flow, natural, cultural and recreational values) in association with bridge replacement projects. This has the potential to impact how such projects get completed.

Impacts on other Federally Funded or Assisted Projects

The overall context and purpose of a Wild and Scenic River designation is to establish a federal policy to “protect and enhance” WSR values for the enjoyment of present and future generations, as articulated in Section 1 and 10 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:

Section 1:

(b) *It is hereby declared to be the policy of the United States that certain selected rivers of the Nation which, with their immediate environments, possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values, shall be preserved in free-flowing condition, and that they and their immediate environments shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Congress declares that the established national policy of dam and other construction at appropriate sections of the rivers of the United States needs to be complemented by a policy that would preserve other selected rivers or sections thereof in their free-flowing condition to protect the water quality of such rivers and to fulfill other vital national conservation purposes.*

Section 10:

(a) *Each component of the national wild and scenic rivers system shall be administered in such manner as to protect and enhance the values which caused it to be included in said system without, insofar as is consistent therewith, limiting other uses that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of these values.*

In this context, any federal agency undertaking projects that could impact the designated segment of the Housatonic would consult with the National Park Service as an aspect of their normal project review procedures under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The NPS would have the opportunity to comment on those projects to ensure that WSR values are recognized and protected. Such consultations would not carry the definitive weight of Section 7 of the Act (which only applies to FERC hydropower and federally assisted water resource development projects), but nonetheless could impact the implementation of other sorts of federally funded or assisted projects. The effect of such consultations would be to

provide greater weight to the recognition and protection of values such as scenery, recreation, historic and cultural values associated with the designated river segment.

Existing federal projects or programs that have a presence in the vicinity of the proposed Housatonic segment (as discussed in other sections of this evaluation) include: Appalachian Trail, Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area and Great Thicket National Wildlife Refuge. Wild and Scenic River designation would complement and support these programs which also have a conservation and recreation focus. Similarly, the ongoing PCB remediation efforts of the US EPA in the upstream (MA) segment of the Housatonic has the promise to improve water quality within the proposed Wild and Scenic segment and would be complementary to that designation. "Monitored Natural Recovery," as described previously, which is proposed in the Connecticut portion of the river, appears consistent with the long-term goal of water quality improvement and restoration of Class B standards.

Other Potential Indirect Impacts of designation

Wild and Scenic River designation can be anticipated to raise the overall awareness and visibility of the Housatonic River as a resource of national recognition and significance. This may improve the ability of local partners to raise grant funds and otherwise compete for resources directed toward conservation and recreation efforts. Similarly, the added recognition and awareness could impact decision makers at all levels (individuals, local boards, state, federal, non-governmental) to consider stewardship of river values in their decision making.

Recreational visitation could also increase, although the area already exists as a destination, and any future increase will likely be based on local marketing of the area as such, which is not likely to be driven by the designation. There is no data from the existing Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers in New England that designation itself has led to significant recreational visitation.

Summary of Expected Impacts

Under the Wild and Scenic River designation, the National Park Service would become a federal partner and advocate for the preservation of identified WSR values in the context of federally funded or assisted projects that could impact river values. New hydroelectric developments would be prohibited. Designation would elevate the status and perception of the river and its values at all levels. Increased coordination at all levels through the expanded Housatonic River Commission Coordinating Committee would benefit the river and implementation of local and state programs. Cumulatively, it is anticipated that these impacts will have a steady long-term effect of helping ensure that identified river values are protected and enhanced.

Section 7 Flowchart – End Notes

¹**Federal Assistance:** Any assistance by an authorizing agency before, during, or after construction. Such assistance may include, but is not limited to: a license, preliminary permit, permit, or other authorization granted by the FERC; a license, permit or other authorization granted by the USACE, pursuant to the Rivers and Harbors Act and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. Assistance also includes federal funding of projects such as state highway proposals (36 CFR 297).

²**Construction:** Means any action carried on with Federal assistance affecting the free-flowing characteristics or the scenic or natural values of a Wild and Scenic River or Study River (36 CFR 297).

³**WSR (River) Corridor:** Means a river and the adjacent area within the boundaries of a designated river, or a river and the adjacent area within one-quarter mile on each side of the banks of a Section 5(a) study or Section 2(a)(ii) application river (one-half mile for designated/study rivers authorized under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act).

⁴**Section 2(a)(ii) Application Area:** If a river was authorized by Congress for study through Section 5(a), and the governor of a state(s) subsequently applies for designation through Section 2(a)(ii), that river is protected for one year following receipt of the application for designation to the Secretary of the Interior. This one-year protection only applies to 2(a)(ii) application rivers that first were authorized for study by Congress through Section 5(a).

⁵**Undesignated Tributaries within WSR Corridor:** Projects on undesignated tributaries are evaluated under "direct and adverse" standard when they also are located within the boundary of the designated WSR, or Section 5(a) study or Section 2(a)(ii) application area. Generally this area is within 1/4 to 1/2 miles upstream along the tributary from the confluence with the mainstem (IWSRCC WSR Questions & Answers; <https://www.rivers.gov/documents/q-a.pdf>).

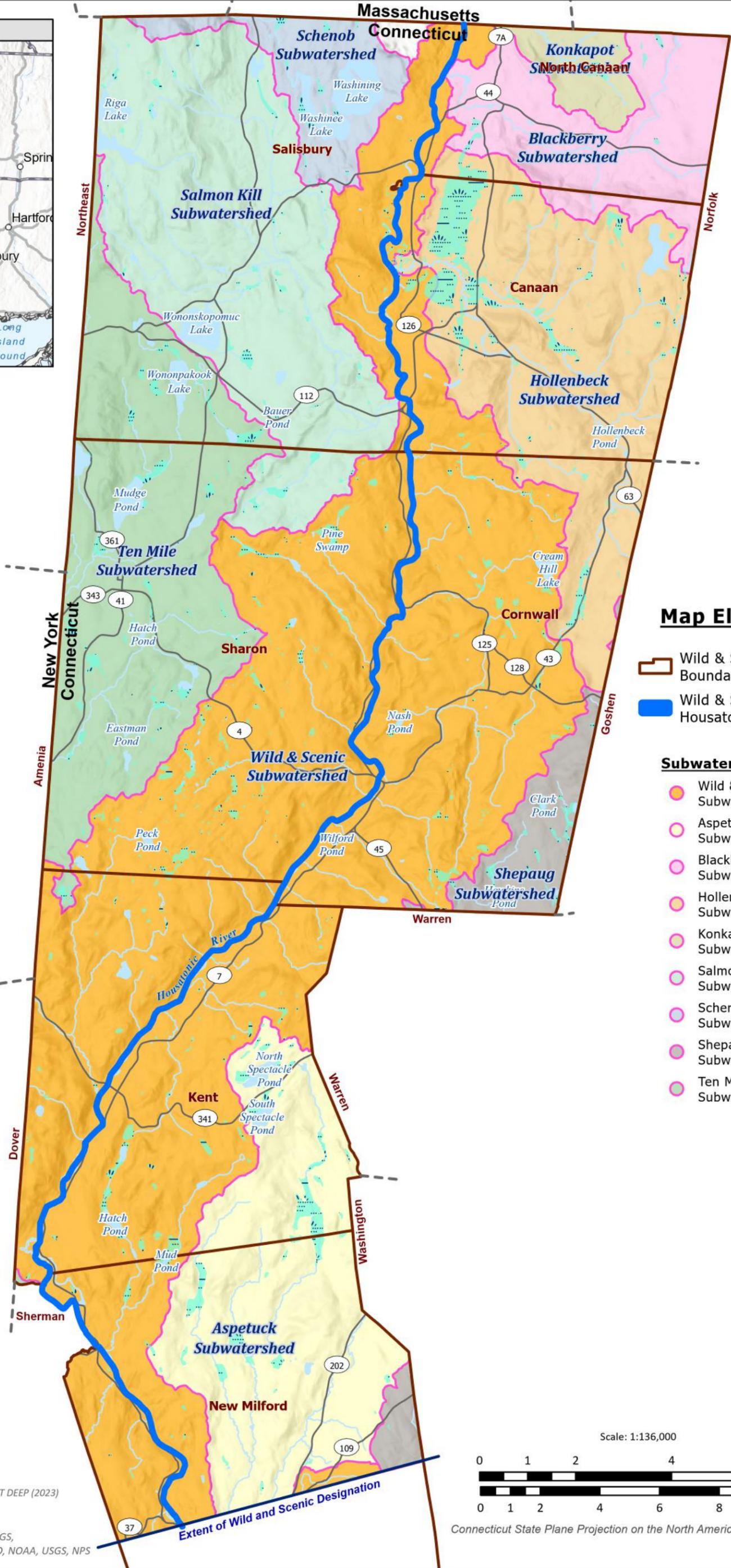
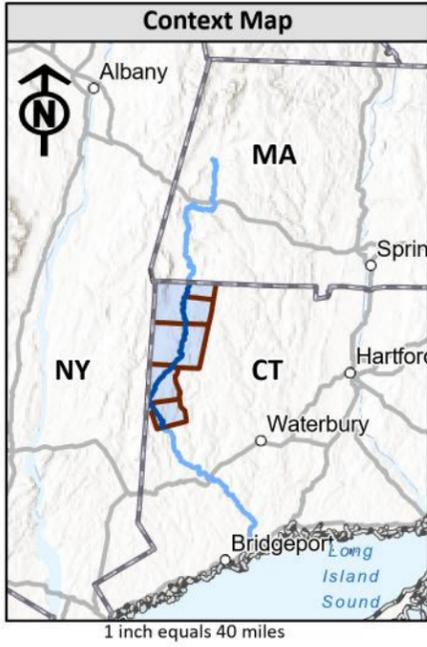
⁶**Water Resources Projects:** Construction of developments [including emergency repairs] that would affect the free-flowing characteristics of a Wild and Scenic River or [Section 5(a)] Study River, [or Section 2(a)(ii) application area] (36 CFR 297). Water resources projects located below the **ordinary high water mark (OHWM)** of the river always are subject to WSR agency Section 7 review. Examples of water resources projects include, but are not limited to, bank stabilization/revetments; bridges (e.g., abutments, piers, approaches); channelization; channel restoration; culverts; dams and dam removal; dredging or excavation; fish habitat/passage restoration or enhancement; gravel mining, in-channel transmission towers; levees; pipelines; recreation facilities like boat ramps and fishing piers; water diversions/wells; and activities that are authorized under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Department of the Army. Projects located above the OHWM within uplands in the WSR corridor, such as cell towers, electrical transmission towers/lines, livestock grazing, solar arrays, timber harvesting, and wind turbines, are not subject to Section 7 review, but may be subject to review under Sections 10(a) and 12.

Ordinary High Water Mark: is an interpretation of the term *waterway* under Section 16(b) of the WSRA, which defines free-flowing, in part, as "existing or flowing in natural condition without impoundment, diversion, straightening, riprapping, or other modification of the waterway" (16 U.S.C. 1286(b)). Generally the applicability of Section 7 is limited to the area below the OHWM of the river. OHWM is defined in 33 CFR Part 328.3(e) as "...that line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas." The lowest potential boundary of the OHWM in a given river is within the active channel, especially in deeply incised systems. The highest potential upper boundary of the OHWM may be on the valley flat or floodplain out-side of the active channel in locations where these features are inundated in more years than not (ERDC/CRREL SR-16-5; http://acwc.sdp.sirsi.net/client/en_US/search/asset/1054567).

⁷**Projects with Potential to Invade or Diminish:** Water resources projects with the potential to invade or diminish scenic, recreational, fish or wildlife values in the designated WSR, or Section 5(a) study or Section 2(a)(ii) application area typically include, but are not limited to, dams, upstream diversion structures, and other water resources projects that are visible from the river.

⁸**Invade:** Encroach or intrude upon.

⁹**WSR Agency:** Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), USDA Forest Service (USFS) or US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).



Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River

Subwatersheds

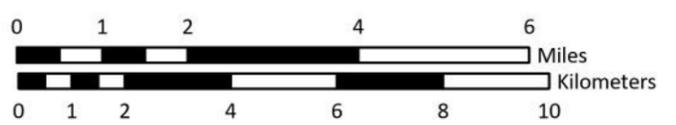
- Wild & Scenic Subwatershed
- Aspetuck Subwatershed
- Blackberry Subwatershed
- Hollenbeck Subwatershed
- Konkapot Subwatershed
- Salmon Kill Subwatershed
- Schenob Subwatershed
- Shepaug Subwatershed
- Ten Mile Subwatershed

Map Credits:
 Stacy Deming, GISP
 GIS Manager
 Housatonic Valley Association
 Cornwall Bridge, CT 06754
 hvatoday.org
 860.672.6678

Data Sources:
 Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
 Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
 Town Boundaries & Village Centers: State of CT DEEP (2023)
 Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
 Subwatersheds: State of CT GIS Basins (2022)

Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS

Scale: 1:136,000



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map Date: 3/27/2025



Permanently Protected Land*

- State of Connecticut
- Federal
- Municipal
- Land Trust

*Protected Lands displayed on this map are Fee owned by a Conservation Entity.

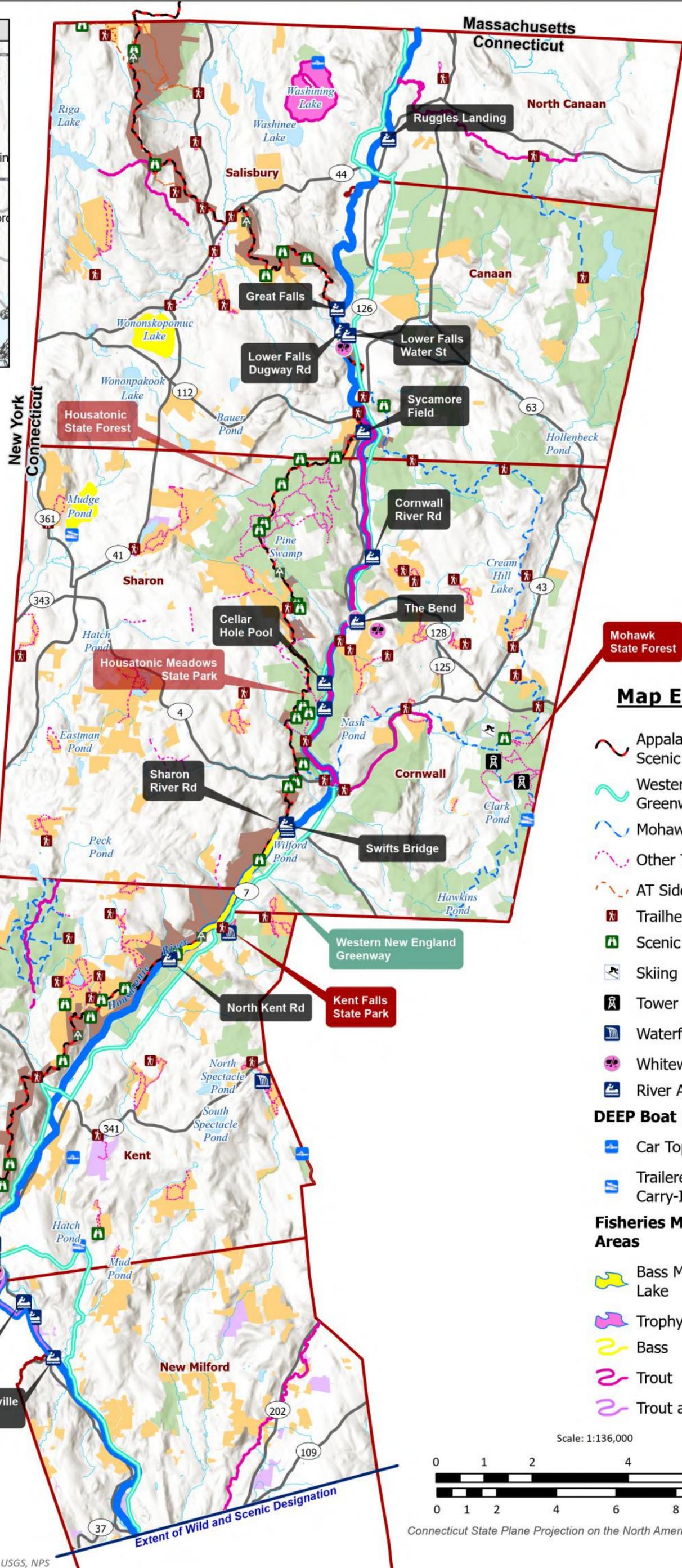


Macedonia Brook State Park

Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries & Fisheries Management Areas: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Appalachian Trail: NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail - Official Centerline - 06-27-2023
Trails: NHCOC (2019) & HVA (2023)
Protected Lands: Litchfield Hills Greenprint & Housatonic Valley Association (2023)

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860.672.6678

Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS



Map Elements

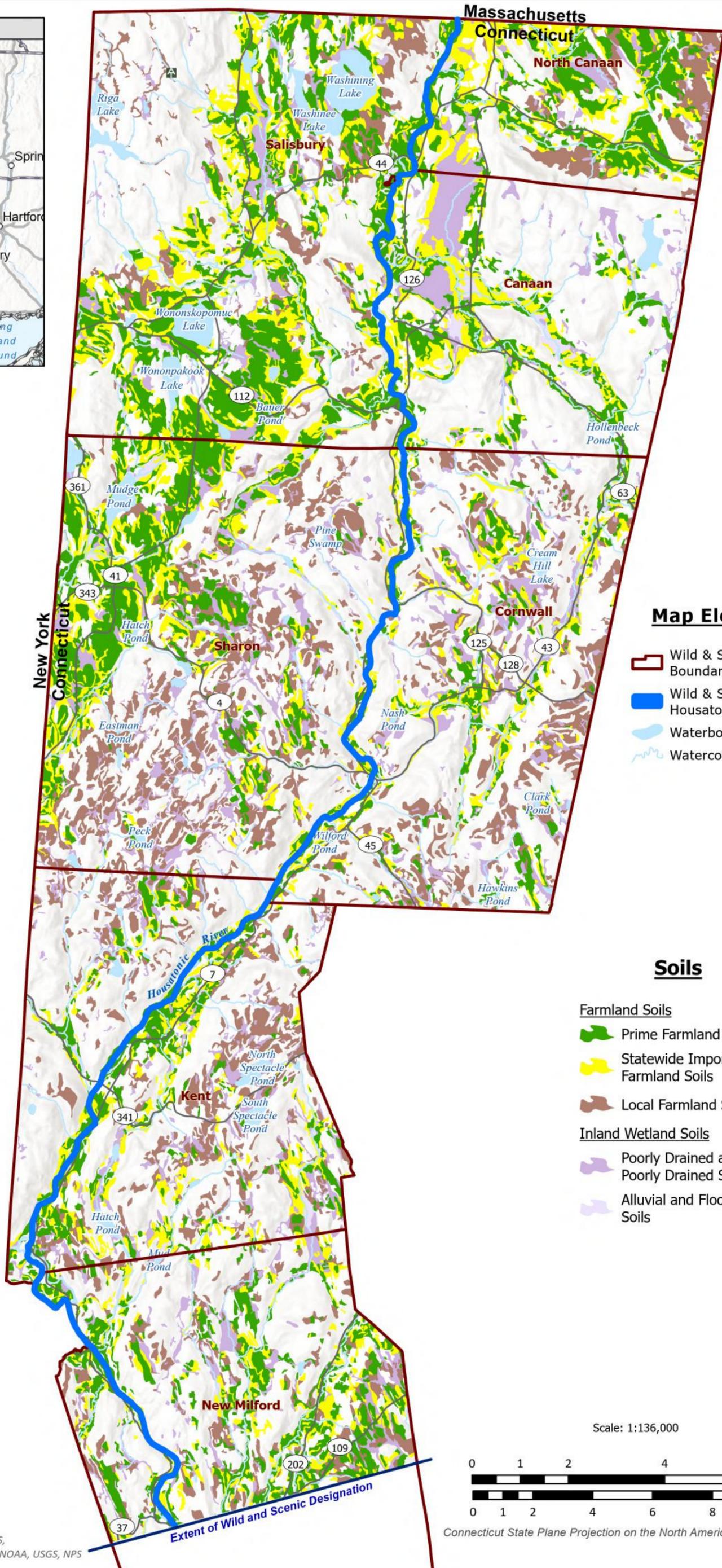
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Western New England Greenway
- Mohawk Trail
- Other Trails
- AT Side Trails
- Trailhead
- Scenic View
- Skiing
- Tower
- Waterfall
- Whitewater
- River Access Site
- DEEP Boat Launch**
- Car Top/Carry-In
- Trailered, Car Top/Carry-In
- Fisheries Management Areas**
- Bass Management Lake
- Trophy Trout Lake
- Bass
- Trout
- Trout and Bass

Scale: 1:136,000



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map Date: 4/4/2025



Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

Soils

Farmland Soils

- Prime Farmland Soils
- Statewide Important Farmland Soils
- Local Farmland Soils

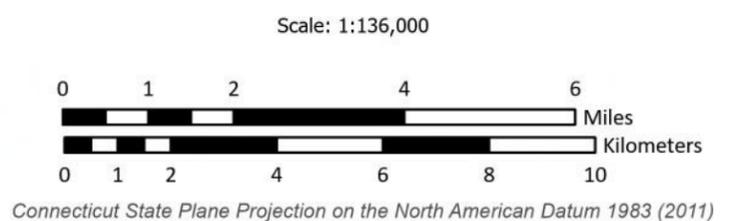
Inland Wetland Soils

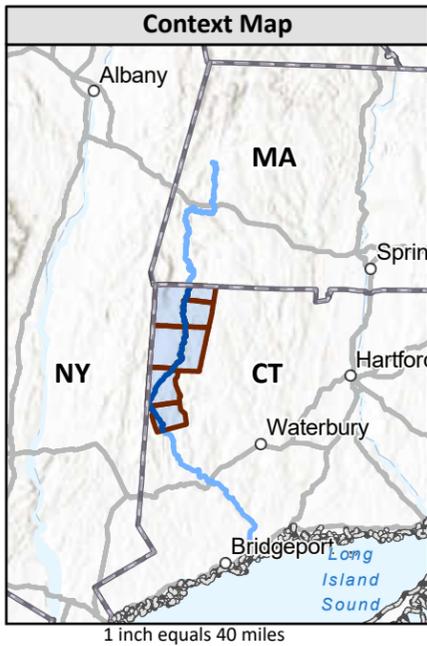
- Poorly Drained and Very Poorly Drained Soils
- Alluvial and Floodplain Soils

Map Credits:
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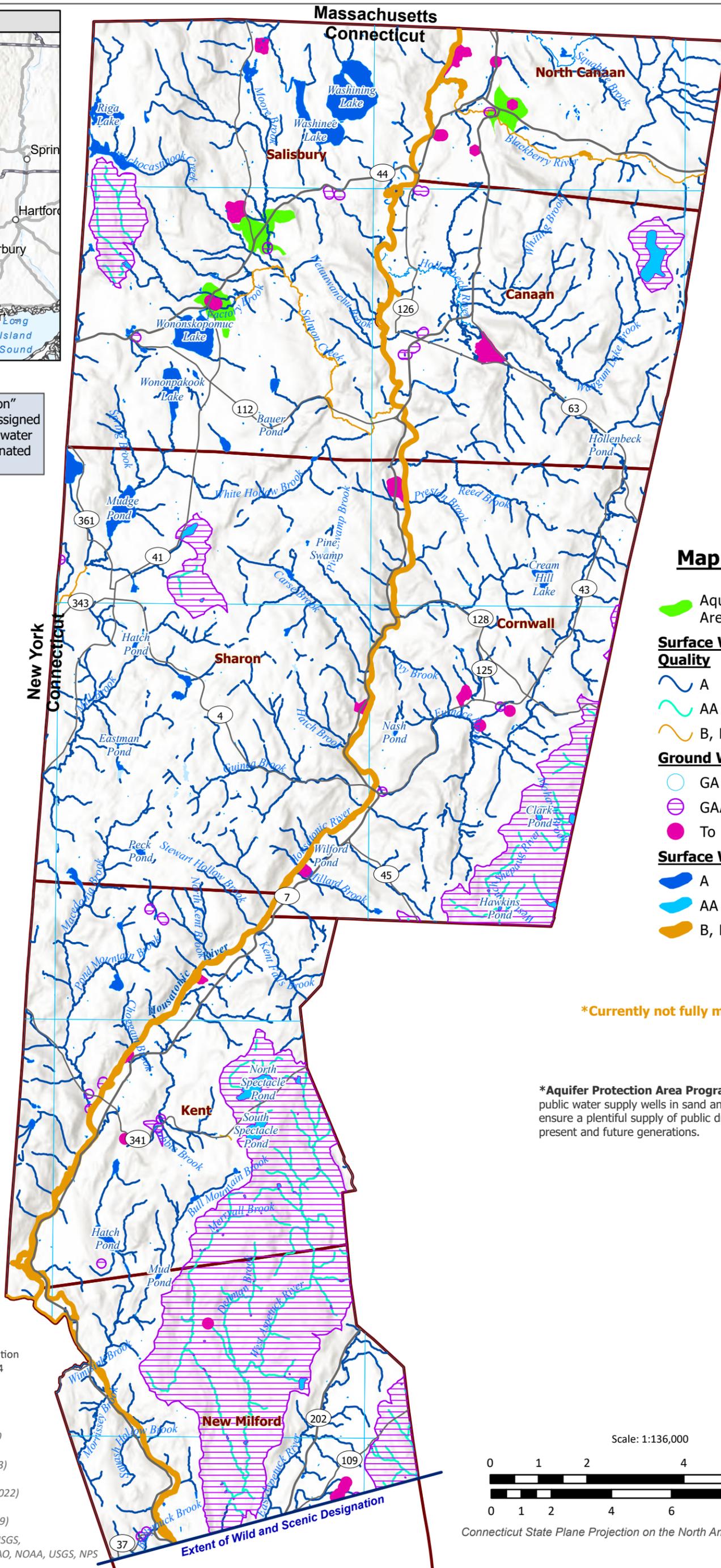
Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Soils: CT DEEP, USGS SSURGO (2022)

Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS





The "Water Quality Classification" maps show the classification assigned to specific surface and ground water resources based on their designated use goals.



Map Elements

Aquifer Protection Areas**

Surface Watercourse Quality

A
 AA
 B, B*

Ground Water Quality

GA
 GAA, GAAs
 To GA, GAA

Surface Water Quality

A
 AA
 B, B*

*Currently not fully meeting goal of Class B

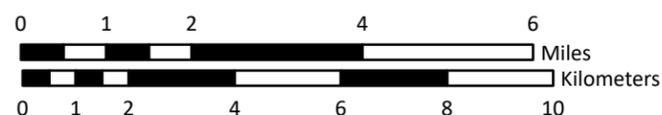
*Aquifer Protection Area Program protects major public water supply wells in sand and gravel aquifers to ensure a plentiful supply of public drinking water for present and future generations.

Map Credits:
Stacy Deming, GISP
GIS Manager
Housatonic Valley Association
Cornwall Bridge, CT 06754
hvatoday.org
860.672.6678

Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Aquifer protection & Potential: CT GIS (2022)
Water Quality: CT DEEP (2023) with the Housatonic Watershed Last Update (1999)

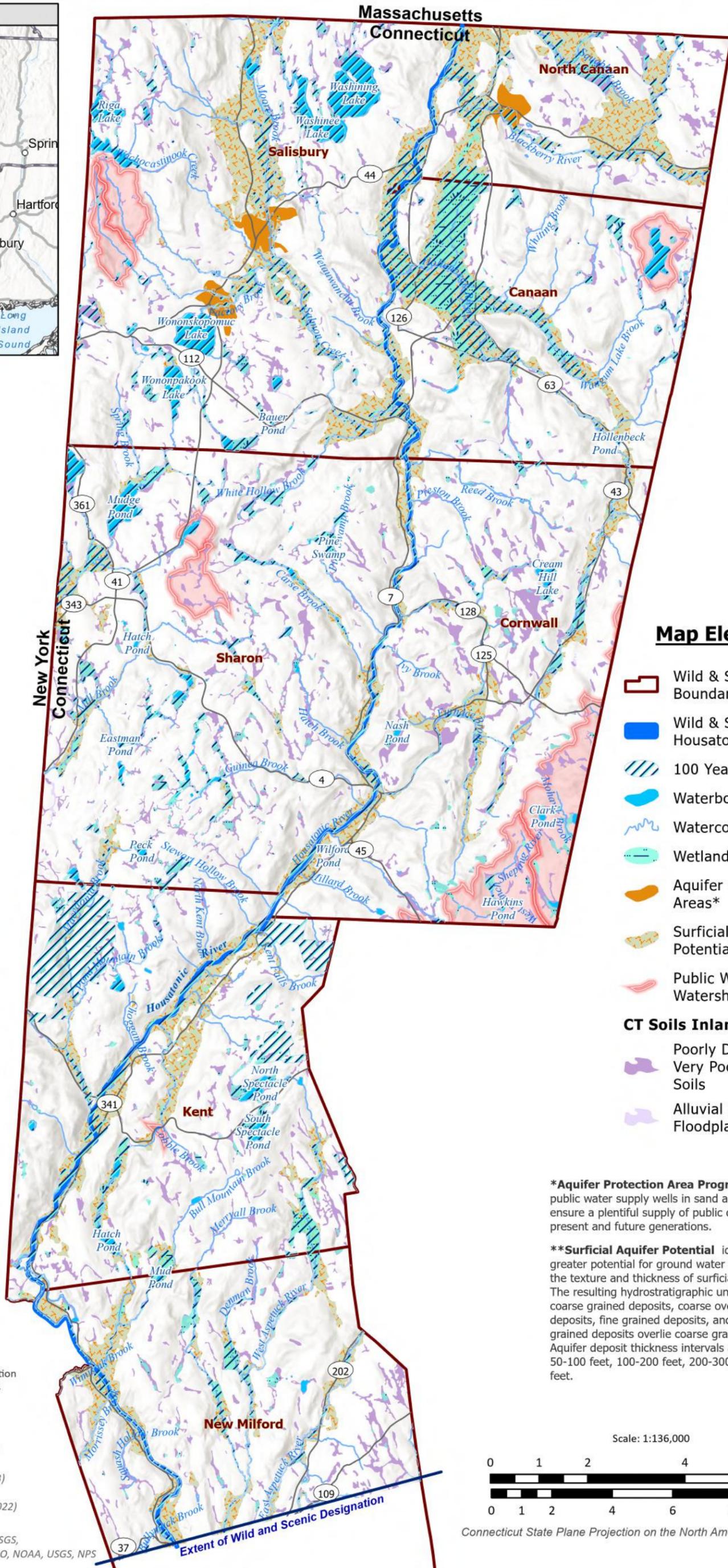
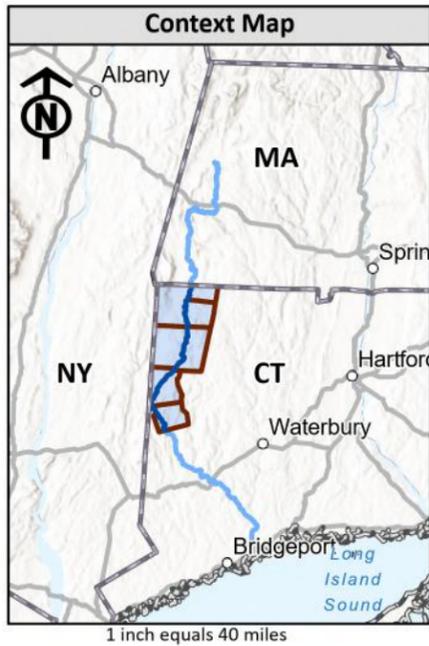
Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS

Scale: 1:136,000



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map Date: 3/27/2025



Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
 - Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
 - 100 Year Flood Zone
 - Waterbodies
 - Watercourses
 - Wetlands
 - Aquifer Protection Areas*
 - Surficial Aquifer Potential**
 - Public Water Supply Watershed
- CT Soils Inland Wetland**
- Poorly Drained and Very Poorly Drained Soils
 - Alluvial and Floodplain Soils

***Aquifer Protection Area Program** protects major public water supply wells in sand and gravel aquifers to ensure a plentiful supply of public drinking water for present and future generations.

****Surficial Aquifer Potential** identifies areas with greater potential for ground water supply based upon the texture and thickness of surficial aquifer deposits. The resulting hydrostratigraphic units define areas of coarse grained deposits, coarse overlying fine grained deposits, fine grained deposits, and areas where fine grained deposits overlie coarse grained deposits. Aquifer deposit thickness intervals are 1-50 feet, 50-100 feet, 100-200 feet, 200-300 feet, and 300-400 feet.

Scale: 1:136,000



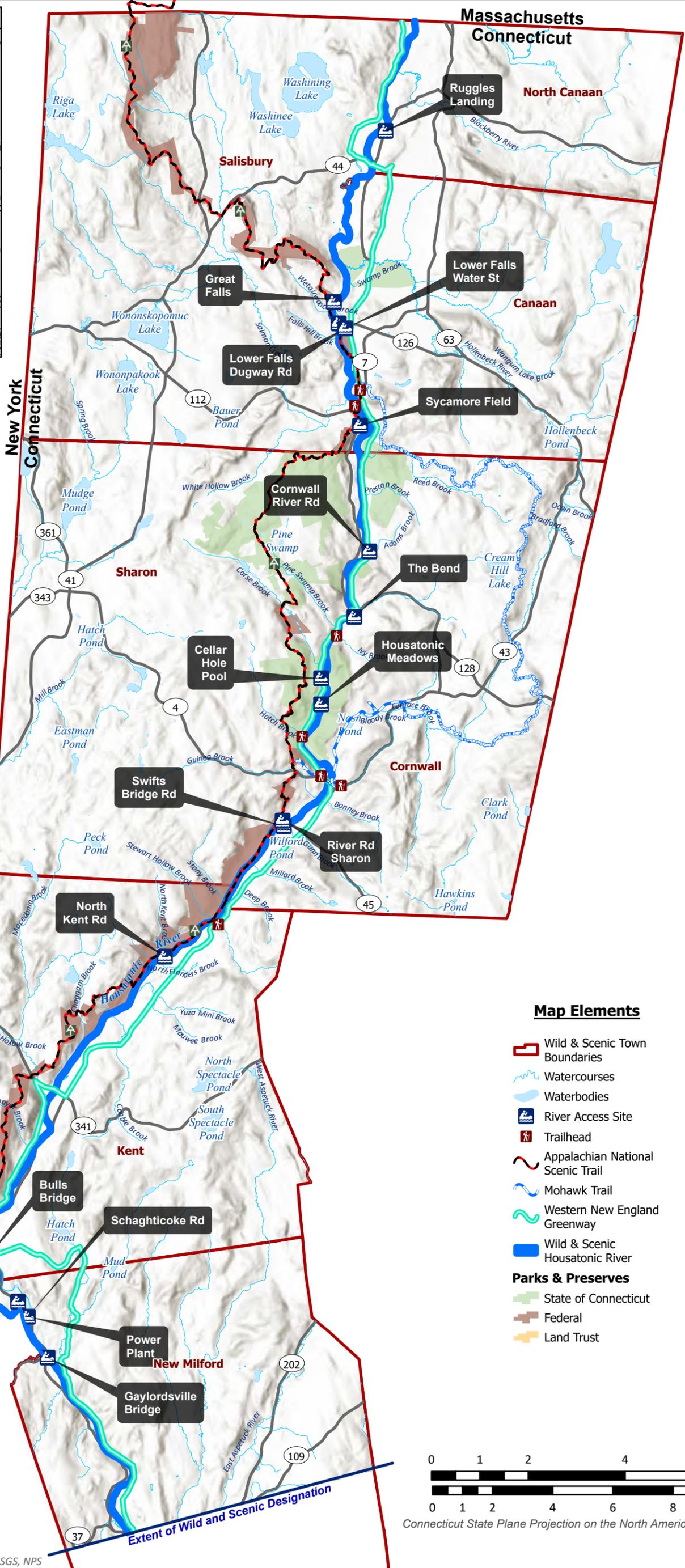
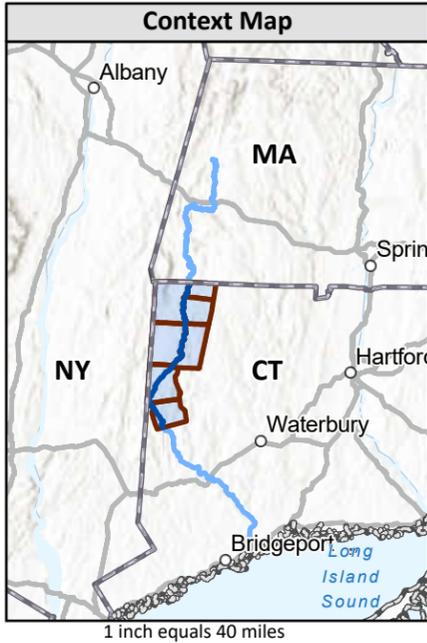
Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map Date: 4/4/2025

Map Credits:
Stacy Deming, GISP
GIS Manager
Housatonic Valley Association
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860.672.6678

Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Aquifer protection & Potential: CT GIS (2022)
100-Year Flood: FEMA (2017)

Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS



Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries & Fisheries Management Areas: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Appalachian Trail: NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail - Official Centerline - 06-27-2023
Trails: NHCOC (2019) & HVA (2023)
Protected Lands: Litchfield Hills Greenprint & Housatonic Valley Association (2023)

*Protected Lands displayed on this map are Fee owned by a Conservation Entity.

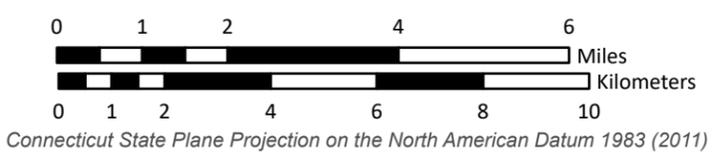
The Parks & Preserves on this map are only the ones within the Housatonic River Corridor

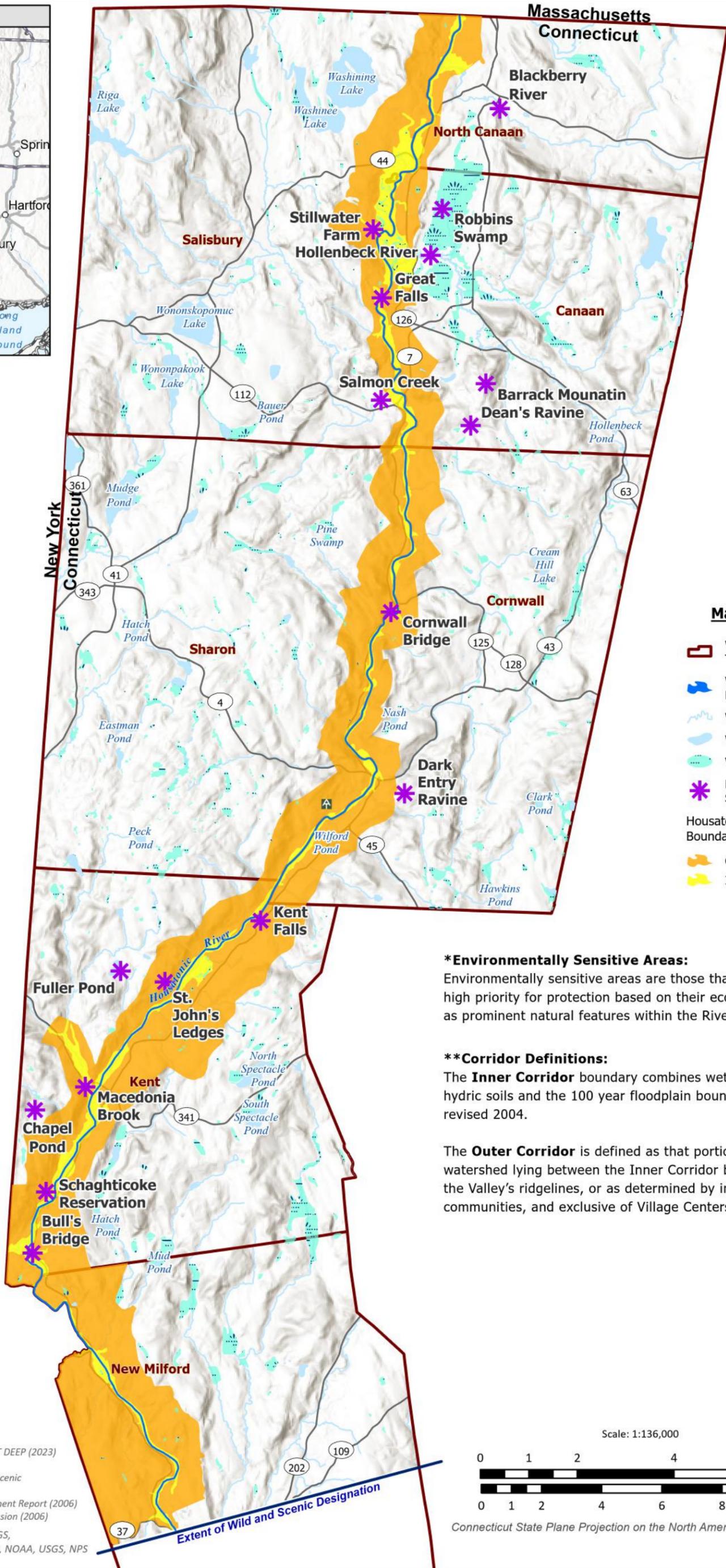
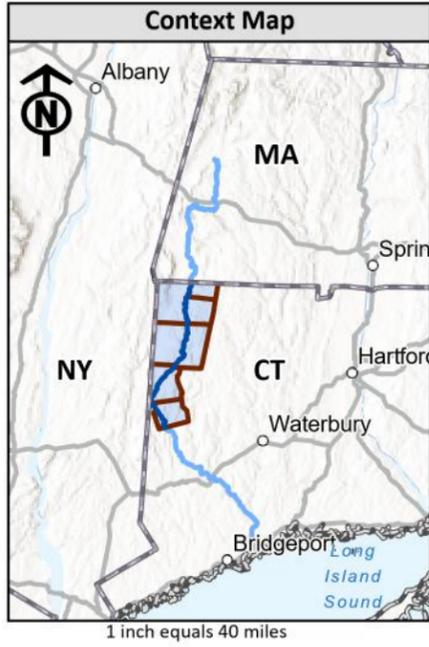
Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- River Access Site
- Trailhead
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Mohawk Trail
- Western New England Greenway
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
- Parks & Preserves**
- State of Connecticut
- Federal
- Land Trust

Map Credits:
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Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS





Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- Wetlands
- Environmentally Sensitive Area*
- Housatonic River Corridor Boundary**
- Outer Corridor
- Inner Corridor

***Environmentally Sensitive Areas:**
Environmentally sensitive areas are those that should be a high priority for protection based on their ecological value as prominent natural features within the River Corridors.

****Corridor Definitions:**
The **Inner Corridor** boundary combines wetland and hydric soils and the 100 year floodplain boundary, revised 2004.

The **Outer Corridor** is defined as that portion of the river watershed lying between the Inner Corridor boundary and the Valley's ridgelines, or as determined by individual communities, and exclusive of Village Centers.

Map Credits:
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GIS Manager
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hvatoday.org
860.672.6678

Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries & Village Centers: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Appalachian Trail: NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail - Official Centerline - 06-27-2023
Environmentally Sensitive Area: HRC Management Report (2006)
Corridor Boundaries: Housatonic River Commission (2006)

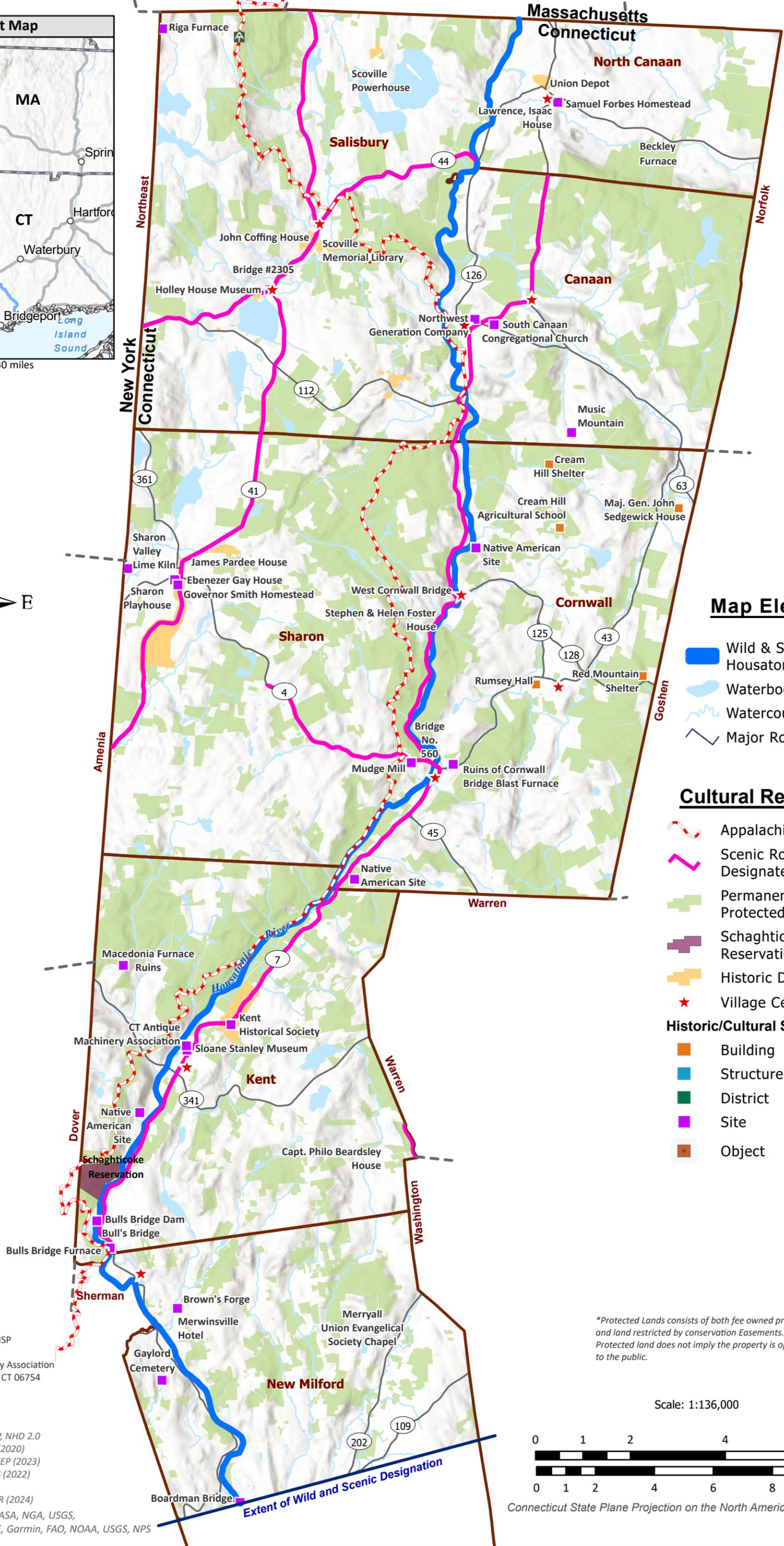
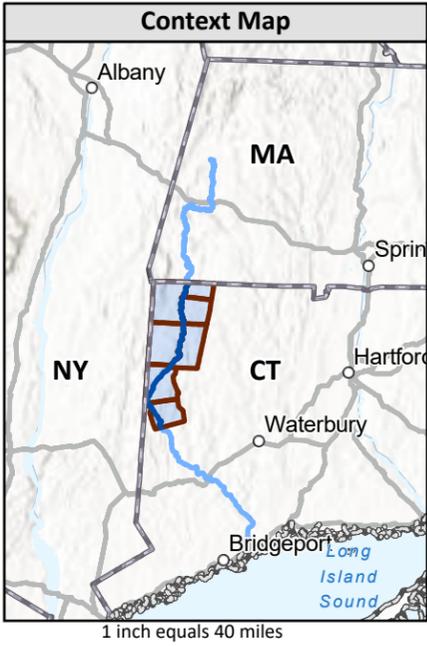
Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS

Scale: 1:136,000



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map Date: 3/27/2025

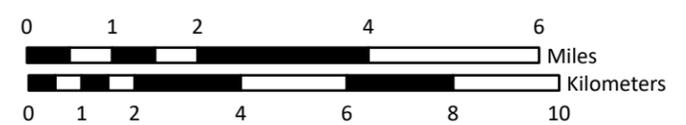


Map Credits:
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hvatoday.org
860.672.6678

Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Scenic Roads: State of CT DOT
Historic Sites: State of CT & NHR (2024)
Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS

*Protected Lands consists of both fee owned property and land restricted by conservation Easements. Protected land does not imply the property is open to the public.

Scale: 1:136,000

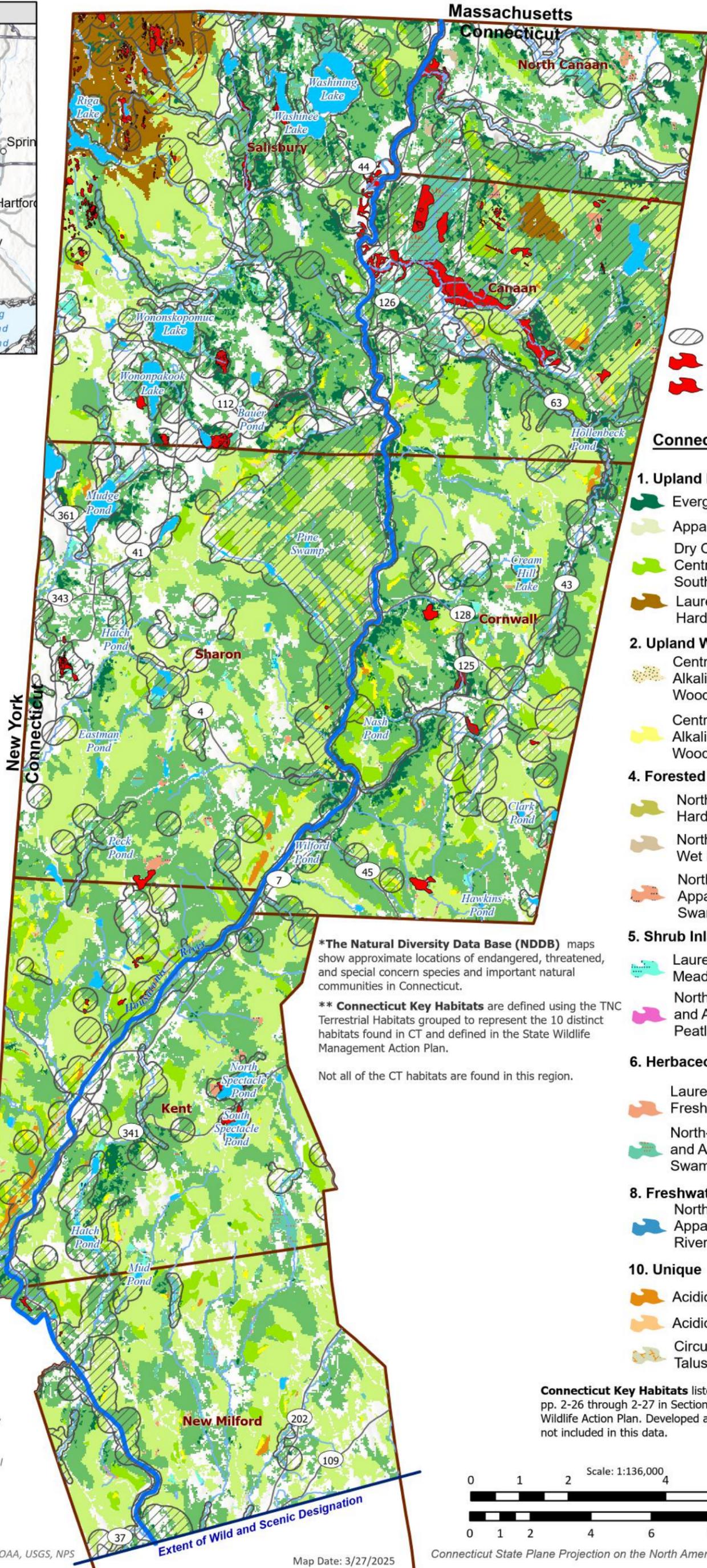


Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)



Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
- Open Water
- Watercourses
- Critical Habitat



Habitats

- Natural Diversity Area*
- Critical Habitat
- Critical Habitat

Connecticut Key Habitats**

- 1. Upland Forest**
 - Evergreen Forest
 - Appalachian Hemlock
 - Dry Oak-Pine Forest, Central Apps and Southern Piedmont
 - Laurentian Acadian Hardwood
- 2. Upland Woodland & Shrub**
 - Central Appalachian Alkaline Glade and Woodland
 - Central Appalachian Alkaline Glade and Woodland
- 4. Forested Inland Wetland**
 - Northern App-Conifer-Hardwood Acidic
 - North-Central Interior Wet Flatwoods
 - North-Central Appalachian Acidic Swamp
- 5. Shrub Inland Wetland**
 - Laurentian-Acadian Wet Meadow-Shrub Swamp
 - North-Central Interior and Appalachian Acidic Peatland
- 6. Herbaceous Inland Wetland**
 - Laurentian-Acadian Freshwater Marsh
 - North-Central Interior and Appalachian Rich Swamp
- 8. Freshwater Aquatic**
 - North-Central Appalachian Large River Floodplain
- 10. Unique**
 - Acidic Cliff and Talus
 - Acidic Rocky Outcrop
 - Circumneutral Cliff and Talus

*The Natural Diversity Data Base (NDDB) maps show approximate locations of endangered, threatened, and special concern species and important natural communities in Connecticut.

** Connecticut Key Habitats are defined using the TNC Terrestrial Habitats grouped to represent the 10 distinct habitats found in CT and defined in the State Wildlife Management Action Plan.

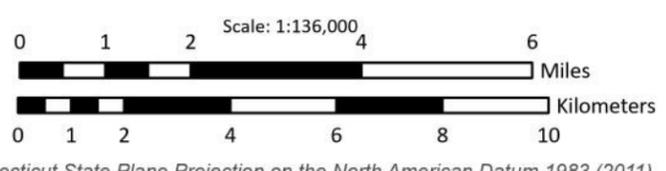
Not all of the CT habitats are found in this region.

Map Credits:
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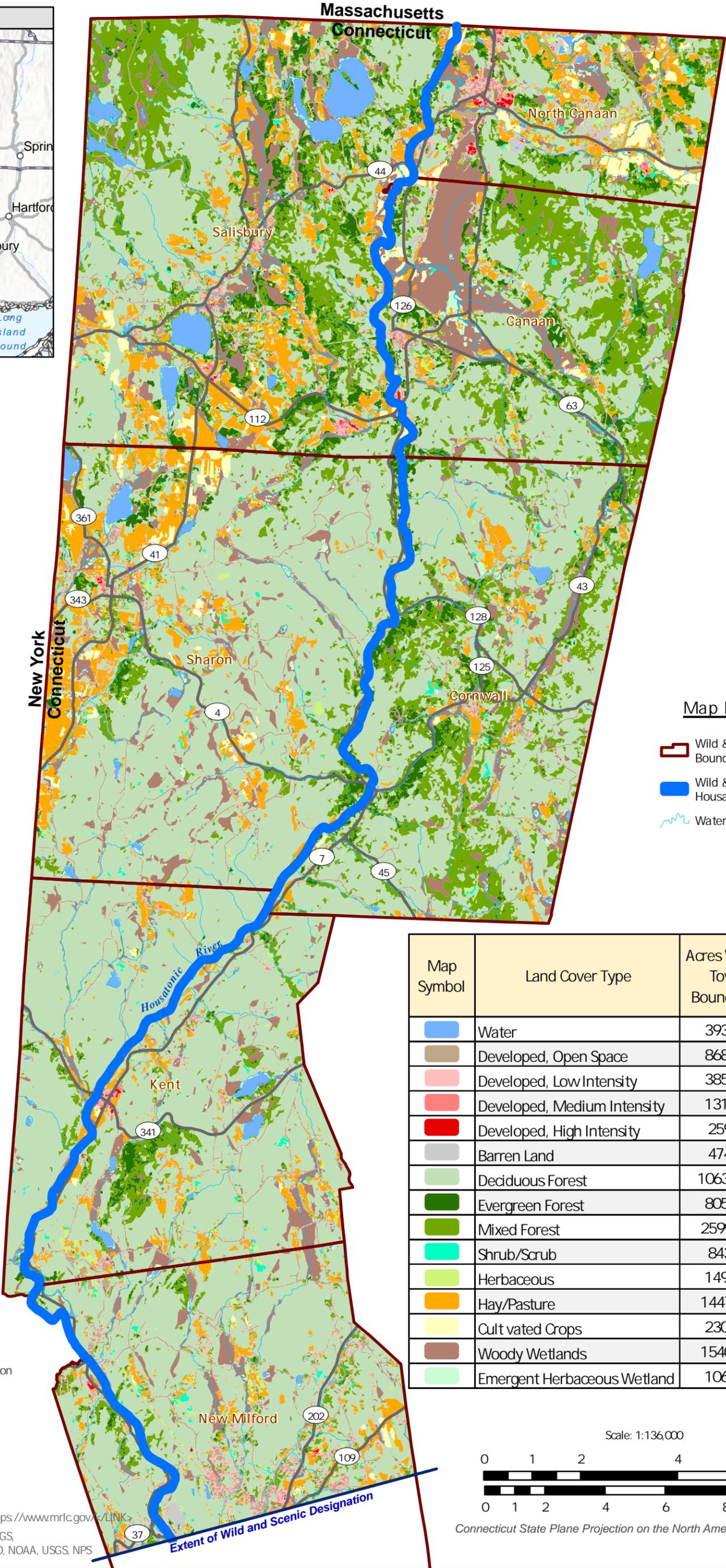
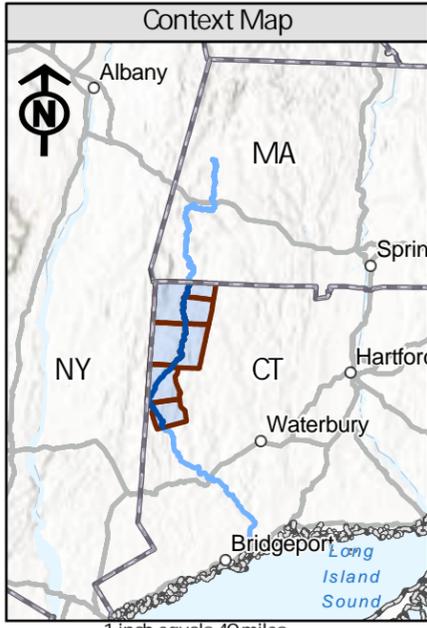
Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Aquifer protection & Potential: CT GIS (2022)
100-Year Flood: FEMA (2017)

Connecticut Critical Habitat Data depicts the classification and distribution of twenty-five rare and specialized wildlife habitats in the state. It represents a compilation of ecological information collected over many years by state agencies, conservation organizations and many individuals.

Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS



Connecticut Key Habitats listed in bold as found in Table 2.1 pp. 2-26 through 2-27 in Section 2 of the 2015 Connecticut Wildlife Action Plan. Developed areas and agriculture are not included in this data.



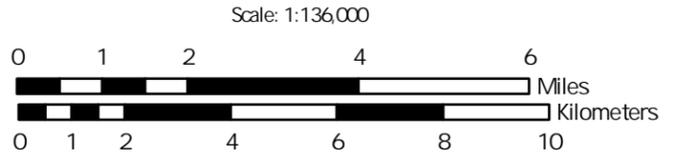
Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
- Watercourses

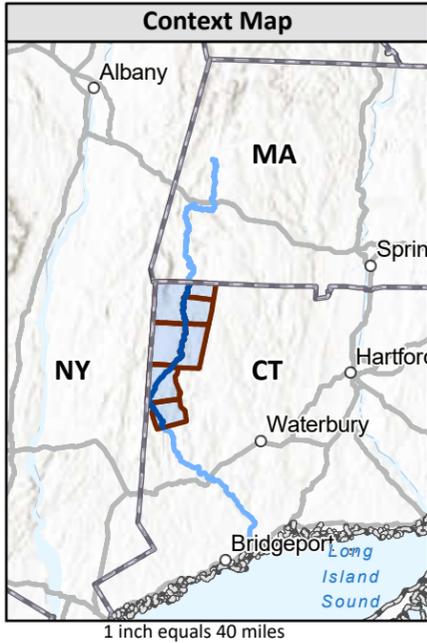
Map Symbol	Land Cover Type	Acres Within Town Boundaries	Acres Within 1/4 mi of the Housatonic River
	Water	3938.02	842.51
	Developed, Open Space	8684.68	920.99
	Developed, Low Intensity	3856.85	500.16
	Developed, Medium Intensity	1315.53	205.98
	Developed, High Intensity	259.51	45.38
	Barren Land	474.08	48.57
	Deciduous Forest	106354.37	7281.24
	Evergreen Forest	8057.32	1045.64
	Mixed Forest	25999.90	1397.11
	Shrub/Scrub	843.26	45.81
	Herbaceous	1496.98	102.96
	Hay/Pasture	14471.69	982.00
	Cult vated Crops	2306.27	415.35
	Woody Wetlands	15400.04	781.07
	Emergent Herbaceous Wetland	1061.54	91.27

HVA
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GIS Manager
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860.672.6678

Data Sources:
Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
Town Boundaries: State of CT DEEP (2023)
Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
Land Cover: USGS, MRLC (2021) <LINK>
Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)



Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies

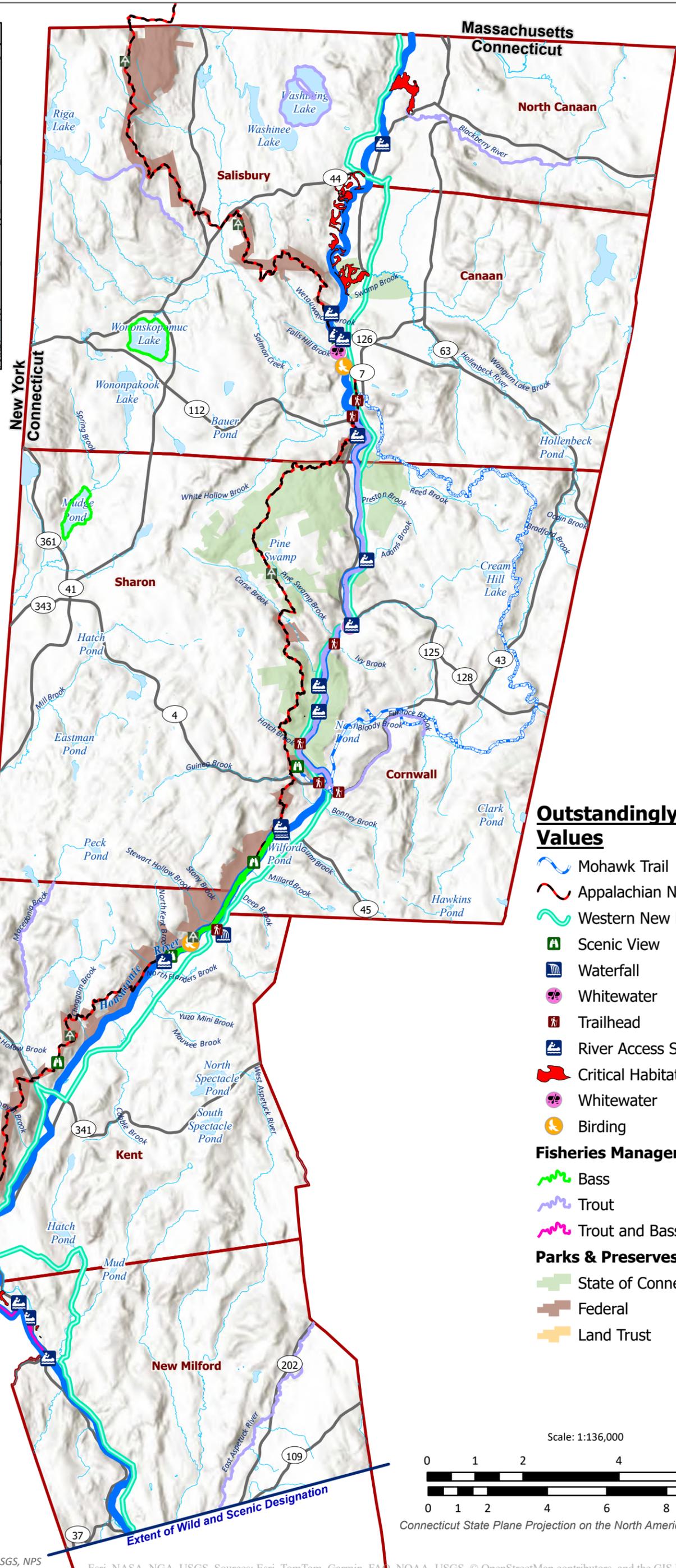


Data Sources:
 Watercourses: State of CT DEEP, NHD 2.0
 Roads: State of CT TIGER Data (2020)
 Town Boundaries & Fisheries Management Areas: State of CT DEEP (2023)
 Wild & Scenic Designation: NPS (2022)
 Appalachian Trail: NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail - Official Centerline - 06-27-2023
 Trails: NHCOC (2019) & HVA (2023)
 Protected Lands: Litchfield Hills Greenprint & Housatonic Valley Association (2023)

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Outstandingly Remarkable Values

- Mohawk Trail
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail
- Western New England Greenway
- Scenic View
- Waterfall
- Whitewater
- Trailhead
- River Access Site
- Critical Habitat
- Whitewater
- Birding
- Fisheries Management Area**
 - Bass
 - Trout
 - Trout and Bass
- Parks & Preserves**
 - State of Connecticut
 - Federal
 - Land Trust

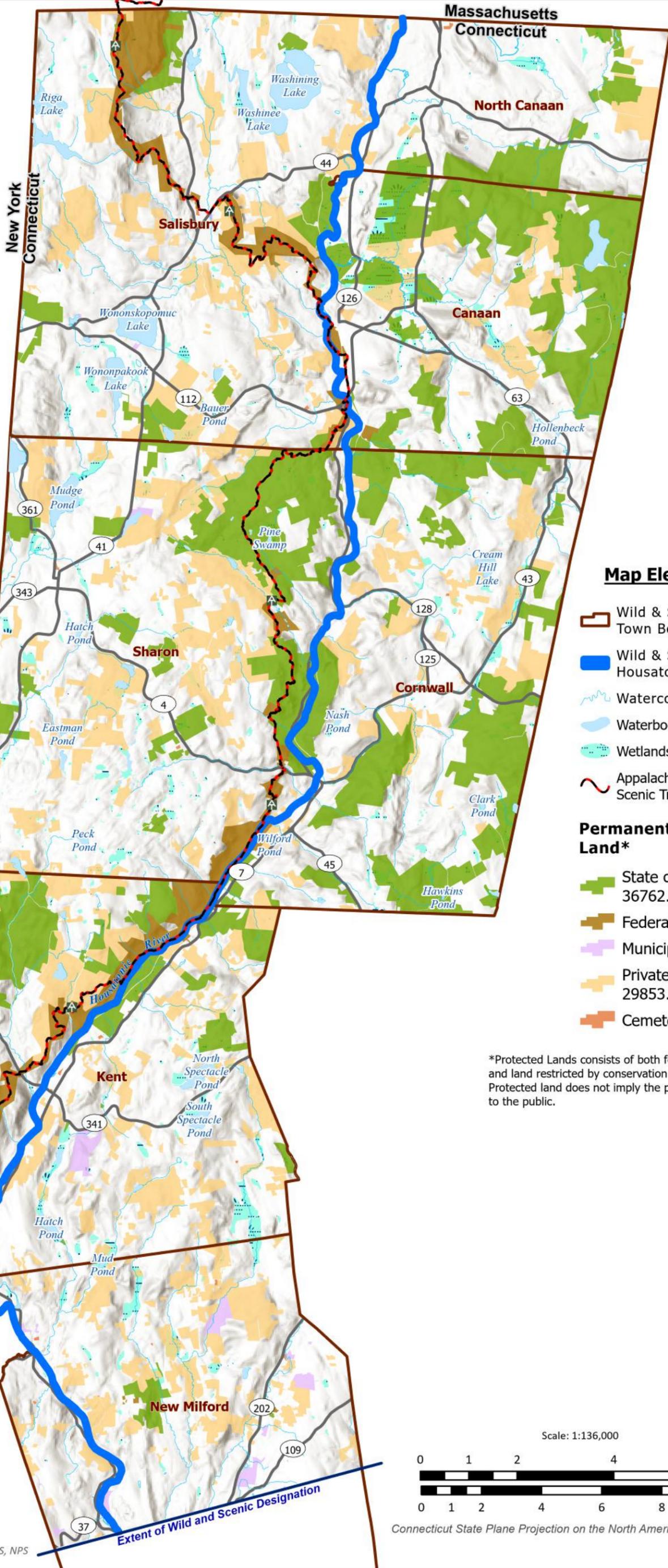
Scale: 1:136,000



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map Date: 3/27/2025

Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Sources: Esri, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community, Esri, USGS



Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
- Watercourses
- Waterbodies
- Wetlands
- Appalachian National Scenic Trail

Permanently Protected Land*

- State of Connecticut: 36762.76 ac
- Federal: 6138.73 ac
- Municipal: 815.28 ac
- Private Conservation: 29853.8 ac
- Cemetery: 91.96 ac

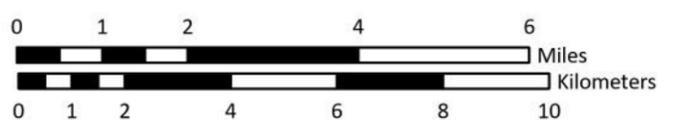
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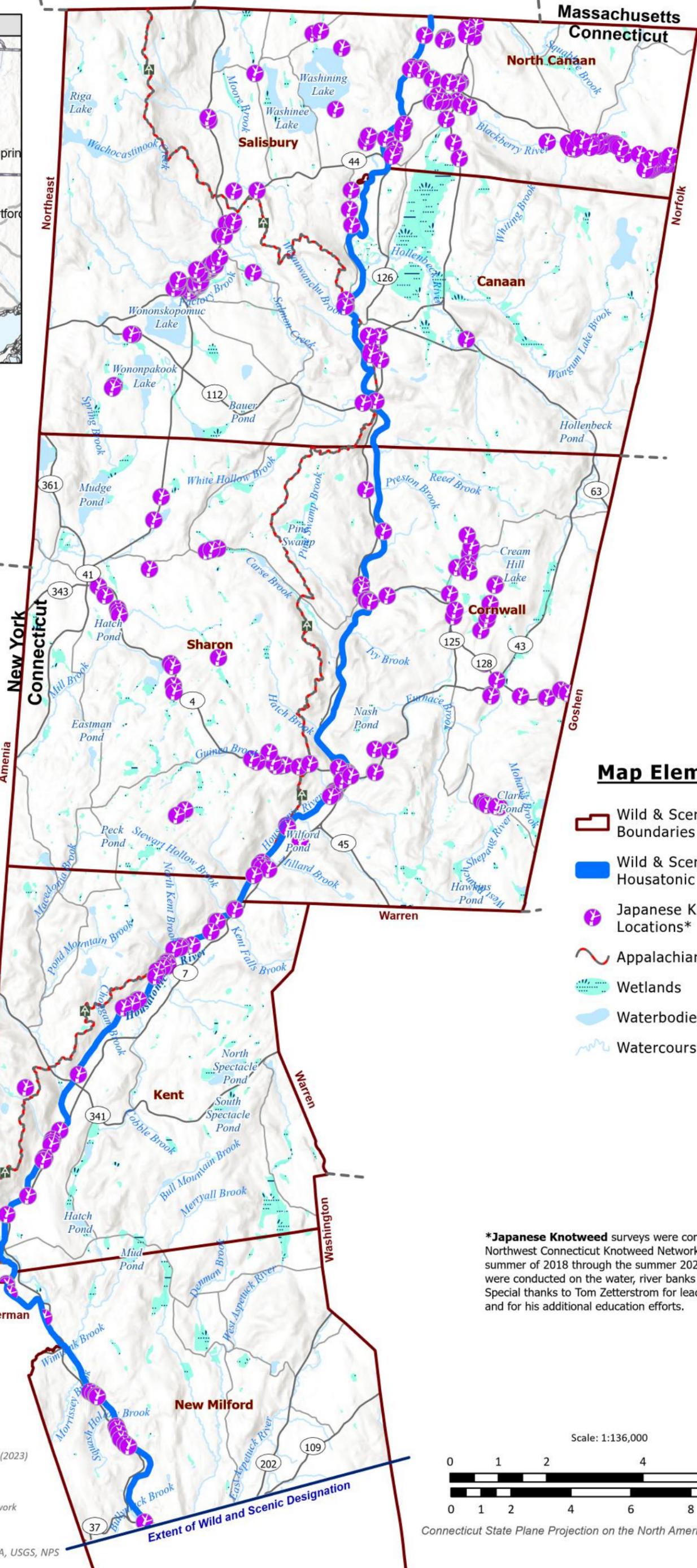
Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS

Scale: 1:136,000



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)

Map Date: 3/27/2025



Map Elements

- Wild & Scenic Town Boundaries
- Wild & Scenic Housatonic River
- Japanese Knotweed Locations*
- Appalachian Trail
- Wetlands
- Waterbodies
- Watercourses

*Japanese Knotweed surveys were conducted by the Northwest Connecticut Knotweed Network from the summer of 2018 through the summer 2023. These surveys were conducted on the water, river banks and roadways. Special thanks to Tom Zetterstrom for leading this effort and for his additional education efforts.

Map Credits:
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 860.672.6678

Data Sources:
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 Appalachian Trail: NPS Appalachian National Scenic Trail - Official Centerline - 06-27-2023
 Japanese Knotweed Locations: NWCT Knotweed Network Surveys (2018-2023)

Service Layer Credits: Esri, NASA, NGA, USGS, Esri, CGIAR, USGS, Esri, HERE, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, NPS

Scale: 1:136,000



Connecticut State Plane Projection on the North American Datum 1983 (2011)