
News and Updates on the Fort River

AUGUST 2020

We invite you to support our work this Giving Tuesday

2020 Lessons Learned Monitoring Water Quality on the Fort River

Despite the occasional spikes of warm weather, we find it undeniable that summer has passed and many of our river activities must look forward to next year.

This past summer, FoRWA began regular monitoring of bacteria in the watershed at two locations, Amethyst Brook and Groff Park. While there are several ways we can measure and evaluate water quality, bacteria is one of the most important with respect to

recreation and public health.

Hailey Fleury, a Northampton-based graphic designer, volunteered her time to sample the river at both locations every other Thursday morning for 12 weeks and the water samples were processed at the Connecticut River Conservancy lab. In general, we found that Amethyst Brook is clean and safe for wading and recreation. Four miles downstream however, bacteria levels in the Fort River at Groff Park are generally higher making the water unsafe for swimming.

A nearby Fort River swimming area downstream of Amethyst Brook, Jump Bridge, was also closed this summer due to unsafe levels of bacteria in the water. This was determined through water sampling conducted by the Town of Amherst.

Bacteria levels in water samples on four dates during summer 2020 are shown for Amethyst Brook and the Fort River at Groff Park. Amethyst Brook samples generally fall below the 240 Colony Forming Units(CFU)/100 milliliters(ml) threshold for safe recreation, whereas those from the Fort River at Groff Park generally exceed the threshold.

We are working with our community partners to investigate the likely cause of this downstream decline in water quality and create an action plan to continue monitoring bacteria levels in the Fort River next summer. We are committed to taking action to clean and protect the Fort River so that people and non-human river residents can safely enjoy this local treasure.

In addition to bacteria monitoring this summer, volunteers also collected data on nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus, specifically), macroinvertebrates (water bugs!) and a host of water quality measurements from water flowing directly in to the river from stormwater drains. The data is being processed and we look forward to sharing what else we can learn from this data about the state of the Fort River watershed. A special thank you goes out to all of our volunteer monitors!

Interested in volunteering to collect water samples with us next year? Email Sarah at srippere@ctriver.org and let us know!

Opportunity to help protect the Fort River

Many of us think of the Fort River as a clean river. But the 2019 Fort River Cleanup filled a municipal dumpster with trash, much of it in the form of bottles, bags, and styrofoam. This year, volunteers again took action by participating in the 2020 Fort River Cleanup held throughout the month of September. (A big thank you to all of the Cleanup volunteers!)

Clearly, even the Fort River is not immune to the problems of plastic and other trash. Continual effort is needed, with support for supplies and publicity. [Support this work by donating this Giving Tuesday.](#)

Fort River Watershed Association volunteers Alfred Yue and Nick Bowers have done an amazing job identifying and testing non-stormwater flow in storm sewer pipes that drain to the Fort River. Their work has focused on the Fort River between South East Street and Hickory Ridge Golf Course. By focusing on non-stormwater flows, this work can help to identify sources of pollution in the watershed such as poorly maintained septic

systems, excessive fertilizer, and road salt contamination that can degrade water quality. This work is crucial in eliminating sources of pollution to the Fort River and improving water quality for the protection of human health and the environment.

With restoration efforts and educational campaigns, we can reverse water quality deterioration in the Fort River and make it swimmable again. Today Fort River Watershed Association is equipped to recruit and train volunteers to monitor the Fort River, with the help of our community to pay for the testing.

On Giving Tuesday, 12/1, you can help make this happen. Please consider making a donation of any amount at fortriver.org/make-a-donation/.

Thank you for all the ways in which you support this work and our continued work together for a clean, healthy Fort River.

This Giving Tuesday, I choose to support restoration work on the Fort River!

Stay safe,
your neighbors at the
Fort River Watershed
Association

**Have updates on what's happening
in the watershed?**

Please send us your local Fort River
news at



Donate to FoRWA

fortriverwatershed@gmail.com

Image



The Fort River Watershed Association has partnered with the Connecticut River Conservancy, a local non-profit organization advocating for the Connecticut River watershed since 1952. This working partnership makes us both more effective advocates for our rivers.

For more information on the Connecticut River Conservancy, please visit their website: www.ctriver.org

You are receiving this email because of your interest in the Fort River Watershed Association and our work. Please let us know if your interests have changed by replying to this email. Thanks for your support of healthy rivers in our community!

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