

Friends of the Hockanum River Linear Park of Vernon, Inc.



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NEWS RELEASE

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GRANT AWARD RECEIVED for TANKERHOUSEN WATERSHED PROTECTIONS

A group of collaborating organizations that came together in 2004 to provide protections for the Tankerhoosen River has recently received their third award for the project. A \$26,000 grant to draft low-impact development (LID) regulations and a corresponding design manual for the Town of Vernon was awarded to the Friends of the Hockanum River Linear Park, and project partners, the North Central Conservation District, the Belding Wildlife Trust, the Hockanum River Watershed Association, Rivers Alliance of Connecticut, the Town of Vernon Planning Department and the Vernon Conservation Commission.

The Long Island Sound Office of the US Environmental Protection Agency announced the grant awards at a ceremony in Port Jefferson, NY on November 12th attended by congressmen and top federal and state officials. Ann Letendre and Ginny Gingras received the award on behalf of the collaborating organizations.

The grant was one of 38 awards given for community-based projects in New York and Connecticut to improve the health and vitality of Long Island Sound. Funds for the projects are sourced from the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Since 2004 the Tankerhoosen River project has produced four comprehensive reports on existing conditions within the watershed, as well as recommendations for future actions to protect the watershed. The first award

of \$25,000 funded baseline water quality studies along the entire length of the Tankerhoosen River. The second award of \$57,000 funded a comprehensive Tankerhoosen Watershed Management Plan for the 12.9 square-mile land area that comprises the watershed. This third award funds a key recommendation of the Management Plan, to incorporate low-impact development methods and a design manual into Vernon's land use regulations.

The most recently completed study, the Tankerhoosen River Watershed Management Plan, is one of only three watershed plans in the State of Connecticut that has been approved by the Department of Environmental Protection. The technical work for the project has been done by Erik Mas of Fuss and O'Neill, who authored DEP's 2004 Stormwater Quality Manual that is used by land use commissioners throughout the State.

The Tankerhoosen River watershed has been recognized by federal and state agencies for its high water quality and the wild trout populations that it sustains. The Belding Wildlife Management Area within the watershed is one of only two Class I Wild Trout Management areas east of the Connecticut River. Seventy percent of the watershed lands lie within the Town of Vernon. Development pressures in the headwaters region near Exit 67 prompted the collaborating organizations to undertake the studies in 2004 to better understand and document the resources within the watershed, identify potential threats, and outline the steps that are needed to protect the watershed's resources and high water quality into the future.

The Tankerhoosen River studies are the furthest inland project from the coast funded by the Long Island Sound Futures Fund. It is a testament to the importance that state and federal officials place on the value of the resources in the Tankerhoosen River watershed, and their importance to the restoration of Long Island Sound.