

“Salisbury is Wet and Wild”

Article for the Lakeville Journal that is a Summary of NRI Water Section

March 2025

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the **Salisbury Conservation Commission’s** quarterly missive. Our mission is education - educating ourselves as well as fellow Salisburyians on the important natural habitats specific to our beautiful and fascinating town, and how to preserve them.



Photo courtesy of Thomas Blagden

In this article we summarize “Water – Wetlands and Watercourses”, a chapter from the Town’s Natural Resources Inventory (NRI). You can find the whole NRI at www.salisburyct.us/town-documents/.

We like to think holistically about our natural resources and how they all work in concert to support the nature we love and steward. As we consider the lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, bogs, swamps, fens, and vernal pools of Salisbury, we are also thinking about what drains into them and how we can help to keep them clean, productive and viable habitats during our time here in Salisbury.

Salisbury is Wet and Wild – Summary of the NRI’s Water Section

Salisbury’s rich assemblage of wetlands and watercourses are the lifeblood of our landscape. We are fortunate to have many large bodies of water and riparian areas in town, all of which support and provide a multitude of habitats making up our unique and precious ecosystem.

For instance, Salisbury is home to two high elevation lakes that sit atop the Riga Plateau, also known as the Taconic Uplift: Riga Lake and South Pond. These lakes, sitting at a high elevation have colder water than any other water source in Town, which flows down to swamps, wetlands and streams, supporting important native plants and animals such as brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) and slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*) (DEEP website) as well as the threatened spring salamander (*Gyrinophilus porphyriticus*.) (Klemens et al. 2021, Salisbury POCD, 2024).

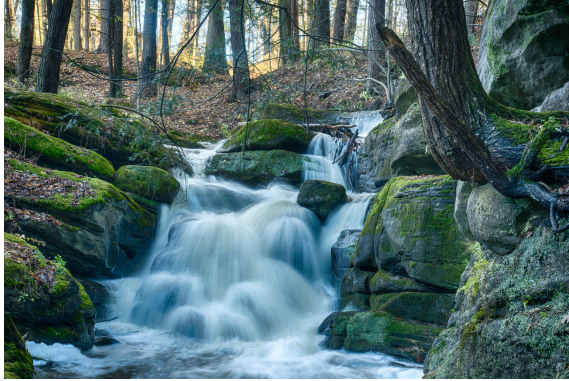


Photo courtesy of Thomas Blagden

Salisbury's northwestern location within the state of Connecticut, its elevation gradient of close to 2,000 feet, and its relatively unfragmented landscape, have resulted in the Town being a reservoir for biodiversity of statewide and regional significance. (Klemens et al,2021) Using climate change modeling, it is predicted that Salisbury will be the only area in the state where certain cold-water species will be able to continue to flourish despite climate change.

On the valley floor we have four large hardwater lakes, (lakes rich in calcium and magnesium.) Lake Wononscopomuc (Lakeville Lake), Lake Wonopakook (Long Pond), Lake Washinee (West Twin Lake) and Lake Washining (East Twin Lake). These lakes are stewarded by numerous lake associations where dedicated volunteers work to preserve and enhance their ecology.

At the town's eastern border is the Housatonic River, whose flood plain is made up of rich soils, perfect for agricultural uses but also provides important wildlife habitat in the oxbows. In 2023, 41 miles of the Housatonic, including the stretch in Salisbury, were designated by the National Park Service's Partnership to be in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program which protects and enhances rivers throughout the country. Smaller rivers that flow through Salisbury include the Salmon Kill River seen from Main Street, Ball Brook running at the north end of town, and Moore Brook running between the Housatonic and Salmon Kill.

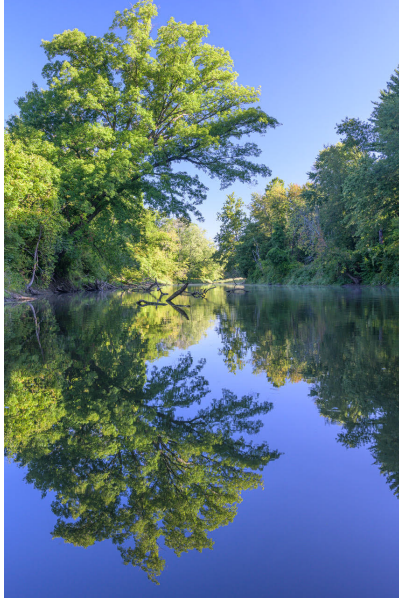


Photo courtesy of Thomas Blagden

Hidden from view are extensive sand and gravel deposits known as till, which were deposited by the last glaciation some 12,000 years ago. Driving north on Undermountain Road these glacial terraces are clearly visible as gently undulating agricultural fields. Water percolates through these terraces and feeds the subterranean aquifer. This gives rise to many unusual habitats, such as fens, that contain endangered and rare species.



Salisbury's rich assemblage of wetlands and watercourses are the lifeblood of our landscape. They add to our lives in obvious ways for recreation such as fishing, boating, and for drinking, but they also support productive and exceptional ecosystems that are not readily apparent.

It is imperative to protect Salisbury's waters as we protect our way of life in our Town. Increased flooding from climate change along with development, especially around the lakes, is increasing runoff and pollutants into our water system. This toxic runoff threatens many wetland-dependent species of plants and animals that are at the core of our ecosystem.

The Conservation Commission wants to encourage landowners to not use fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides on their properties. The quality of our water resources is directly dependent on the choices

we residents make in caring for our properties. Applied fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides eventually reach our waters with detrimental effects. For more science on this topic, please read:
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2405844024051594>.

We would like to be interactive, so please send topic suggestions and comments to leepotter@salisburyct.gov.