

Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC)

Representing the towns of Shelton, Milford, Orange, Stratford, Derby, and Ansonia CT.

To: The Honorable Mark A. Lauretti (Shelton), James L. Richetelli Jr. (Milford), James Zeoli (Orange), John Harkins (Stratford), Anthony Staffiere (Derby), and James Della Volpe (Ansonia)

From: Bob Gesullo, Chairman of the Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC)

Date: November 30, 2011

2011 HREC Year-end Summary Report

This report is intended to summarize the 2011 activities of Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC), which is authorized under the State of Connecticut General Statute Sec.25-170 (Chapter 483b) to work collectively with each of these towns as the stewards for the river for which each of these towns share borders.

The Commission is composed of one representative from each town who is appointed to this Commission by the City Executives (Mayor or First Selectman) to serve a term of two years. The commission may study any issues relating to the Housatonic River and may make such recommendations as may be necessary to maintain, protect and restore the resources of the estuary of the Housatonic River. The commission shall consider the adverse impact any action proposed for the Housatonic River estuary that may impact its' resources. *This is a forum in which the these communities regardless of their own local or similar efforts, come together without borders to collectively work together for one common goal, the stewardship of the Housatonic River.*

The following is a summary of accomplishments completed during 2011 supporting the mission statement of this commission since its' establishment in 2007:

- Actively participated for the fourth year in the Housatonic River Clean-up. Organizers reported more than 20 tons of debris were removed. HREC strongly supports the river clean-up and its' volunteers.
- The HREC website has been updated with news and information throughout the year. (www.TheHREC.org)
- HREC commissioners continued their outreach efforts by attending and participating in related meetings with the Harbor Commissions, the CT DEP, CT Sea Grant, and the Long Island Sound Assembly. Several commission members serve on various other related commissions and provide valuable information and communication between the groups.
- The Commission sent a letter to the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) with suggestions for improvements to the speed zones and signage in the river. Changes in the placement of buoys were recommended as well as additional "no wake zone" buoys located near the Knapp's Landing fuel dock.
- A reminder brochure was developed and sent to all Town Administrators and Public Works departments reminding the towns of the importance of the timing for street sweeping of sand after the winter before sediments were washed into the river, adding to the sedimentation and dredging problem. The town of Orange responded by reporting that they are no longer using sand for the roads.
- The Commission drafted a letter of support to CT Audubon and the US Fish and Wildlife Service as part of a grant application for Sacred Heart University graduate students

participating in their Masters Program in Environmental Science Analysis and Management. The grant was for the planning of habitat remediation efforts at the DuPont property at Stratford Point (formerly Remington Gun Club). The site is littered with lead shot from decades of use as a shooting range.

- The Commission met with Sacred Heart University Professors planning for a year-long debris study. The study began with a river survey, partnering with the US Coast Guard Auxiliary and Derby Commissioner Bill Rohland at the helm. Nine graduate students are participating on the debris study to assess the types, volume and sources of river debris. "Best Management Practices" (BMPs) and educational information will be developed after review of the study findings. Debris ending up at the mouth of the river has pollution impacts to wildlife and habitat as well as being hazard to boaters.

The commission has established a small annual stipend funding (operating budget) for recording fees, the website and ancillary expenses and has requested that each participating town support the Commission with these small expenses. ***"We would like to express our gratefulness to the towns of Shelton, Milford and Orange for their ongoing support and we trust the other participating towns will do the same." The Town of Stratford offers in-kind free pump-out services for boaters in Stratford, Milford, and Shelton.***

Plans for 2012 include:

- Continuing the debris study with Sacred Heart University graduate students determining the types, amount and entry points of floatable debris in the river and possible means of removing/stopping its entry. The commission is able to provide access to vessels to travel up the river and survey the pollution sources. The final objective of the project after assessing the types, volumes, and collection locations of the debris is to determine the sources and evaluate means of containing, mitigating, reducing or removing it. The possible utilization of new pollution reduction technologies will also be reviewed.
- Participating in the annual river clean-up to be scheduled in May. Next year the Commission will also assist the "Clean-up" by reaching out to other community volunteers to increase the numbers of participants.
- Continuing to improve communication with our local and legislative leaders.
- Continuing to monitor the soil and erosion control measures at the Baldwin Station housing in Milford after many trees were removed from the property leaving the riverbank vulnerable to erosion resulting in additional sediments that will need to be dredged from the river in the future costing additional tax dollars to area residents.
- Addressing the expanded use of Wooster Island for recreation and the boating, jet ski and litter issues that occurred during 2011.

The commission is dedicated to its mission and truly appreciates the support of the local leaders of the towns it represents. Please feel free to contact your town Commissioner as listed below, for any issues relating to the River.

Respectfully submitted,

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