



# Currents & Eddies

**Connecticut River  
Conservancy**

*You used to know us as  
Connecticut River Watershed Council*

Fall 2017  
Volume 66 Issue 3

Above all else, one thing stood out during our Source to Sea Jump-In Journey this summer: YOU. From source to sea, you were right there with us every step of the way. You showed up, rain or shine. You slogged up slopes to reach the source, jumped in the river for Splash Mobs, attended celebrations, dragon boated, rowed, scuba-dived, canoed, sailed, and so much more! We had a fabulous time connecting with people and places throughout the watershed and celebrating CRC's 65th anniversary.

I cannot express to you how wonderful it was to meet so many people from so many backgrounds who all share a passion for our rivers. You told us stories about your river adventures, what you love about our rivers, and your concerns for our rivers. You told us what our rivers were like when you were young and you shared what you hope they will be like for your children and grandchildren. We all want clean rivers that won't make us sick when we swim, boat or fish; beautiful rivers that support our local economies; and healthy rivers that are full of fish and other wildlife.

In 1959, CRWC chairman Dr. Davidson and his wife traveled the Connecticut River to highlight the problem of river pollution. This year, as my wife Karen and I retraced Dr. Davidson's trip, we got to enjoy all that our rivers have to offer.

Thank you for celebrating the progress we've made together so far and for reflecting on the work still to do.

This Journey has enriched my perspective on our work; reinforced my admiration for the staff, Trustees, CRC members and river supporters; and inspired me for the continuing work we've set out for this organization. Please join us for the next 65 years of protecting our rivers.

Enjoy the recap of the Journey in these pages. You can see even more photos, videos, and news from the whole Journey at the travelogue on our website: [www.ctriver.org/S2SJourney](http://www.ctriver.org/S2SJourney).

*ANDY* Andrew Fisk, Executive Director

*Above: The Source to Sea Jump-In Journey ended with a sunset cruise to Long Island Sound aboard the Onrust.*

# THEN & NOW

While the health of our rivers has dramatically improved since the Davidsons took their trip in 1959, you know that important problems continue to impact us today. Our work takes time to make a difference. And we are committed to being here for you and your rivers for many decades to come as passionate and respected advocates for a clean and healthy river that is full of life.

We started our Journey just as the Davidsons did, by collecting the clean and healthy water of the river's source at Fourth Connecticut Lake.

The headwaters of the Connecticut River at Fourth Connecticut Lake remain a beautiful and inspiring place, just as it was in 1959. One big difference today is that the small intermittent streams that form the very beginning of our great river (as well as the vast majority of surface waters across the country) have protection under the federal Clean Water



## THEN & NOW

Act, passed in 1972. Unfortunately, right now, those protections are proposed to be eliminated. We're joining you to fight this ill-informed roll-back of critical environmental protection. Thanks to all of you who have already contacted the EPA to demand these protections stay in place.



# THEN & NOW



In 1959, Mrs. Davidson, while an enthusiastic traveler, preferred to be paddled down river. In 2017, Karen Fisk was in the bow navigating the entire three days of our canoeing from Canaan to Guildhall, VT.

In 1959, a canoe trip down the river was a lot harder than today with more dams, fewer portages, and no formal network of campsites and launches. Today, thanks to the work of many partners, the Connecticut River Paddlers' Trail maintains a terrific network of beautiful campsites and access locations. But the Trail is not complete. With your help, CRC is working with partners to complete the Trail through Massachusetts and Connecticut.

In 1959, the Wyoming Paper Company in Guildhall, VT was still in operation and powered by this main-stem hydroelectric dam. Today the dam and paper mill are long gone.

New England's manufacturing economy was built on the power of water harnessed by dams of all shapes and sizes. But as the economy has changed, the need for dams to power the mills that manufactured paper, textiles, machinery, and many other products has also changed. This has left thousands of dams as relics and hazards to fish, recreation, and communities affected by floods. While the Wyoming Paper Company dam is no more, there are still over a thousand other deadbeat dams that need to come down. Today, CRC's restoration program builds on twenty years of progress and has over 12 active dam removal projects underway—with four coming down in 2017 alone!



# THEN & NOW





From 1959 to 2017, erosion of our river banks remains a fact of life and a challenge in many different ways.

Rivers move and change and we need to give them room to do that where we can. But the many dams, particularly hydro-electric facilities, control how our rivers flow in order to generate electricity. That control causes river levels to rise and fall repeatedly each day, which increases erosion, causes damage to roads and private property, and washes away valuable farm land. We're all for greener sources of energy. But you can do it in a way that causes less harm to our rivers and riverbanks and doesn't create big problems and expenses for small local towns.

# THEN & NOW



In 1959, work was underway to build several large-scale flood control dams in response to severe flooding. Our work today is about smaller, but equally important, infrastructure improvements like making better road crossings that reduce flooding and help migratory fish.

We live in a changed climate—both environmentally and politically. Climate change is already impacting weather patterns and river flows. Here in New England, we now have more frequent rain events that are more intense with increased risk of flood damage. There are many strategies to address this global crisis. We're tackling the important work of removing dams and upgrading culverts to reduce flood damage and open up hundreds of miles of habitat for native and migratory fish.

However, proposed rollbacks to environmental protections and disregard of the causes of this changed climate make the future of our rivers even more uncertain. We are leaders here in New England. Whether it's renewable energy standards, controlling greenhouse gases, or any number of other regulations meant to protect our environment, we can show the country that environmental protection is still a bipartisan priority.



Howard Weiss/Tisman / YPR



The Holyoke Dam has long been a leader in innovative strategies to pass migratory fish with the fish lift elevators constructed in the mid-1950s. Today, they are continuing improvements to allow for safe sturgeon passage for the first time since the dam was built.

Our rivers are a highway for migratory fish—shad, eels, lamprey, and river herring—who return each year to spawn. Their numbers are nothing like they could be, when millions of fish returned in centuries past. This

spring was hopeful with more than 537,000 shad passing the Holyoke Dam upstream. That's the second highest year since the 1980s! But there is still work to do. For example, Turners Falls Dam only passed 9% of those shad farther upstream rather than the 40–50% that should be passing. Also, eels and juvenile shad do not have safe passage downstream for their journey out to the ocean in the fall. Let's make sure all migratory fish have access to as much river as possible to raise their fish families.



Throughout their Journey, the Davidsons carried water from Fourth Connecticut Lake, and we did too. In 1959, he took a sample of the river at Bassett Marina in Springfield, MA to show how it compared so poorly to the source water. In 2017, we sampled at that same location, which is now the thriving Pioneer Valley Riverfront Club. As you can see, we've made terrific progress!

In 1959, one of the most obvious problems was the amount of raw and poorly treated sewage being dumped into our rivers. To illustrate the problem, the Davidsons would don gas masks at particularly foul locations. Today, after hundreds of millions of dollars of investments by the federal, state, and local governments, we have improved the technology and capacity of our waste water treatment plants so that our rivers are much cleaner and healthier. Yet, we still need to tackle nutrient pollution, which degrades our rivers and causes algae blooms, harming the plants and animals that call our rivers home. And we need to care for what we have built. Just like our roads, bridges, and airports, our clean water infrastructure still needs hundreds of millions of dollars to be maintained and upgraded.



Unfortunately, just as in 1959, too many people think our rivers are a place to get rid of trash, debris, cars, and yes abandoned houses.

For generations people have used our rivers as trash dumps thinking that as long as it was carried away they were done with it. Farmers even used old cars, tires and machinery to shore up eroding banks. Today, we know better and recognize that there is no “away.” Even Styrofoam and plastic eventually reach the oceans and harm wildlife halfway around the world. You have helped us remove over 1,000 tons of trash and junk from your rivers in the last twenty years. But there is still more to do. River trash is more than just bottles, cans, tires and food wrappers. It's also submerged cars or boats, oil tanks, and large dumps like this old house falling into the river. CRC works to clean up trash—large & small—as part of our annual Source to Sea Cleanup and works all year long on trash policy to prevent trash from reaching our rivers. Watch for our next newsletter, the *Cleanup Chronicle*, to see what we find this year!



At the mouth of the Connecticut River at Long Island Sound, we are reminded that we're all downstream. Our rivers and waterways connect us all. We must protect and keep all waters clean if any of us are to enjoy clean water. The Connecticut River contributes 70% of the freshwater in Long Island Sound. CRC works to keep trash, nutrients, sediment and other types of pollution from ever making it this far.



## Thanks to supporters like you,

CRC and our rivers have had many successes over the past decades. But we need rivers that are not just clean, but healthy and full of life too. As Andy and Karen traveled the length of the river, they saw first-hand some of the areas where there is critical work yet to do. They talked to many river lovers like you who are continuing to push for improvements that will restore natural river cycles so life can flourish.

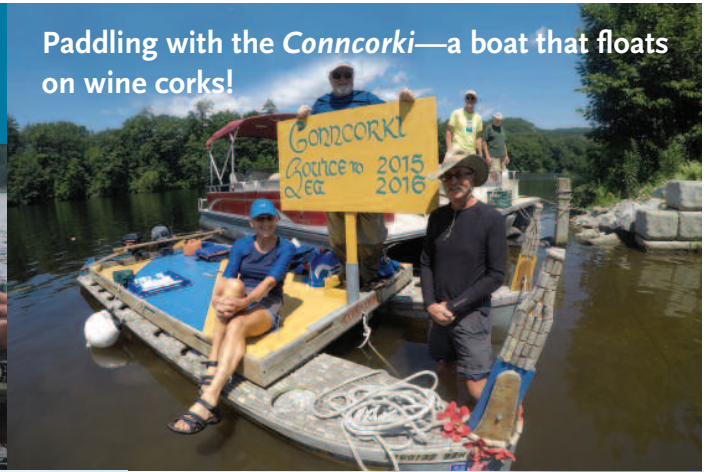
We're doing our part to keep our rivers clean here at home in New England and contributing clean water to the rest of the globe. But we can't do this work alone. If you're already a CRC member, thank you. Please invite a friend to join you as a member. If you're not yet a member, please join us. Donate online at [www.ctriver.org/donate](http://www.ctriver.org/donate) or contact Corey Kurtz, Development Director, at [ckurtz@ctriver.org](mailto:ckurtz@ctriver.org) or 413-772-2020 ext.202.

We couldn't resist having just a bit of fun during the Journey as well...



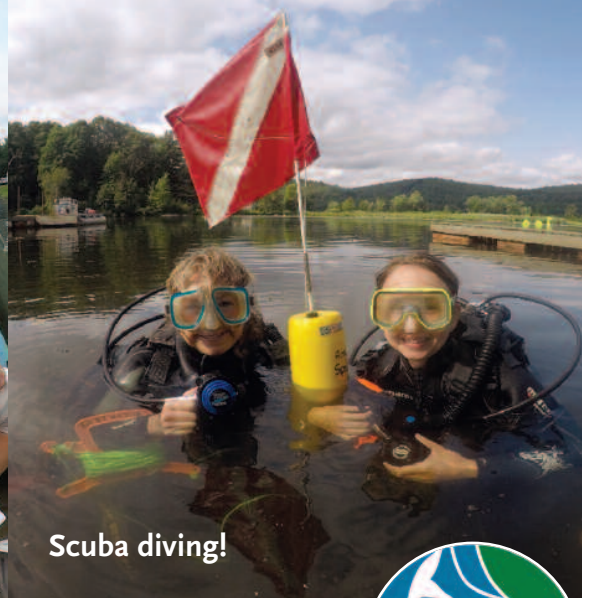
Rowing!

Paddling with the *ConnCorki*—a boat that floats on wine corks!



Bass fishing!

43rd annual Connecticut River Raft Race in a shad costume!



Scuba diving!



**Currents & Eddies** is a quarterly publication for members of the Connecticut River Conservancy.

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**Mission:** We are the voice for the Connecticut River watershed, from source to sea. We collaborate with partners across four states to protect and advocate for your rivers and educate and engage communities. We bring people together to prevent pollution, improve habitat, and promote enjoyment of your river and its tributary streams. Healthy rivers support healthy economies.

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## PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Debbie Talamini of the American Heritage River Commission helped organize a paddling leg of the Source to Sea Jump-In Journey from Enfield to East Windsor, CT. The Commission does terrific work throughout East Windsor building trails, creating river access, picking up trash, and celebrating their rivers. CRC is proud to partner with AHRC and other local organizations throughout the watershed that make so much good work happen.



"I love taking to the water and escaping into the beauty of nature, introducing others to the benefits of being outdoors, and bringing awareness to the great resources within our local communities. What a great pleasure to join up with other advocacy groups like Connecticut River Conservancy to accomplish these goals and to make the world a better place to live, grow and explore!"  
—Debbie Talamini, American Heritage River Commission of East Windsor, CT

## Welcome!

To all of the new members who have joined CRC, welcome! Your support makes all the difference for our rivers. Together, we all own our rivers. And together we will protect them. Thank you for joining us in this work, and please be in touch with any questions or feedback in the year ahead. Contact Corey Kurtz at 413-772-2020 ext.202 or [ckurtz@ctriver.org](mailto:ckurtz@ctriver.org).



## Help Demolish a Dam!

Did you know that more than 1,000 "deadbeat" dams block the Connecticut River and its tributaries? Left over from old mills and industry, these dams no longer serve a useful purpose. Instead, they restrict fish migration up and down the river, and contribute to flood damage in communities hit by major storms.

Help us take them down! We have 12 dam removal projects in the works and we can't do it without you.

**Double your impact! Make a gift by October 15 and your donation will be matched dollar for dollar by a group of CRC supporters.**

Return your donation in the enclosed envelope or give securely online at [www.ctriver.org/donate](http://www.ctriver.org/donate). Thanks to all who have already contributed!

It's YOUR river! Tag your photos with #MyCTRiver to show your family, friends, and the world what you love about YOUR river.



## Wow your friends

with your river knowledge! Sign up for CRC emails for all the latest news and events. Find us online at **Facebook, Instagram & Twitter**.

Last issue's photograph was of the Connecticut River between Wells River, VT, and Woodsville, NH. Congratulations to Steve Campbell of Lyme, NH, whose correct guess won him a CRC hat!