3.3 Engage in Watershed Protection and Restoration

15 – 55 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2024. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

Objective

Implement projects that conserve, protect, and improve the health of the watershed.

Complementary Action:

- Create a Watershed Management Plan

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

Watershed Protection and Restoration **(up to 45 points)**

1. Complete a priority project, ideally as outlined in your Watershed Action Plan (as part of Sustainable CT Action Create a Watershed Management Plan, which may require cooperation with your local water company). If not included in your plan, provide justification for the project. Projects might include, but are not limited to: monitoring, riparian restoration, research studies (nutrient management, etc.). The watershed project must have been completed in the last three years. **(15 points per project, up to 30 points)**

   Note: Watershed protection and restoration projects may not receive credit for other Sustainable CT actions. Invasive species management projects should be included in the Sustainable CT Action Facilitate Invasive Species Education and Management, rather than this Action.

   Submit: Documentation of the completed project, including completion dates. Please also include justification if not part of your Watershed Action Plan. You may submit up to two watershed protection and restoration projects.

2. Adopt or revise regulations to help protect your watershed, source water, and or riparian corridors, such as: **(20 points)**

   - Overlay zones, zoning setbacks, or other mechanisms to protect ecologically important areas such as source waters, tidal wetlands, riparian corridors, vernal pools, critical habitat areas, or other areas identified by your Natural Resource Inventory;
   - Regulations focused on protecting water quality such as septic inspection and pump-out ordinances; and/or
   - Road standards.

   Note: Any new regulations adopted by your municipality must go above or beyond state standards for watershed, source water, or riparian corridor protection. Incorporating the state standards into municipal code is beneficial but will not earn points under this action.

Submit: A copy of the regulations formally adopted by your governing body or a copy of the relevant section(s) of your zoning regulations; documentation that the regulations have been adopted (such as meeting minutes, a copy of the municipal zoning regulations with relevant portions highlighted, a link to municipal ordinances, or similar verification).

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

Staff from your community's planning or public works departments, engineering, GIS, water pollution control authorities could be helpful in implementing this action.

In addition, the inland wetlands commission, planning and zoning commission, conservation commission, and watershed organizations could help implement this action.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations
- State Funding Readiness Project

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, "Watershed Based Plans and Watershed Management Plans"
- UConn CLEAR, Local Watershed Assessment Tool
- Checklist for plans eligible for CWA Section 319 funding
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Handbook for Developing Watershed Management Plans to Restore and Protect Our Waters"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Watershed Plan Builder"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Impaired Waters and TDMLs: Resources, Tools and Databases"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Nonpoint Source: Volunteer Monitoring"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "National Aquatic Resource Surveys"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Tools to Assist States and Tribes to Reduce Nutrient Pollution"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Polluted Runoff: Nonpoint Source Pollution"
- US Environmental Protection Agency, Watershed Academy
- US Environmental Protection Agency, WATERS (Watershed Assessment, Tracking & Environmental Results System)
- Connecticut River Coastal Conservation District & North Central Conservation District, "How to Create a Streamside Buffer Garden"

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- CT Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials
- Connecticut Conservation Districts
- US Environmental Protection Agency, Climate Ready Estuaries

- US Environmental Protection Agency, "Healthy Watersheds Protection"
- National Estuary Program
- US Environmental Protection Agency, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Program
- Center for Watershed Protection
- UConn Stormwater Corps
    - A hands-on, interactive classroom semester with a focus on the local (municipal) perspective, followed by a "practicum" semester where student teams undertake environmental projects in the community

Why This Matters

A watershed is the area of land that drains or sheds water into a specific receiving waterbody, such as a lake or a river. As rainwater or melted snow runs downhill in the watershed, it collects and transports sediment and other materials and deposits them into the receiving waterbody. All waterbodies are part of a watershed. Connecticut has eight major watersheds, but your town or city only needs to plan for local watersheds.

Watershed management is the practice of planning for and implementing strategies to maintain or improve the health and water quality of a watershed system. Since watersheds are, essentially, large areas of land that are the pathways for water flow in a region, there are many opportunities for pollutants to enter the system. Thus a thorough plan that includes an education component is important to protect the long-term health of the system. Watershed health is a barometer for health of the surrounding environment.

Benefits

Your community will have a water quantity and quality that is both fishable and swimmable.

You will help sustain drinking water levels for your citizens and surrounding populations.

By managing stormwater properly and minimizing point-source and non-point source pollution you will be able to sustain healthier watersheds and healthier wetlands, forests, meadows, etc. - creating healthier places for people to live, work, and play.

CT Success Stories

- Waterford - Oct 2022 Certification
- Wilton - Oct 2022 Certification
- Windham - Sep 2023 Certification
- Old Saybrook - May 2024 Certification
- Fairfield - Oct 2024 Certification
- Madison - Oct 2024 Certification
- Southbury - Oct 2024 Certification