



Quiet reflection Photo: Tom Cameron

CHAPTER 6

Education and Outreach Overview

Goal

The outreach and education goal for the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Committee is to engage the public including landowners, recreational users, towns and the state in their shared responsibility of stewardship in order to protect and enhance the Outstanding Resource Values of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook. Organizations with existing education and outreach programs will be encouraged to continue and expand their efforts. The Committee's objective will be to support and complement ongoing education and outreach activities, rather than to duplicate them. To that aim, the Committee will help to organize cooperative efforts among its membership and with other organizations.

The Importance and Purpose of Outreach and Education

Outreach and education plays a critical role in achieving the goals of the Management Plan. Because this is an advisory plan, it can only be successful with the voluntary support and engagement of many stakeholders including

landowners, towns and their local land use commissions, state agencies and recreational users. Outreach and education efforts can be effective when the various stakeholders understand why it is important to protect local resources, know what specific actions are

Because this is an advisory plan, it can only be successful with the voluntary support and engagement of many stakeholders including landowners, towns and their local land use commissions, state agencies and recreational users.

needed and recognize the long-term benefits of resource protection.

Actions

The Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Committee can provide a strong foundation for achieving the Outreach and Education goal by means of the actions discussed below. The following action list will evolve over time as circumstances change. Opportunities to pursue and implement other actions or activities that would be clearly effective in achieving the goal should be strongly encouraged.

Potential Activities

Website

Establish and maintain a website that would include a variety of information relevant to Outreach and Education goals. Examples are background information on the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, an explanation of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon

Brook Wild and Scenic Designation, access to pertinent documents including the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook River Management Plan, maps and images and material about volunteer opportunities and funding opportunities. Contact information and related links, such as links to sites with up-to-date information on river protection techniques that have been used successfully in other areas (e.g., the Center for Watershed Protection, EPA, CT DEP websites), should also be included.

ORV Presentations

Develop and distribute information about the Outstanding Resource Values of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook and how the Wild and Scenic Management Plan provides for their long-term protection and management. This could be done through PowerPoint presentations, videos for community television stations, printed materials, photography contests and/or formation of a speaker's bureau to give presentations to local civic service organizations, garden clubs, and similar groups.

Volunteer Opportunities

Continue and expand existing Farmington River Watershed Association and Salmon Brook Watershed Association volunteer opportunities with students, land trusts, local service organizations and other residents. Activities to continue or expand include vernal pool monitoring, water quality monitoring, stream walk surveys, invasive plant removal and river clean ups. Such opportunities are excellent ways to engage members of the local communities in discrete projects that provide an important service to stream protection and a significant sense of investment and accomplishment to the volunteers.

Recreational Opportunities

Work with local organizations such as the Farmington River Watershed Association (FRWA), the Salmon Brook Watershed Association (SBWA), the Farmington River Anglers Association, the Farmington River Club, the Farmington Valley Rowing Club, Holcomb Farm Learning Center, Inc., the Appalachian Mountain Club, local land trusts and other such organizations to provide recreational opportunities for the public to experience the river (e.g., through nature hikes, bird walks and canoe trips).

Photo: Tom Cameron



...bring further public attention to the Outstanding Resource Values and the management challenges of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook.

Information for Riverfront Landowners

Develop and help towns distribute a simple, understandable brochure for riverfront landowners that 1.) summarizes the existing local, state, and federal regulations that may affect them and how those regulations are implemented, and 2.) provides addresses and phone numbers of the appropriate offices or agencies at each level of government. To ensure accurate descriptions of each town's regulations, different brochures should be prepared in consultation and cooperation with the local land use commissions for distribution in each town.

Information on Best Management Practices for Landowners

Provide information and assistance to landowners on techniques to enhance their stewardship of riverfront property. This could include: 1.) identifying sources of information and expertise regarding the management of forest lands, wildlife habitat and wetland vegetation, 2.) organizing workshops and providing follow-up assistance on voluntary land protection techniques, such as conservation easements and deed covenants and 3.) providing information on the use of Best Management Practices to control non-point source pollution, and on funding opportunities to implement demonstration projects using Best Management Practices.

Land Use Commissions

As membership on local Planning and Zoning, Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commissions typically changes, the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Wild and Scenic Committee will need to establish regular communications with the land use commissions in each town, sharing with them updates on Management Plan implementation, new resource management strategies and the status of Outstanding Resource Value quality. The Wild and Scenic Committee should provide towns with existing publications for distribution to land owners, developers, local land use boards and other relevant people about the causes of non-point source pollution, its potential impacts on water quality and other instream resources, and methods for reducing or eliminating it. The Committee should also provide land use commissions with information on river protection techniques that have been used successfully in other areas.

Periodic Newsletters/Publications

Publish a brief newsletter on a semi-annual basis to provide information on the Outstanding Resource Values of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook, to keep all stakeholders informed of committee activities and report on the current water quality and other conditions of the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook. Publish other brochures or informational booklets as necessary to promote key management issues or unique natural, cultural or recreational aspects of the watershed.

Workshops/Training/Professional Development Opportunities

Offer and fund periodic educational workshops and/or training sessions to the public to promote the Outstanding Resource Values and actions that can be taken to address key watercourse management issues such as riparian corridor management and preventing polluted stormwater runoff. Help organize and fund workshops for town staff and commission members to facilitate the updating of town regulations. Provide scholarship assistance for professional development for the staff of non-profits organizations involved with protection of the Outstanding Resource Values. Offer a scholarship to high school or college students from the Study Towns interested in pursuing a career in environmental studies.

Local Schools

Engage local primary and secondary schools with place-based multi-disciplinary opportunities to promote the resources of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook. Activities might include educational programs in the classroom, volunteer opportunities such as aquatic insect sampling and salmon reintroduction or literature and art projects that use the Farmington River and Salmon Brook and its resources as subject matter. Promote river-related activities in local schools, as well as with local service organizations and other groups. Promote and facilitate the use of existing programs such as Salmon in the Classroom, the FRWA watershed curriculum, local Nature Center programs, etc.

Annual Protection Progress Reports

Provide an annual report to all stakeholders, including riverfront landowners, local chief

elected officials, land use commissions and state and congressional representatives reporting on achievements for the year and the status of protection efforts. Identify and recognize each town's activities to implement the Management Plan's recommendations in this report. Recognize outstanding conservation achievements by individuals and groups in the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook.

Publicity/Media

Work with FRWA and SBWA to maintain an up-to-date database of media contact information to promote various workshops, training and volunteer opportunities. Release the Annual Protection Progress Report to the media to bring further public attention to the Outstanding Resource Values and the management challenges of the Farmington River and Salmon Brook.

Information Centers

Develop informational exhibits on issues pertaining to the Lower Farmington River and Salmon Brook Outstanding Resource Values that can be displayed at public facilities such as nature centers, libraries, town halls and trail kiosks to increase public awareness.

River Keeper

Explore the possibility of funding a river keeper program, working with the FRWA and SBWA to oversee the general health of the Wild and Scenic portions of the Farmington River (upper and lower) and Salmon Brook.