



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CT River Valley Summit to Focus on Balance Between Economic, Ecological Pursuits Across Watershed

ESSEX, CT — Improving and maintaining the health of the Connecticut River and the vital watershed that feeds and protects it will be the focus of the 2026 Connecticut River Valley Summit.

Organized by the Connecticut River Museum, this third annual event is scheduled for May 2 at Wesleyan University, Fayerweather–Beckham Hall, from 10 am. to 4 p.m., and will be accessible via Zoom.

The Museum collaborated with Wesleyan's Bailey College of the Environment as well as an Advisory Council with members from the Connecticut River Watershed Partnership, the Plastic Pollution Coalition, the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Connecticut's Department of Environmental Science and Forestry, and local legislators.

The summit will feature scientists, policymakers, business leaders, environmental advocates, academics, and representatives of cultural and civic organizations from across New England. The event is intended to develop and strengthen solutions to keep the river and its watershed healthy for future generations by sharing knowledge, forging new connections, and exploring opportunities for collaboration.

This year's theme is '**Resilient Growth: Balancing Economy, Ecology, and Equity.**' Through keynote presentations, panel discussions, and collaborative workshops, the summit will explore strategies for sustainable development, climate adaptation, economic revitalization, housing, transportation, and cross-state collaboration.

Displays of local innovation and sustainability initiatives will also be featured as well as opportunities for networking.

"The success of our two previous Connecticut River Valley summits has led to a vibrant roster of speakers representing a broad spectrum of specialties for this year's summit," said Elizabeth Kaeser, Executive Director of the Connecticut River Museum. "This diversity of experiences and perspectives will allow us to touch on topics relevant to the entire length of the River, and a wide variety of issues affecting the multi-state watershed that serves the River."

Featured presentations include:

Leveraging community and Collaborative Science to Restore Healthy Habitats in the Connecticut River Watershed

— Ron Rhodes, Director of Programs, Connecticut River Conservancy, will discuss how nonprofit organizations with limited staff and financial capacity can advance science-based assessment and habitat restoration strategies. He will share how community science, seasonal support, partnerships, and other forms of collaboration combine for a stewardship model that scales positive ecological results.

Resilient Road-Stream Crossings: Assessment, Prioritization, and Implementation

— Emily Hadzopulos, Freshwater Restoration Project Manager, The Nature Conservancy, Connecticut, will address issues surrounding ineffective culverts and how they block wildlife movement, disrupt stream function, and increase vulnerability to extreme weather. With approximately 25,000 culverts across Connecticut upgrading this infrastructure is critical for ecological and community climate resilience. This presentation outlines a clear process to meet this challenge.

Resilient East Haddam: Adapting to flooding in Downtown East Haddam

— John Truscinski, Director of Resilience Planning, Connecticut Institute for Resilience and Climate Adaptation, will explain how the Resilient East Haddam planning study evaluated alternatives for flood mitigation to community assets in Downtown East Haddam. These include the town's wastewater treatment plant, as well as Goodspeed Opera House facilities, residential properties and critical roadways. The presentation will review outcomes from the study.

Restoring the Mill River: Balancing Climate Resilience, Historic Infrastructure, and Ecological Recovery

— Daniel Miller, PhD. Senior Environmental Scientist, Tighe & Bond, will discuss the D.F. Riley Grist Mill Dam removal feasibility study on the Mill River in Hatfield, Mass., and how river restoration can improve habitat connectivity while addressing aging infrastructure, legacy sediment, and climate-driven hydrologic change. This presentation highlights integrated hydraulic modeling, sediment evaluation, cultural resources assessment, and structural assessment used to guide design in a historically complex setting, offering lessons for balancing ecological recovery, public safety, and resilience in New England river systems.

River Power: Atomic Energy, Activism, and Acts of Memory along the Connecticut River

— Amrys Williams, Executive Director, Connecticut League of Museums, and Jon Kozak, Public History Master's Student, Central Connecticut State University, will share their research regarding the Connecticut Yankee Atomic Power Plant and its relevance to contemporary debates over the future of energy in Connecticut and New England. This presentation will bring together the perspectives of history and environmental activism to trace the useful past of the Connecticut River, drawing on archival research and environmental and oral history to examine the ambitions and legacies of this site for the town, state, and Connecticut River watershed and region.

Panel Discussion: Power of Partnership — Moderator Rebecca Todd, Executive Director, Connecticut River Conservancy, will lead a discussion featuring panelists MaryEllen Mateleska, VP of Education & Conservation, Mystic Aquarium; Ava Goodale, Director of the Center for Service and Global Citizenship, Deerfield Academy, and Kate Ten Eyck, Artistic Director, TunnelVision.

Sound Gardens: Watershed Wise Landscaping and Gardening — Margaret Cozens, Outreach Coordinator for the Long Island Sound Partnership, Connecticut Sea Grant, will explain this new initiative through the Long Island Sound Partnership that seeks to educate the public on best practices for sustainable gardening and landscaping within the context of a clean Long Island Sound and healthy watershed. This presentation will educate potential partners on the project and will provide information on opportunities to be involved.

Information about ticket options, the full agenda, and more [is available here](#).

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