



# Southern New England Coastal Program

Conserving the Nature of New England

*Tuesday,  
December 9, 2014*

## **Field Notes**

Last year, the Service began a partnership with Common Ground High School through the New Haven Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership. Common Ground recently wrote an article capturing sentiments from urban community members about their experience creating Schoolyard Habitats. See the full article here: <http://commongroundct.org/2014/11/east-rock-and-edgewood-schools-partner-with-common-ground-to-create-wildlife-habitat/> (accessed December 2014). "We hope to design a habitat that attracts migratory wildlife including songbirds, shorebirds, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, insects and more. Our goal would be for our schoolyard habitat to have a lasting impact on the local environment!" - East Rock School Principal, Peggy Pelley



USFWS Coastal Program and Refuge staff collaborate to engage local students. The team works together to move seating logs and build outdoor classrooms at three Schoolyard Habitat sites throughout the city of New Haven.

A public information meeting on the White Rock Dam removal project, located in Westerly, RI and Stonington, CT, was held on December 3, 2014 in Westerly, RI. In attendance at the meeting were approximately 45 local citizens and nine staff representing partner organizations. Lori Benoit represented the Service at the meeting. The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island, the project administrator, hosted the event. The main speaker, an engineer from the firm Fuss and

O'Neil, Inc., gave a presentation on the history of the dam, current site conditions, and preliminary plans for removing the dam.

The response from the audience was very positive. Questions focused on the proposed reduction in flood levels, the benefits of the project for migratory fish, and changes in use of that section of the Pawcatuck River for paddlers. In advance of this larger public meeting, a smaller, more focused information session for recreational paddlers was held on November 29 to provide an opportunity for open dialogue with this active user group. This meeting was hosted by the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association, with TNC staff and Suzanne Paton of the Service in attendance.

The Service, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island and Connecticut, the Wood Pawcatuck Watershed Association, the RI Department of Environmental Management's Division of Fish and Wildlife, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Inland Fisheries Division, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Restoration Center, proposes to restore fish passage and mitigate future flood impacts through the removal of the White Rock Dam. This dam is the first impediment to fish passage on the lower Pawcatuck River. Removal of the dam will restore fish passage and access to important spawning and rearing habitat for river herring, American shad, Atlantic salmon, sea run trout, and the American eel.

As the lead federal agency, the Service is providing technical assistance and funding from Hurricane Sandy recovery funds. These funds are being administered by The Nature Conservancy of Rhode Island via a cooperative agreement with the Service.

SNEP website: <http://www.fws.gov/r5sneq/>

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