

WHAT'S NEW IN THE FIVE MILE RIVER?

As the spring and summer finally arrive, we are reactivating our efforts to preserve the Five Mile River and its entire watershed from New Canaan to Long Island Sound by doing all that we can to reduce the possibility of flooding and water pollution.

West Norwalk is a unique residential area of single-family homes surrounding the remaining elements of a historic rural village, including a chapel, general store, post office, and schoolhouse. The oldest homes date back to the mid-eighteenth century. According to the "Norwalk Historic Resources Inventory," there are ten existing houses that were built between 1740 and 1800, sixteen existing houses built between 1801 and 1850, and another eight built during the last half of the nineteenth century. In addition to historic houses, West Norwalk contains miles of stone walls that outline the locations of former farm areas. This landscape is repeated as you travel south into the village of Rowayton and the bordering town of Darien, and high real estate values contribute to the tax base of each town.

Within Norwalk, the Five Mile River flows down from New Canaan along the western edge of town, continuing into Darien and Rowayton before ultimately joining the Long Island Sound. As it flows through West Norwalk, the river opens up into four major ponds: the Millard Pond, the Florsheim Pond, and two adjoining ponds along Morehouse Lane. These ponds teem with wildlife, such as turtles, ospreys, herons, ducks, geese and fish, all of which make their homes here. Preserving this habitat is essential to upholding the quality of life to which residents have become accustomed to, but this idyllic landscape described above will change forever unless positive actions are taken to repair the damage that has already been done.

A report released by the South Western Regional Planning Agency (SWRPA) in 2012 found that the water quality of the Five Mile River did not meet State standards. Presence of *E. coli* and excessive nutrients has negatively affected marine life in the river. In addition, a recent editorial in *The Hour* cites efforts to remove these same contaminants from Long Island Sound. Senator Chris Murphy is strongly supporting this effort. Of course, rivers other than the Five Mile River flow into the Sound, carrying these contaminants with them.

Correction of these undesirable conditions will require effort from all of us. Future editions of this newsletter will recommend actions to be taken by residents, the city and all stakeholders to help preserve and improve the quality of the Five Mile River. Stay tuned for more information.