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Let's Be Water Wise! (Updated May 2020)

May 2020 Update: We're back with a final water feature, recognizing the great work that has happened with Retain the Rain.

As part of our National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant, we're working on increasing awareness about the importance of our local waters and the greater Long Island Sound watershed. So you might catch some fun water facts through our [Retain the Rain program](https://hartfordclimate.org/water/retaintherain/) (<https://hartfordclimate.org/water/retaintherain/>), social media (<https://twitter.com/hartfordclimate?lang=en>), and our [newsletter](https://hartford.us15.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=676950f31c2ad5dc564b77b28&id=d18074a634) (<https://hartford.us15.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=676950f31c2ad5dc564b77b28&id=d18074a634>), and we'll keep a running list of our water facts and photos on this page. Looking for events? Check out our [Bright Green Hartford Calendar](https://hartfordclimate.org/brightgreenhartford/#Calendar) (<https://hartfordclimate.org/brightgreenhartford/#Calendar>).

Have your own photos or fun facts about Hartford's waters, the Connecticut River, or the Long Island Sound? Tag us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/hartfordclimate?lang=en) (<https://twitter.com/hartfordclimate?lang=en>) to share the knowledge!

#10 – May 2020 – Environmental Stewardship



(December 2018) Celebrating the Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant award at Keney Park – Har CT

The mission of the City of Hartford Mayor's Office of Sustainability is to advance the city's economy, improve public health and quality of life, and promote social equity while becoming a global leader in environmental stewardship. Like our mission, we work to affect change with and through our community of residents, businesses, nonprofits, and government agencies. Our National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Long Island Sound Futures Fund grant is one example of how we worked together to create a greener, cleaner Hartford, Connecticut River, and Long Island Sound. Through the generous support of NFWF and with the partnership of Keney Park Sustainability Project, Our Piece of the Pie, the Mayor's Youth Service Corps, the City's Department of Public Works and Department of Family, Children, Youth & Recreation, as well as the Metropolitan District and many

others from KNOX, Riverfront Recapture, Hartford Fire Department and more, we've pulled together a program that can help Hartford residents and local organizations save money by intercepting and repurposing rainwater that would have otherwise become stormwater runoff, which can contribute to water pollution in our streams, Connecticut River, and Long Island Sound watershed.

Through this program, hundreds of rain barrels, downspout diverters/extensions, trees, and composters have been distributed throughout the Hartford area. Over a thousand people have been reached through direct program outreach, education, and engagement. Through this effort, Hartford also ranked 28th among cities of its size in the 2019 Wyland National Mayor's Challenge for Water Conservation. We've been excited share these wins, and many thanks to everyone who helped make these incredible outcomes possible. We hope those that participated in this program will be inspired to continue being environmental stewards and work toward making Hartford, the Connecticut River, and the Long Island Sound cleaner, greener.

Photo taken in 2018: Partners celebrate the award of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Long Island Sound Futures Fund Grant

Water Fact #9- November 2019 – Long Island Sound Futures Fund



Long Island Sound – Stamford, CT

This year, our Bright Green Hartford Retain the Rain program is generously supported by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Long Island Sound Futures Fund. This fund was initiated by NFWF, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the Long Island Sound Study (LISS). In celebrating the year since we first we received this support, we'd like to recognize the mission and goals of each of these groups.

- The **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation** was created by Congress in 1984, and is currently the nation's largest private conservation grant-maker. In partnership with the Long Island Sound Study through U.S. EPA's Long Island Sound Office, NFWF manages the Long Island Sound Futures Fund, which has invested \$19.6 million in 416 projects to date, including our own Retain the Rain program in Hartford. (Source: NFWF (<https://www.nfwf.org/lisff/Pages/home.aspx>))
- The **US Environmental Protection Agency** is a federal agency whose mission is to protect human health and the environment. EPA works across various environmental areas and performs various services, including enforcement, research, sponsorship, and more. From air quality, habitat conservation, brownfield remediation, and more, the EPA works to keep our communities healthy, safe, and strong. (Source: EPA) (<https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/frequently-asked-questions-long-island-sound-watershed-permitting>)
- The **Long Island Sound Study** is a bi-state partnership comprised of the EPA, New York and Connecticut agencies, organizations, and individuals. LISS works to implement, educate, and monitor the Sound, with priority on projects that include reduction in nutrient loads, habitat restoration, public involvement and education, and water quality monitoring. (Source: LISS) (<http://longislandsoundstudy.net/>)

A big thank you to each of these groups, which all help to create a cleaner, greener Connecticut!

Water Fact #8- October 2019 – Resilience



View of the CT River, bound by levee systems on both sides – Hartford, CT

Like many cities that lie adjacent to water, Hartford has extensive flood infrastructure to ensure resilience and public safety. Hartford's system of levees is complex, with over six miles of earthen dikes, nearly a mile of concrete floodwalls, and six pumping stations. Built in the late 30's and early 40's, this system has kept our city safe for decades, protecting over 25% of the grand list.

However, the system is aging, creating strain on our infrastructure that becomes more vulnerable as Hartford experiences more intense and frequent storms and greater spring snow-melts. With more storms and snow-melt, there is more water, which puts pressure on the system. As Hartford is highly developed, the stormwater that falls on roofs, streets, and other impervious areas enters our combined sewer system, which can overflow to the our local waters when overwhelmed. These overflows result in over 1/2 billion gallons of stormwater-sewage mix entering our waters every year. To reduce volume to the river and stress on our aging levee system, one important intervention is capturing the stormwater where it falls.

With the use of green infrastructure like trees and rain barrels, rainwater can be intercepted. Hartford's urban forest is estimated to intercept over 590 million gallons of water every year. Rain barrels can also store the water for later use, allowing individuals to save money when using the water for gardens, lawns, or other greywater uses. (Sources: City of Hartford, Clean Water Project, Hartford Climate Action Plan, American Forests)

Water Fact #7- September 2019 – Local Waters



CT DEEP and HPD at Keney Park Pond, Hartford – CT

Hartford's local waterbodies flow to the Connecticut River and eventually to the Long Island Sound. Each of our local waters plays a small, but important part in the larger picture. So this month we'd like to recognize our small, but mighty waterways.

In every corner of Hartford, you'll find a new treasure. In north Hartford, you can check out the North Branch Park River that winds along the University of Hartford and UConn School of Law campuses, or visit the charming Keney Park Pond (pictured above with CT DEEP and HPD) in the heart of the historic ~700 acre Keney Park. On the other side of Hartford, you can find a trail along the South Branch Park River; the trail starts at the intersection of Brookfield St & Flatbush Ave.

Although you may not see it, water flows under us as well. The Park River, also known as the Hog River, flows underground through the city center. The Arch and pond at Bushnell Park are remnants of the time when the river flowed above-ground. Who knew there was so much mystery to the history of Hartford? Check out your local waters today!

Water Fact #6- August 2019 – Green Infrastructure



Bioswale overlooking the North Branch Park River at the UConn School of Law, Hartford – CT

Hartford has a combined sewer system, which means that rainwater enters the same system as our wastewater. During storms, the system's capacity is overwhelmed with rain and can often cause combined sewer overflows (CSOs) of untreated stormwater-sewage mix to enter our local waterways, all of which lead to the CT River and eventually the Long Island Sound.

What are some solutions? Green infrastructure (GI) uses or mimics natural features, such as plants and rainwater harvesting, to intercept stormwater. Widespread adoption of GI can help reduce CSOs, while also providing benefits such as cleaner air, cooler city streets, and increased green space. One GI solution is a bioswale or rain garden, which uses vegetation and soils to capture and filter stormwater runoff. In Hartford, rain gardens and bioswales have been placed at residential, commercial, public areas. UConn's School of Law boasts two bioswales (one is pictured above), which help reduce the impact of runoff and erosion from the parking lot to the North Branch Park River (<http://www.parkwatershed.org/current/1017-2/>). (Sources: Clean Water Project (<https://www.thecleanwaterproject.com/about-project/problem>), EPA (<https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure>), Park Watershed (<http://www.parkwatershed.org/current/1017-2/>))

Water Fact #5- July 2019 – Placemaking



Riverfront Recapture Food Truck Festival, Hartford – CT

Where there's water, there's fun, and Hartford is no exception. While you'll find lots of amazing activities along the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound, there's no denying that Hartford Has It (<https://hartford.com/>) when it comes to riverfront fun!

Local nonprofit Riverfront Recapture maintains a network of riverside parks and trails that cover 148 acres along the Connecticut River. These parks feature trails for walking, exercising, picnicking, playing, fishing, bird-watching, and so much more. Riverfront Recapture also offers a holistic experience, providing classes (<http://www.riverfront.org/events/freefitness>) and events (<http://www.riverfront.org/events>) throughout the year. Through decades of effort in placemaking, Riverfront has helped shape Hartford's waterfront area into a true gem.

Major events include the Food Truck Festival (<http://www.riverfront.org/events/food-truck-festival>), the upcoming Fireworks (<http://www.riverfront.org/events/fireworks>), as well as next month's Dragon Boat & Asian Festival (<http://www.riverfront.org/events/dragon-boat-asian-festival>). The sky's the limit, so head on over to experience the Connecticut River today! (Source: Riverfront Recapture (<http://www.riverfront.org/events>))

Water Fact #4- June 2019 – Ride Along the River



Connecticut River, Springfield – MA

What are some greener ways you can experience the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound? Ride (or walk) along the River and the Sound by rail, bus, or bike!

- **CT Rail:** Head north to Springfield on the Hartford Line (<http://www.hartfordline.com/>) to see more of the Connecticut River, or go south towards New Haven to experience the Long Island Sound. You can also see more of the Sound and Coastal Connecticut if you transfer to a Metro North (http://as0.mta.info/mnr/schedules/sched_form.cfm) or Shore Line East (<https://shorelineeast.com/>) train.
- **CTTransit/CTFastrak:** The Greater Hartford area's bus system is the most heavily used in the state, with over 15 million trips every year (Source: CT DOT (https://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/plng_studies/ct_statewide_bus/ct_statewide_bus_study_final_report_february_2018v2.pdf)). Take one of over 70 bus routes (<https://www.cttransit.com/>) to head downtown, and you'll find the CT River close by at the stunning Riverside Park. Or head south on a weekday, and hop on express bus 921 (https://www.cttransit.com/schedules?combine_route_name_no=Middletown/Old%20Saybrook%20Express) or 950 (https://www.cttransit.com/schedules?combine_route_name_no=New%20Haven-Hartford%20Express) to see the Long Island Sound.

- **Bike/Walk:** Staying local? Visit Riverfront Recapture's Riverside Park (<http://www.riverfront.org/parks/riverside-park>) (Hartford) and Great River Park (<http://www.riverfront.org/parks/great-river-park>) (East Hartford) for scenic river runs. Want to go cross country instead? You can experience the Long Island Sound by heading south on the East Coast Greenway (<https://www.greenway.org/about/the-east-coast-greenway>) from Hartford to New York. You could also keep going as far as Florida if you're up for the challenge!

Water Fact #3- May 2019 – Long Island Sound



Long Island Sound, New Haven – CT

Our previous water facts discuss Hartford's integral connection with the Connecticut River, but how does our incredible river connect to the region as a whole? The Connecticut River feeds into the Long Island Sound, an 18 trillion gallon-estuary where saltwater from the ocean mixes with fresh water from rivers. As the longest river in New England, it's no surprise that the Connecticut River is a critical feature of the Sound, providing over 70% of the fresh water that enters the estuary.

Designated by Congress as an Estuary of National Significance, the Long Island Sound is an amazing ecosystem and resource, home to over 1,000 different species and driver of various industries including tourism, shipping, recreation, shellfish harvesting, and more. All together, these industries contribute approximately \$9 billion to the regional economy each year, and this productivity is only possible with a

healthy, clean Long Island Sound. (Sources: [Long Island Sound Study \(http://longislandsoundstudy.net/about-the-sound/by-the-numbers/\)](http://longislandsoundstudy.net/about-the-sound/by-the-numbers/), [Connecticut River Conservancy \(https://www.ctriver.org/\)](https://www.ctriver.org/))

Water Fact #2- April 2019 – Connecticut River



Founders Bridge and the Connecticut River, Hartford – CT

At over 400 miles long, the Connecticut River is the longest river in New England, stretching from the Canadian border down to the Long Island Sound. Given its immense size, it's no surprise that the river has a tremendous impact on the region. Its watershed is home to over 2 million residents, around 400 communities, and a variety of threatened and endangered species.

As the oldest and second largest city on the Connecticut River, Hartford plays an important role in maintaining a healthy river and preserving this precious community resource. When we reduce stormwater runoff with rain barrels and pick up litter off the streets, we help keep our river clean of pollution from sewage overflows and trash and preserve habitat for species such as the bald eagle (which can be found nesting right here in Hartford). Want help in keeping our waterways clean? Get free green infrastructure materials as part of our [Retain the Rain \(https://hartfordclimate.org/water/retaintherain/\)](https://hartfordclimate.org/water/retaintherain/) program. (Source: [Connecticut River Conservancy \(https://www.ctriver.org/\)](https://www.ctriver.org/), [American Rivers \(https://www.americanrivers.org/river/connecticut-river/\)](https://www.americanrivers.org/river/connecticut-river/))

Water Fact #1- March 2019 – Connecticut River



Mortenson Riverfront Plaza and the Connecticut River, Hartford – CT

The Connecticut River is the first and only National Blueway, a designation that recognizes the national significance and value of healthy river systems. Our historic river received this honor (as part of the now defunct America's Great Outdoors Rivers Initiative), thanks to the partnership and work of regional stakeholders such as the Friends of the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, the Connecticut River Watershed Council, state agencies, and many other partners. (Source: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (<https://www.fws.gov/northeast/ctblueway.html>))

*The Hartford Mayor's Office of Sustainability is funded in part by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Long Island Sound Futures Fund. The views contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the opinions or policies of the U.S. Government or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and its funding sources. Mention of trade names or commercial products does not constitute their endorsement by the U.S. Government, or the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation or its funding sources.

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