



**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**
OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
79 ELM STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06106-5127

To: Mark W. Alexander - Transportation Assistant Planning Director
DOT - Office of Environmental Planning, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, Newington

From: David J. Fox - Senior Environmental Analyst **Telephone:** 860-424-4111

Date: April 16, 2015 **E-Mail:** david.fox@ct.gov

Subject: Willimantic River Bridge Replacement, Coventry & Mansfield

The Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) has reviewed the Notice of Scoping for proposed replacement of the Route 275 bridge over the Willimantic River between Coventry and Mansfield. The following comments are submitted for your consideration.

Staff of the Inland Water Resources Division have met with DOT regarding this project so that permit requirements and potential issues have already been explored. It is anticipated that the requirement for an inland wetlands and watercourses permit for the project will be met by the *General Permit for Water Resource Construction Activities*. Flood management certification will also be required.

The Department owns property immediately adjacent to the project location on both sides of the river immediately north of Route 275 and east of the river to the south of Route 275. It is likely that the project would entail a need for property rights from the Department. Any requests for temporary or permanent property rights from DEEP should be requested using DEEP's Land Management Request Application. All such requests are reviewed by a multidisciplinary panel of DEEP staff that comprise the DEEP Property Management Review Team. Town-owned open space in the immediate vicinity includes the parcel immediately south of Route 275 on the west side of the river (Coventry) and the Eagleville Preserve (Mansfield) immediately south of the DEEP property south of Route 275 (map available at: [Eagleville Preserve](#)).

The project should be undertaken with full understanding and consideration of the significant cultural and recreational resources of this stretch of the Willimantic River. The Willimantic River Greenway was officially designated in 2003 by the Connecticut Greenways Council. As part of the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor, it is designated a Connecticut Heritage Area pursuant to section 23-81a of the Connecticut General Statutes. The river has also been designated as a National Recreation Trail (NRT) in 2013. The Last Green Valley, Inc. (TLGV), designated management entity for the federally designated The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, successfully applied for the NRT designation with the local assistance of the Willimantic River Alliance, Inc. As a designation requirement, TLGV has developed access management plans and information kiosks for the NRT in two locations, adjacent to the bridge. Public use of the NRT, including the kiosks, is expected during construction phases of the bridge replacement project.

Final project design and construction contracts should recognize that replacement of the bridge structure is nested within the popular Eagleville Lake Dam recreational area that includes two DEEP managed parking lots, a cartop boat launch and the Eagleville Preserve, all within the historically significant Eagleville village. Construction sequencing should be sensitive to public access to the river and adjacent cultural resources by minimizing disruption to the State Greenway and National Recreation Trail. It is recommended that a State Greenway sign be installed, along with a standard DOT sign for the Willimantic River.

Over the last decade, the Department's biennial integrated water quality assessments of this stretch of the Willimantic River have indicated a stressed aquatic system, sometimes in, and other times out of, full support of Connecticut Water Quality Standards. The 2012 *Statewide Total Maximum Daily Load Analysis for Bacteria Impaired Waters* includes an appendix (available on-line at: [Willimantic TMDL Appendix](#)) for the Willimantic River to reflect excess *E. coli* fecal indicator bacteria. The design and construction phases of the project should be undertaken with due consideration of the threatened water quality of this stretch of river. It is recommended that the final bridge superstructure design should include roosting bird prevention measures, that if not addressed can result in localized bacteria source loading into the river. In addition, the stormwater management plan and design should address the widening of impervious surface area with water quality treatment and volume reduction measures for the discharge to the river.

The Natural Diversity Data Base has reviewed the project in response to a request from DOT. In the response from Dawn McKay dated December 10, 2014, it was reported that there are records of the wood turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*), a state special concern species, in the project area. Adherence to the protective strategies and protocols outlined in the DOT submission, *Notice to Contractor - Endangered Species*, will be sufficient to ensure that the proposed project will not have an adverse impact on the species.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this proposal. If you have any questions concerning these comments, please contact me.

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