

SUSTAINABLE WESTON

Be Waterwise, in five easy steps

By Andy Bill, Sustainable Weston



Water quality is an important issue the world over, but it's particularly important here in Weston where most of our water comes from wells that draw from a common underground aquifer.

Sustainable Weston, an in-town conservancy group, recently invited Louise Washer to give a talk at Lachat Farm, detailing ways we can protect our precious water resource. Louise is president of the Norwalk River Watershed Association and serves on the Norwalk Mayor's Water Quality Committee (full bio below). During her excellent presentation she outlined the situation in Lower Fairfield County, addressed the threats, and left us with five easy ways to be "waterwise."

NEXT ISSUE

TOWN OF WESTON RECYCLING GUIDE

Louise Washer (pictured below second from left,) is president of the Norwalk River Watershed Association, serves on the Norwalk Mayor's Water Quality Committee and the steering committee for the Hudson to Housatonic Conservation Partnership (H2H). She also serves on the steering committee of the Pollinator Pathway Northeast project, which she helped found in 2017 and has helped expand to over 275 towns across the region.

*More info:
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LEARN MORE ABOUT SUSTAINABLE WESTON HERE:

[HTTPS://WWW.WESTONCT.GOV/GOVERNMENT/BOARDS-COMMISSIONS/APPOINTED](https://www.westonct.gov/government/boards-commissions/appointed)



THE CHALLENGE

70% of Connecticut's rivers are considered "impaired," meaning that they fail to meet safety standards for "allowable bacteria" and "dissolved oxygen." Two local rivers, the Norwalk River and the Saugatuck, failed 73% and 56% of the time, respectively, for bacteria in 2019 and 50% and 29% of the time (respectively) in 2020, which was less rainy. The pollution in our rivers due to stormwater runoff has become so acute that during the rainy year 2018, recreational shell fishing near the mouths of our rivers had to be off limits for all but three weeks of the season.

THREATS

Contributing factors range from climate change to lawn care. Intensified by the changing climate, storms are damaging wetlands, eroding riverbanks and shorelines, creating increasingly harmful surges of runoff which contain everything from pesticides and petroleum products to PFAS and microplastics. Here in Lower Fairfield County, 40% of the water we use goes to keep our gardens green and, in summer, that number surges to 70%. Unfortunately, the shallow root systems of lawn grass retain little of that water, allowing fertilizers and E.coli (from pet waste and leaking septic systems) to run directly into wetlands, streams, rivers and ultimately the Sound.

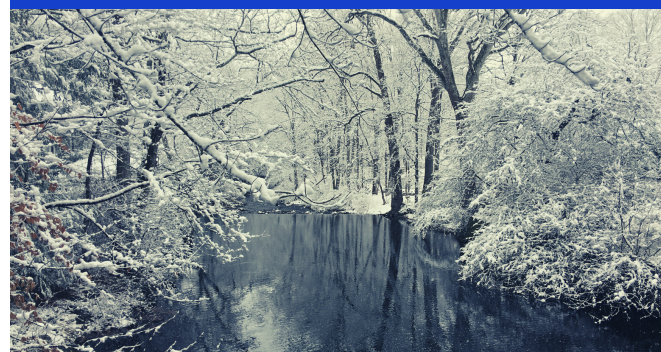
FIVE EASY WAYS TO BE WATERWISE:

- Maintain your septic
- Join the Pollinator Pathway
- Keep water on-site
- Conserve water
- Be careful what you throw away



Be River Smart

Clean Water Starts With You



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RESOURCES

- Maintain your septic with regular inspections and pump-outs, every 1-3 years
 - <https://www.epa.gov/septic>
- Join the Pollinator Pathway:
 - <https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/weston>
 - plant natives, they don't need watering after they are established
 - reduce lawn size
 - avoid pesticides and chemical fertilizers (test soil to see if fertilizer is needed)
- Keep water on-site by adding rain barrels or rain gardens to catch water from downspouts and plant vegetative buffers along any wetlands, streams, or rivers
 - <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water/Watershed-Management/Low-Impact-Development-and-Green-Infrastructure-Municipal-Outreach>
- Conserve water in your home and in your yard:
 - <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Water/Water-Quantity/Water-Conservation>
 - Use smart meters on irrigation systems
 - Water early or late in the day
 - Install low-flow showers and toilets
 - Check toilets, irrigation systems, pool lines for leaks
- Be careful what you throw away:
 - Dispose of pet waste in the trash or a pet-waste processor (better)
 - Never flush old medication down the drain, use your town drop-off sites
 - Dispose of hazardous waste at your town's Hazardous Waste Disposal location
 - <https://www.westonct.gov/government/municipal-departments/public-works/stormwater-management-program>