



Thames River Watershed

In the Thames River watershed, the valleys of the Quinebaug and Shetucket rivers are designated by the U.S. Congress as a National Heritage Corridor known as the Last Green Valley—a place where natural and cultural resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally distinctive landscape.

Watershed *n.* The geographic area of land, also called a drainage basin, that receives and drains rainwater and melting snow into a specific body of water such as a river, lake or estuary. Every body of water has its own watershed, and smaller watersheds are joined together to form larger watersheds.

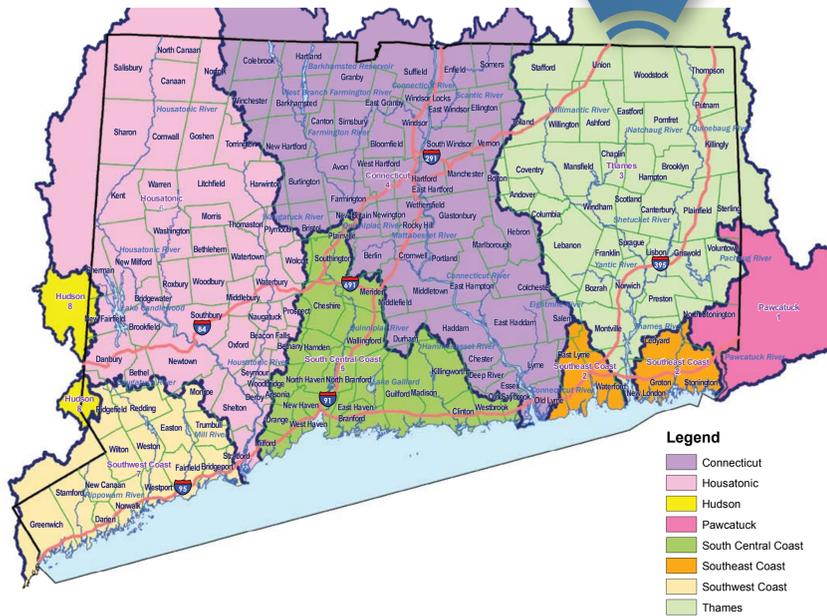
Watershed of the Thames

From the Norwich waterfront, the Thames River flows south 16 miles to Long Island Sound. Measured by the volume of fresh water it empties into the Sound, the Thames is the third largest river in Connecticut—behind the Connecticut and Housatonic. An intricate web of tributaries feeds into the Thames from the north, including the Quinebaug, Shetucket, and Yantic rivers. The Thames watershed of 1,500 square miles covers most of eastern Connecticut and parts of Rhode Island and Massachusetts. Within the watershed, rainwater and melting snow drain off the land, pulled downhill by gravity to the Thames and ultimately into Long Island Sound.

falling in the watershed runs off roads, parking lots, farms, lawns, and other surfaces. As the water runs over the ground and into storm drains, it picks up pollutants such as oil, sand, debris, pesticides, bacteria from animal waste and nutrients from fertilizer. This runoff pollution can make its way to the Thames and eventually to Long Island Sound.

Long Island Sound depends on the environmental quality of its tributaries and watersheds. If the water flowing into the Sound is polluted, the water we swim in and fish we eat will be polluted too. Alone, each source of runoff pollution has only a small impact, but the cumulative impacts of many sources throughout the watershed can be significant. Everyone can help reduce runoff pollution, simply by being aware of how watersheds work. Everyday water-friendly practices, such as proper disposal of pet waste and limited use of fertilizers and pesticides, help keep Norwich Harbor, the Thames River and Long Island Sound clean for people, fish and wildlife.

There is a vital relationship linking the Thames, its watershed and Long Island Sound. An arm of the sea, the Thames is an estuary where salt water from the Sound mixes with fresh water from the watershed. As the tide rises and falls twice each day along the entire length of the river, precipitation



Major Connecticut Watersheds

Watershed map: Courtesy of The Last Green Valley, Inc.
 State watershed map: Courtesy of State of Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP)
 Aerial photo: Courtesy of G. Steadman
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