



NEWS RELEASE

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GOING WITH THE FLOW *Partnership Launches to Develop Water Management Plan for the Saugatuck River Watershed*

Bridgeport, CT: November 8, 2007 – Aquarion Water Company and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) are joining together to launch an innovative partnership aimed at meeting human needs for water while protecting key ecological processes well into the future. The partnership will officially launch with a signing agreement on November 8 at 11:00 a.m. at Aquarion Water Company’s Aspetuck Environmental Center at 714 Black Rock Turnpike in Easton, CT.

Together, Aquarion, TNC and a team of freshwater experts will develop a sustainable water management plan that protects the Saugatuck River’s rich diversity of plants and animals while ensuring clean drinking water, recreation and other essential community services throughout the river’s watershed.

“This is the first time that The Conservancy has worked with a private water company who has voluntarily committed to re-examining the pattern of releases out of its reservoirs to bolster freshwater ecology,” said Lise Hanners, Director of TNC in Connecticut. “We hope that Aquarion’s progressive thinking will set the stage for similar efforts by other private and public water suppliers and demonstrate that a healthy, sustainable balance between human and ecological needs can be achieved.”

“Aquarion understands that sound management of freshwater resources is key to maintaining the quality of life in our region,” said Aquarion Company President and CEO Charles V. Firlotte. “We believe that it is possible to create a flow management plan for the Saugatuck River basin that will achieve both public water supply and river ecosystem health goals and we look forward to working with The Nature Conservancy and other stakeholders in making this concept a reality that will benefit our customers and neighbors for years to come.”

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The Saugatuck River watershed covers over 57,000 acres in southwest Connecticut. Despite its location within the heavily populated New York metropolitan area, it is one of the healthiest river systems in southwestern Connecticut. The Saugatuck once sustained one of the state's largest rainbow smelt populations and productive shellfish beds, and many of its streams still support breeding populations of native brook trout, a species in decline throughout New England. Additionally, the Saugatuck is part of a public drinking water supply that provides drinking water for some 300,000 people in Fairfield County.

This partnership is unique in that Aquarion has taken a proactive and voluntary step to collaborate with TNC to develop a Flow Management Plan to enhance river ecology downstream of its Saugatuck and Aspetuck Reservoirs. Naturally flowing water—with seasonal highs and lows—is essential to river ecosystems. The flow of water is a river's pulse, and its variability helps to ensure a river's overall health and sustainability.

“Seasonal high waters trigger spawning migrations in fish and provide them access to upstream habitat. When these flows are reduced or stopped, fish lose habitat and cues essential to their life cycles. This doesn't just impact fish, but can also have a dramatic effect on wading birds, waterfowl and the diversity of plant life alongside the river,” remarked Mark P. Smith, Director of TNC's Eastern U.S. Freshwater Program. “Water demand as well as land and water management practices not only impact these habitats and species, but also surface and groundwater quality.”

“Working together with TNC and other Saugatuck watershed stakeholders is the best way to identify a method for balancing the competing needs for water in and out of the river,” said John J. Herlihy, Aquarion's Director of Water Quality and Environmental Management. “We hope that this project provides a model that can be applied to other public supply watersheds throughout the state,” Herlihy added.

TNC has worked in Connecticut since the 1960s to advance a holistic approach to freshwater conservation that protects streamside land, reestablishes connectivity and ensures natural flow. In 2004, the organization launched a Watershed Partnership planning process to turn its vision for the Saugatuck into reality. Over 17,000 acres of the watershed have been protected, thanks in part to early and continuing efforts by TNC and Aquarion; resource management will also help to protect this ecological treasure.

Now that the partnership has officially launched, Aquarion and TNC will work with local scientific experts to develop recommendations for in-stream flow. The process is designed to illuminate “win-win” possibilities, build consensus and avoid the wrangling that often encumbers more traditional water

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management and regulatory efforts. Once the plan is finalized, Aquarion is likely to modify the operations of the Saugatuck and Aspetuck Reservoirs to improve stream flow and will consider future release adjustments at other points in the system it operates. Ongoing monitoring of ecological results will be a centerpiece of the plan. For more information on the Saugatuck River watershed, please visit the website www.nature.org/Connecticut.

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. To date, the Conservancy and its more than one million members have been responsible for the protection of more than 15 million acres in the United States and have helped preserve more than 102 million acres in Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. [Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org).

Aquarion Company's principal business is public water supply. Through its Aquarion Water Company subsidiaries, it is one of the 10 largest investor-owned water utilities in the U.S., serving some 207,000 homes and businesses, or approximately 700,000 people, in 44 Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire communities. Aquarion Water Company of Connecticut provides high-quality water to 179,000 customers, or some 600,000 people, in 36 cities and towns. Visit www.aquarionwater.com for more information.

Directions to the Aspetuck Environmental Center: Merritt Parkway to exit 44. Take Rte 58 (Black Rock Turnpike) north approximately 5 miles to Aspetuck Valley Apple Barn – park across street and enter tent area.

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