

THE FARM RIVER ESTUARY *River Guide*

WELCOME

The Farm River Estuary (where fresh river water mixes with the salt water from Long Island Sound) is still a relatively wild, pristine and enormously complex productive, and fragile estuarine ecosystem with wooded uplands, high quality fresh water, and brackish tidal marshes. These picturesque floodplains, coves, and inlets provide a critical natural habitat for an immense variety of life forms that rely on it for food, water, and shelter, especially during migration and breeding.

Unfortunately, as more and more people flock to enjoy the estuary's natural beauty, they venture too close to wildlife, and the fragile balance is upset. Paddling quietly in a kayak or canoe especially creates the illusion that you are alone in nature; but you are not!

Please enjoy the Farm River Estuary as you would your own home, enjoy its natural beauty, and help protect it.

THE FARM RIVER

The Farm River begins 1) by rising from the land and 2) from a small brook flowing off Pistapaug Pond, which is partially within the towns of Wallingford, Durham and North Branford. Hence it flows southward 16 miles emptying into Long Island Sound.

THE ESTUARY BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE

The State holds title water-ward of the mean high water line for the public, and a waterfront owner may not exclude the public from lawful uses of the public trust area, just as an upland owner cannot exclude the public from driving or walking on the street in front of his or her house. Visitors, however, should exercise their rights responsibly, without disturbing property owners or others using the public shore. Thus visitors will always be welcomed.

BIRDS

The Farm River Estuary forms the southern end of an important migratory flyway that extends north through Connecticut into northern New England and Canada, and there is ample evidence that it is host to a number of Endangered, Threatened & Special Concern Birds. Many birds use the estuary to rest and refuel on their sometimes long migrations. Please enjoy but do not disturb them (especially nesting birds) as they need time on the mudflats to prepare for the next leg of their journey.

OSPREY

The osprey is a large bird of prey, which nests in coastal areas like the Farm River estuary until August, flies south to Florida, Mexico, and South America for the winter, and returns in late March. Preferred nest sites are on top of dead trees (snags), although they readily adapt to artificial platforms. Osprey usually return to the same nest each year. In the 1940s, the coastal zone between New York and Boston supported approximately 1,000 nests. DDT reduced this number to an all-time low of nine. Since the banning of DDT, the population has increased, but careful monitoring continues to be important, as human activity impedes their population growth. People including kayakers should stay at least 500 feet from osprey nests.

THE FARM RIVER STATE PARK

The Farm River State Park (about 61 acres) was acquired in 1998 as open space for environmental, educational and recreational uses. It is managed by Quinnipiac University in collaboration with Schooner, Inc. a non-profit marine education organization and the Sound School, an accredited college preparatory public high school. Friends of the Farm River Estuary, Inc., which is dedicated to environmentally sound use of the lower Farm River watershed, serves on the Advisory Board. The Farm River State Park is open from sunrise to sunset. Vehicle access is for registered users only. For further information call (203) 582- 3777.

THE TIDEGATE

The Tidegate was part of a mosquito control program, (c. 1900) to prevent outbreaks of malaria. Mosquito control began as a method of growing crops in the salt marshes during Colonial times. A series of ditches, the remains of which can be seen in the estuary, were dug to drain the marshes. The "wasteland" marshes could then be used for growing salt marsh hay (*Spartina patens*) and corn to feed livestock. In 1959 the control program maintained 9,292 acres of marshlands, 14 tidegates, 18 beach outlets, two dikes, and one sea wall. Approximately 1,800 acres of marsh had been filled, and a total of 4,181,400 feet of ditching had been dug. The need for ditches changed as society went from an agricultural to industrial-based economy.

Below the Tidegate is the remains of a once flourishing trap rock quarry operation (Tide Water Trap Rock Company (1894-1904) and Atlantic Trapping Company (1907). The river was then "a beehive of activity with barge traffic carrying stone in and out of the mouth of the river at a heavy rate." By 1942 operations had ceased.

The river water going through the remains of the tide gate can be dangerous at the turbulent times of the tide cycle.

BEACON HILL

Beacon Hill consists of 70 acres of state owned critical habitat including a small portion of tidal wetlands and a steep forested traprock ridge that rises 80 feet or more above the Farm River Estuary. Dramatic vertical rock cliffs and the remains of a small quarry operation mark the southern tip. From the top one has breathtaking panoramic views of Long Island Sound, the New Haven skyline, and the Farm River.

TROLLEY MUSEUM

The Shore Line Trolley Museum is the oldest continuously operating suburban trolley line in the United States. During the summer trolleys may be seen traveling along the Farm River Estuary about once an hour, as the Museum continues to operate restored trolleys over a 1.5 mile segment of the old "F" trolley route of the Connecticut Company, which started in 1900 and provided service from New Haven, through East Haven and Branford as far as Stony Creek. Visitors may tour the museum and ride the trolley for a small contribution.

KELSEY'S ISLAND

Kelsey's Island is privately owned with numerous small cabins used as summer homes. The public may use its magnificent beaches when water-ward of the mean high water line.

STATE COASTAL ACCESS SITES

The shore is held in public trust. Many sites contain fragile coastal resources or are located adjacent to privately-owned lands. Site conditions may change. Please respect these resources and neighbors and consider contacting the site or the municipality for current conditions before visiting.

| NAME | PARKING | ACTIVITIES | ENVIRONMENT | FACILITIES | SITE |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|---|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Farm River State Park | Registered Users Only | Boating Bird & Wildlife, Walkways | Rocky Shore, Tidal River Wetland | HC Access, Picnic Area, Sanitary Facilities | View of Farm River & Kelsey Island |
| Kelsey Landing | Lot | Bird & Wildlife | | HC Access, Picnic Area | View of Farm River |
| Whalers Point | Lot | Bird & Wildlife | | HC Access, Picnic Area | View of Farm River & Kelsey Island |
| Shoreline Trolley Museum | Lot | Bird & Wildlife Historic Cultural Interest, Walkways | Tidal River, Tidal Wetland | HC Access, Picnic Area, Sanitary Facilities (Seasonal) | Trolley rides through tidal wetland on vintage trolley cars. |

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**QUINNIPIAC
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Friends of the Farm River Estuary, Inc. (FFRE) was formed by local citizens to facilitate access to, and environmentally sound use of, the lower Farm River watershed through collaboration, outreach and education.

FRIENDS OF THE FARM RIVER ESTUARY, INC.

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Farm River Access Guide

Legend

Points of Interest

- Tidegate
- Natural Area
- Nest
- State Coastal Access

Roads

Shoreline Trolley

Town Boundary

Water

Farm River Watershed

Natural Area

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

