

David James, Northwestern CT Community College

David James is majoring in Environmental Studies and his employment goal is to work in Natural Resource Management. It was his work as a volunteer for the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association (QRWA) that motivated this career change. The QRWA is a nonprofit organization that helps lead the efforts to restore Quinnipiac's water quality and overall ecological health. It is the only organization that is dedicated solely to the restoration and enjoyment of the Quinnipiac River. It is funded primarily through federal and state grants provided as a result of the Clean Water Act, and foundation grants and membership participation. In order to receive these funds the QRWA must develop and maintain a Base Plan that meets the criteria for standard eligibility for these funds. The QRWA's Board, of which all 11 members are volunteers, is responsible for the Watershed Base Plan.

The Quinnipiac River is the most urban river in Connecticut and was once rated as Class IV, by the DEP, a rating reserved for the worst waterways. Cleanup efforts have brought about a 50% improvement in the river since then. Currently, the greatest challenge to the river is development, which requires raising awareness and educating citizens, business owners, farmers, and developers of the value of doing business in a clean water area. The Base Plan for the QRWA encompasses education and outreach, advocacy, science and monitoring, conservation and restoration, and recreation and public access. The strength of the organization is the volunteer corps. (www.qrwa.org)

Administrative Service - David has served on the Board for several years and during the 2011-2012 academic year, he served as Secretary. He attended monthly meetings on the Watershed Base Plan and worked with municipal officers to help them follow up and improve municipal regulations that affect the watershed. This includes work with the town officers, Planning and Zoning Commissions, Inland and Wetland Commissions and Town Councils.

Advocacy - David submitted testimony on two occasions. One was to the State Legislature in support of a bill requiring mattress producers to provide recycling of these products in an effort to reduce the impact of contamination to the river and environment. In a second hearing to the DEEP, his testimony supported the scientific research that demonstrates that stricter wastewater standards for phosphorous amounts, would be necessary for the health of the watershed area.

River Clean-up - David served as the Coordinator of the biannual physical cleanup of the river. This encompassed 5 municipalities and involves a grass root effort from the communities. Youth groups from churches and the Boy Scouts along with community members are recruited to participate. The municipalities manage disposal of the debris. Between the spring and fall clean-ups in 2011 - 2012, a total of 10,000-20,000 pounds of debris was removed from the river. David also worked on the Quinnipiac Down River Classic, an annual event to raise awareness of the QRWA and support recreation on the river. Last year this required freeing up the river from damage done by preceding storms. Approximately 75-80 racers participated in this event.

David has continued his service with the QRWA.