

David Deen
Vermont State Legislator,
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I have been living in Vermont for 36 years. Originally, I came from Pennsylvania in junior high school, and then Connecticut, where I stayed through undergraduate school at UCONN. I have been friends with Bill and Jeanette White since the 1960s. In 1972 we all were living in Illinois. I was in Chicago and they were at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. I went to visit them one weekend and decided to leave with Bill for Vermont. He picked me up in Chicago in an old white van they owned and we drove off. Since then, I have lived within two miles of where I put my tent on the ground for the first time when he and I got here.

I'm interested in everything wet. What could be more attractive to someone like me? There is a healthy system of rivers and streams to fish. There is time to fish them. The landscape is pleasing to look at and welcomes you. The pace of activity is reasonable and not frenetic. The scale of the society is at a human level, whether it's public policy, economic activity or the size of our communities. There are sturdy and competent people living here who share my values. The community seems to value what I can contribute to its well-being.

Windham County is blessed with rivers and streams that welcome people to enjoy the out of doors in one way or another. There are four major tributaries to the Connecticut River in the county. They are the West, Saxtons, Williams and Deerfield rivers.

The West River is the largest river in the county. The West has numerous swimming holes, both on the main river and on its tributaries. One of three on the Rock River, a tributary that joins the West in Dummerston, is just off Rt. 30 north of Brattleboro. The West River itself has a hiking trail that begins in Brattleboro and follows the old rail line, nicknamed "30 Miles of Trouble" while it was operating, because of the number of washouts the line suffered over the years. During high water, people can canoe and kayak the length of the river from the Corps of Engineers flood control dam in Townshend to its confluence with the main river in Brattleboro. There is also the high-water release event spring and fall from the Ball Mountain Dam in Jamaica. Access to the event is through the Vermont State Park in Jamaica.

During dry spells, with low flows in the river, canoeing the river is a pretty bumpy ride. If someone wants a flat-water experience, they can launch onto the Retreat Meadows immediately north of Brattleboro on Rt. 30 at any time in the spring, summer or fall, regardless of flow conditions. At the Retreat Meadows, there are 55-plus acres of calm water replete with wading birds, water animals and lots of bass. If you did not bring a canoe with you, one can be rented at Connecticut River Safari or the West River Marina, both off Rt. 5 in Brattleboro.

The Saxtons River has two swimming areas of note on the lower river, Little Egypt in Westminster and Twin Falls in Bellows Falls. Both are tough to find, but worth the exploring to find them. The Williams River has swimming areas off of Pleasant Valley Road in Rockingham.

Of note is the confluence of the Williams River where it joins the main Connecticut River, a location known as Herricks Cove, just off Rt. 5

north of Bellows Falls. This area has been designated an Important Birding Area by the national Audubon Society. The back water areas around Herricks Cove have a summers-long population of song birds, osprey, bald eagles, wading birds like herons and kill deer, ducks and geese of all varieties that swim and breed here. The area is an important stop-over refuge for migrating birds of all kinds in the spring and fall. The drive-in area is maintained by the TransCanada Corporation and offers picnic tables and charcoal grilling in a quiet peaceful setting.

The Deerfield is in the western side of the county. Many of the headwaters of the main river and its tributaries flow through the Green



Photo Credit: Jason E. Henke



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Williams River, Rockingham

Mountain National Forest or power company land. This area is wild and is almost completely undeveloped. There is one federally maintained primitive camping area on the main river. A matrix of roads is maintained for access to the power company dams and to allow people into the national forest. The access to this area is a turn off of Rt. 9 west of Wilmington. If your map doesn't show this network of roads, just follow the river as it turns northward off of Rt. 9.

And then there is the fishing. Most of the lower reaches of the tributaries to the main Connecticut River are populated with small mouth bass, rock bass, some trout, and depending on the season, perch, pickerel

and walleye. The main river has the same species mix, but fewer trout and the added plus of large mouth bass. Headwater areas on all tributaries to the Connecticut hold trout, usually rainbow or brook with an occasional brown trout thrown in to make things interesting. There are no special regulations on any of our Windham County rivers. A fishing license is needed if you are 14 years of age or older, and when you get your license you will get a booklet of the general fishing regulations that will inform you of creel limits and any other restrictions.



David Deen is interested and involved in all things that are wet, whether it is the Connecticut River as

river steward, public policy as chair of the Fish, Wildlife and Water Resources Committee in the VT. House or as a guide on one of the watershed rivers.

As river steward for the Connecticut River Watershed Council, Deen does a variety of things to protect and promote the river. Once each year CRWC organizes the Source to the Sea River Cleanup Day. The Watershed Council holds this cleanup as a way to get people in all four states through which the river flows involved in taking care of this wonderful resource. The Cleanups are fun and involve people of all ages and abilities working together. In 2007 CRWC mobilized more than 2000 volunteers who among them took 55 tons of trash out of the river or off its banks. For more information about the Source to Sea Cleanup, go to criver.org.