

3.1b Meriden's Rivers and Streams

The Quinnipiac River is Meriden's largest stream. At Hanover Pond, it meets with Harbor Brook and Sodom Brook, significant, medium-sized streams, making the Quinnipiac downstream of Hanover Pond substantially larger. Smaller streams and headwaters occur throughout Meriden, and most feed into one of these larger streams. The following section describes Meriden's nine named streams and the landscapes that border them in the paths they follow.

This description of the **Quinnipiac River Gorge** is broken down into two sections:

- **Upstream of Meriden**
From its origin near the border of Farmington and New Britain, the Quinnipiac runs through the cities of New Britain, Plainville, Southington, Milldale, and Cheshire, before entering Meriden. Notably, the river runs along and near Interstate 84. About half of the buffer is semi-developed in residential and commercial areas, with the river running through natural areas. The area is home to most of the animals found in Meriden - both resident and migratory. A large portion of the buffer is a wetlands forest with Red Maples and other wetland trees. The larger buffer size helps offset the harmful effects of the proximity to heavy traffic. Before entering Meriden, the Quinnipiac runs through the Quinnipiac Recreation Area/Treatment Plant in Cheshire.
- **The Gorge to Hanover Pond (impoundment of the Quinnipiac)**
The Quinnipiac River Gorge in Meriden follows the same path as State Highway 70/River Road. This segment maintains a significant buffer between the banks of the river and the recreational trails. The Quinnipiac River Gorge Trail, running alongside the segment, is also a popular spot for hiking and canoeing. The Quinnipiac Trail runs along the side of the river before meeting the Meriden Linear Trail by Hanover Pond. There are multiple scenic viewing areas. The trail is handicap accessible, and this part of the Quinnipiac Gorge is stocked with trout. The segment flows into Hanover Pond under the Red Bridge that marks Oregon Road. The waterway is rapid and provides streamflow bordered by steep wooded ridges. The segment is relatively close to roadways, and a large buffer would help offset the effects of traffic and impervious surface runoff.

The Quinnipiac River Gorge is a large segment of the river flowing approximately 1.3 miles. Its eastern banks are bordered mainly by wooded wetlands, while the western and southern banks are close to River Road and residential property. The significant buffer around this section of the Quinnipiac is mainly made up of native vegetation in streamside woods, which acts as riparian buffers. More about necessary vegetation for stream health is described in this document's Floodplains and wetlands sections. Given the proximity of other important natural areas, the Quinnipiac River Gorge and its buffers represent important resources for protection from floods and wildlife habitat.

This description of the **Quinnipiac River downstream of Hanover Pond** is broken into three segments:

- **Confluence at Hanover Pond**
In Hanover Pond, the Quinnipiac joins Sodom Brook and Harbor Brook, and the confluence increases the Quinnipiac flow as it continues south. Located between Oregon Road and State Highway 70, the Hanover Pond area provides multiple trails for recreation, fishing, and wildlife viewing opportunities. Many migratory species frequent the area, including aquatic species and birds.
- **New Hanover Avenue to Wallingford**
The dam in Hanover Pond forms a sizable waterfall and features an innovative Archimedes Screw hydroelectric project and fish ladder. The river follows near New Hanover Avenue and Old Colony Road. On the other side, it is bordered by South Meriden and the former landfill across from the Meriden Airport. The river then crosses State Highway 150 and Church Street. Along this section, the buffer is generally significant but faces potential challenges as the river comes close to residential and commercial property and several major roads. This portion of the river offers suitable habitat for most of the wildlife found in Meriden and has a good array of native plants, while the stream flow is swift and scenic. Public

access is somewhat limited. However, there have been proposals to extend the linear trail to cross Hanover Pond and continue to Wallingford.

- **Wallingford to Long Island Sound**

Downstream from Oak Street, the Quinnipiac is a larger stream flowing about 20 miles before draining into the Long Island Sound and flows through Wallingford, into North Haven, and empties into the New Haven Harbor. Downstream, the water's flow coincides with several dedicated natural areas, such as the Quinnipiac River State Park, which has well-maintained wooded regions and several Quinnipiac trails. The river maintains a significant buffer as it travels to the Sound.

The actions and efforts of multiple municipalities in the watershed area of 165 square miles work together to protect the health of the Quinnipiac River and the buffer. At the same time, established best practices can be employed in the roadway and private landscapes that can significantly improve the protection of the stream. Given the proximity of other important natural areas, the Quinnipiac and its buffers represent important resources for protection of wildlife habitats and from floods.

This description of **Harbor Brook** is broken into four segments:

- **Upper Reaches**

Two small streams act as headwaters, **Harbor Brook** and **North Harbor Brook**. From its origin near Bilger Farm state agricultural area by Westfield Road, Harbor Brook crosses under Bee Street, flows through a significant buffer of woods and wetlands, and connects with Spoon Shop Brook before crossing under Wilbur Cross Parkway. It flows into Baldwins Pond. The headwater called North Harbor Brook also starts near Bradley Hubbard Park and runs across the Hunter Golf Course. North Harbor Brook crosses Westfield Road and flows behind residential areas with a significant wooded and wetland buffer into Baldwins Pond. North Harbor Brook also flows through Giuffrida Park, one of Meriden's largest parks. In these upper reaches, there is numerous wildlife and plant life, which can be attractive to any recreational activity.

- **Baldwin Pond to the Meriden Green**

Before crossing under Westfield Road and North Broad Street, the stream reaches Brookside Park. The park provides lots of trees and is part of a pollinator pathway. It is a medium stream with undeveloped buffers that are generally substantial, especially in the wetlands, although residential areas reduce the buffer in some spots. A small portion of the buffer is a wetlands forest with Red Maples and other wetland trees. Wildlife can be seen or heard from Baldwins Park and Brookside Park.

After the stream leaves Brookside Park, it crosses under Interstate 691 and flows between Camp Street and Pratt Street, running through several commercial areas. Crossing under Center Street, the brook runs through several commercial areas. This part of the stream's buffer is limited. The buffer is a suitable habitat for small species and a seasonal movement corridor. Because of the nearby roads and small buffer, there is little protection for the stream in this section.

- **Meriden Green**

Harbor Brook flows through the Meriden Green, with a small natural buffer area. Due to the park setting, the buffer is surrounded by mainly grass and sparse trees. Additional natural areas are planned for the Green and along Harbor Brook. **Clark Brook** is a small stream that runs under Colony Street to join Harbor Brook in the center of Meriden Green. Several walking paths are at the Meriden Green, and public events are hosted at the amphitheater. The Meriden Green is located downtown and serves as a flood storage area. More description of Meriden Green can be found in the Parks and Recreation section.

- **Downstream of Meriden Green to Hanover Pond**

This segment is currently being worked on for flood control, so the buffer is mostly a construction zone. The future stream and buffer conditions will be determined by how the flood control work and linear trail extension are done.

Crossing through Main Street, the stream flows next to several more commercial areas, crossing Cook Avenue and flowing next to Bronson Avenue Park. Once the stream crosses Columbus Avenue, it meets Hanover Street. This area's buffer is also limited. After crossing Hanover Street and Bradley Avenue, the stream meets Sodom Brook and empties into Hanover Pond. The undeveloped buffers in this section are substantial as the stream runs behind Glen Hills.

According to QRWA, Harbor Brook is one of the five largest tributaries of the Quinnipiac River at over 5 miles long. Roadways and private property mostly border its banks. The actions of the Connecticut Department of Transportation and property owners pose a significant threat, mainly due to a generally small and compromised buffer. At the same time, there are established best practices that can be employed in the roadway and private landscapes that can significantly improve the protection of the stream. Given the proximity of other important natural areas, Harbor Brook and its buffers represent important resources for wildlife habitat and protection from floods.

This description of **Sodom Brook** is broken into two segments:

- **Victoria Drive and Hicks Avenue to Interstate 691**
From its origins near Victoria Drive and Hicks Avenue, Sodom Brook flows past Mule Well Field and the Meriden Mall, crossing Interstate 691. The brook flows under Hicks Avenue in a culvert that is much too small to handle flooding events. The brook often overflows the culvert and crosses the road, and in high flood events will flow down Bailey Avenue Extension. The section of the brook once it crosses Hicks Avenue is flat and meandering and bordered on both sides by residential development. This area's buffer is narrow and limited, providing suitable habitat for small species and a seasonal movement corridor. It is a medium stream with undeveloped buffers that are generally substantial, especially in the wetlands, although commercial landscaping near the mall reduces the buffer in some spots. Around the playing fields of Columbus Park, the area is home to most of the animals found in Meriden - both resident and migratory. A small portion of the buffer is a wetlands forest with Red Maples and other wetland trees. The larger buffer size helps offset the harmful effects of the proximity to heavy traffic. There is no real public access; however, wildlife can be seen or heard from the parking lots of businesses, and the foliage displays are easily viewed from roads and streets.
- **Interstate 691 to Hanover Pond**
After crossing under Interstate 691, Sodom Brook passes John Barry Elementary School, Columbus Park, and several neighborhoods and residential areas, crossing Springdale Avenue, West Main Street, and Coe Avenue. Because of the nearby roads and small buffer, there is limited protection for the stream in this section. After crossing Coe Avenue, Sodom Brook runs along one of the Meriden Linear Trails (see Trails under Public Access). For a mile and a half, Sodom Brook also borders the playing fields for Lincoln, Pratt, and Wilcox schools. The undeveloped buffer in this section provides great habitat for larger terrestrial species and nesting habitats.

Sodom Brook is a medium stream, and its banks are bordered mainly by roadways and private property, except at South Mountain and around Hanover Pond. The actions of the CT DOT and property owners pose a significant threat, mainly due to buffer behind schools and along the linear trail. At the same time, there are established best practices that can be employed in the roadway and private landscapes that can significantly improve the protection of the stream. Given the proximity of other important natural areas, Sodom Brook and its buffers represent important resources for wildlife habitat and protection from floods. Sodom Brook flows has been observed to have white-tailed deer, bobcats, coyotes, red foxes, black bears, copperheads and other snakes, eastern box turtles, a variety of amphibians (salamanders and frogs), barred owls, great-horned owls, screech owls, red-tailed and other hawks, and a variety of songbirds, insects, small mammals, etc.

This description of **Willow Brook** is broken down into three sections:

- **Bishop Pond to Pomeroy Ave and the Engine Company 5 Firehouse**
From its origin at Bishops Pond, Willow Brook crosses under Research Parkway and flows behind businesses on Research Parkway and from Dog Misery Swamp, a large wetland between Research Parkway and Interstate 91. It is a small stream with undeveloped buffers that are generally substantial, especially in the wetlands, although commercial landscaping reduces the buffer in some spots. The area is home to most of the animals found in Meriden - both resident and migratory. A large portion of the buffer is a wetlands forest with Red Maples and other wetland trees. The larger buffer size helps offset the harmful effects of the proximity to heavy traffic. There is no real public access; however, wildlife can be seen or heard from the parking lots of businesses, and the foliage displays are easily viewed from roads and streets.

- **East Main Street to Interstate 691**

At East Main Street, the stream crosses under and through the highway interchange and then flows along the west side of Route 15 [Wilbur Cross], crossing under Route 15 near Interstate 691. The undeveloped buffers in this section are limited and significantly compromised in some spots. The buffer is a suitable habitat for small species and a seasonal movement corridor. Because of the nearby roads and small buffer, there is limited protection for the stream in this section. Most of the area is private property, but there is a section bordering the campus of Maloney High School.

- **Interstate 691 to Baldwin Pond**

After crossing under Interstate 691, Willow Brook flows to the east of Route 15 [Wilbur Cross] through a mostly residential area and joins Spoon Shop Brook, Harbor Brook, and North Harbor Brook, and the confluence flows under Route 15 into Baldwin Pond. The undeveloped buffers in this section are limited and compromised in some spots. The buffer is a suitable habitat for small species and a seasonal movement corridor. Because of the nearby roads and small buffer, there is limited protection for the stream in this section. Most of the area is private property.

Willow Brook is a small stream flowing approximately 3.5 miles, and its banks are bordered mainly by roadways and private property. The actions of the CT DOT and property owners pose a significant threat, especially due to a generally small and compromised buffer. At the same time, there are established best practices that can be employed in the roadway and private landscapes that can significantly improve the protection of the stream. Given the proximity of other important natural areas, Willow Brook and its buffers represent important resources for wildlife habitat and protection from floods.

This description of **Spoon Shop Brook** is broken into two sections:

- **High Hill to Black Pond**

Spoon Shop Brook has two headwater branches. The main headwater branch begins in **High Hill Pond** and flows along the power line past High Hill Orchard and Dunn Complex Ball fields. The buffer is substantial, but there are concerns about the practices of the Eversource power line. Trap rock ridges can be seen to the east. Hills, orchards, and woods are to the west until the main headwater reaches **Black Pond**.

- **North Spoon Shop Brook confluence to Harbor Brook**

The north headwater from Preston Avenue runs through mostly undeveloped space around corporate park and Hall Farm. The two headwaters join near the intersection of interstates 691 and 91, running along Bee Street. The buffer from interstates 691 & 91 is limited and exposed to nearby roads and residents. The brook crosses under Baldwin Avenue and flows through the Carroll Park play area, joining **Harbor Brook** in a wooded wetland area. Carroll Park offers public access to Spoon Shop Brook.

Spoon Shop Brook, including its headwaters, is a smaller stream that provides some recreational opportunities through Carroll Park. As it eventually flows into Harbor Brook, the buffer around Spoon Shop Brook can affect the water quality downstream.

Crow Hollow Brook begins in Hubbard Park at the **Merimere Reservoir** and **Mirror Lake**. It flows along West Main Street. After it has crossed Johnson Avenue, it flows into Sodom Brook behind Platt High School. There is a significant buffer in the Hubbard Park area, providing public access to the small stream. The buffer is more limited along West Main Street.

Meetinghouse Brook starts at an unnamed pond near Ann Street and Dryden Drive. It crosses Ann Street and Yale Avenue through residential areas near Kogut Nursery. After crossing South Curtis Street, they remain parallel for a small while. Once Meetinghouse Brook crosses North Colony Road in Wallingford, it flows into the **Quinnipiac River**.