Protecting Water Quality

The city currently has strong regulations to protect its public drinking water supplies as discussed in the 1990 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD).

There is now a need to provide further protection for all its water resources, beyond those which serve as a source of public drinking water.

Since the adoption of the 1990 POCD, the elimination of non point source pollution (NPSP) has become a significant issue.

NPSP is the runoff from impervious surfaces, such as roads and parking lots, into adjacent wetlands and water bodies. For Middletown, the most notable of these are the Connecticut River, the Coginchaug River, the Mattabasset River, Sumner Brook and their associated wetlands and tributaries.

The goal is to reduce the amount of harmful nutrients, road salt and sand, construction sediment, organic matter, pesticides and other pollutants that reach the water bodies and harm aquatic life or make the watercourse unsuitable for recreation.

The Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency (IWWA) has put a great deal of focus on storm water quality when reviewing development applications. These diligent reviews should continue and should be focused on requiring best management practices to protect the water resources, including but not limited to bio-filters, grass swales and detention ponds with plant uptake in a treatment train approach, where applicable. Additionally, measures should be taken to improve infiltration and to encourage sheet flow by reducing the amount of impervious surfaces and increasing the use of pervious concrete and asphalt.

While it is within the IWWA purview to regulate new development, by far the largest amount of degraded storm water reaching the city's water bodies comes from existing roads and parking areas which have been built with absolutely no consideration of storm water quality and watercourse preservation.

The State has adopted detailed regulations, which require municipalities to address NPSP concerns. The State's Phase 2 Non Point Source Regulations required the city's Public Works Department to develop a Stormwater Management Plan in 2004 and update the plan annually. The city should do all that is possible to implement this plan by identifying and eliminating non-point source pollution coming from the city's drainage outfalls. New drainage systems should include best management practices for storm water quality and, as economically feasible, existing drainage systems should be regularly maintained and retrofitted to include best management practices.

Enforcement is also critical. The IWWA regulations allow municipalities to strictly enforce soil erosion and sediment controls and identify locations of extreme and documented sources of non-point source pollution and seek corrective measures.