

# Branford River bottom tainted with pollutants

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**BRANFORD** — The muck at the bottom of the Branford River has elevated levels of metal pollutants, according to a study by graduate environmental science students from Southern Connecticut State University.

The main areas of concern are the part of the river below the railroad tracks, where copper and zinc were found, and near Interstate 95, where lead was detected.

"There are some areas where we see higher concentrations of metals. Many that have higher levels correlate to historical industrial discharges," said Vincent Breslin, associate professor of science education and environmental studies at SCSU.

The contamination is the result

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of decades of unregulated industrial pollution, partly from factories such as Malleable Iron Fittings, which no longer exists, and Atlantic Wire.

Samples the students took near Mill Plain Road showed a heavy concentration of lead, believed caused by the emissions from gasoline before environmental regulations required unleaded fuel.

The students did their work last July as part of one of Breslin's classes. He said his inspiration was a former student, Steve Gangi of Branford, a member of the Branford River Project.

The project is a volunteer group of residents who look out for the

welfare of the 10.5-mile river, which runs from Lake Gaillard in North Branford to Branford Harbor.

While riding in canoes, students took samples from 18 sites along the river and in the harbor, from Exit 55 south to between Jeffrey and Johnson points.

"When you study sediment, you're looking at the history of the last 20 to 30 years," said Donna Lawnsby, a science teacher at North Branford High School who took Breslin's class as part of a master's degree in environmental education.

While parts of the river were affected, "the results showed, generally, that the Branford River is not

very contaminated" in its upper section. The harbor sediment also is not overly contaminated, she said.

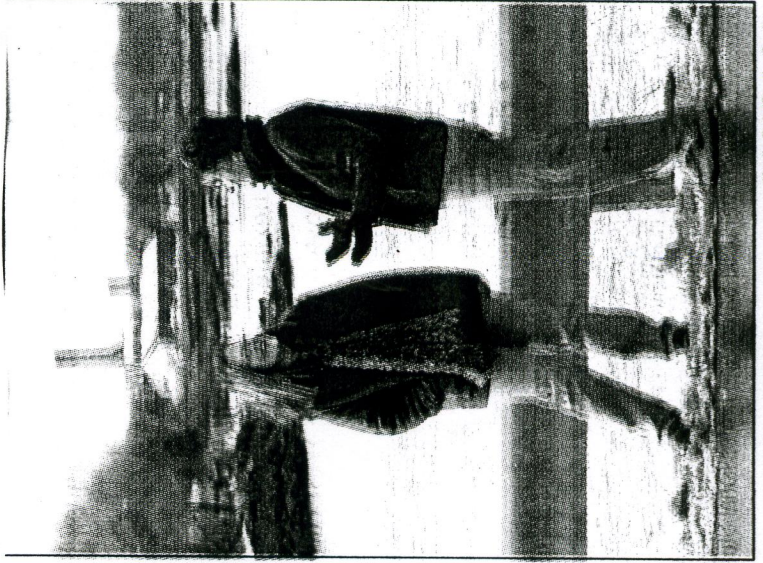
Breslin said fewer metals now are being discharged into the water, so sediments are getting cleaner over time. A decline in pollution also occurs because contaminated sediment is buried under new layers as time goes on.

Dredging the sediment would stir up the metals and cause more concern than if the riverbed was not disturbed, Lawnsby said.

Members of the Branford River Project monitor the river water from May to September each year, said Chris Sullivan, head of the Water

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SCSU graduate student Donna Lawnsby, left, and Maria Storm, chairman of the Branford River Project, want to clean up the river.



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