



**BARKHAMSTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

**EDC**

*Special Opening Day Edition*

## McAllister's Hatch Dream

Spend much time on the West Branch of the Farmington River and you will run into Jamie McAllister, fly fisherman extraordinaire, owner of McAllister's Fly Shop and former craftsman of guitars in the Rock N' Roll Hall of Fame.

Jamie, who grew up in Winsted, has fished the Farmington and all the brooks, streams and ponds in Barkhamsted for 22 years. He knows how the river flows in all kinds of weather, he knows which hatches will show up when and he understands the mind of the brown, rainbow and brook trout that frequent its waters. That's why he set up shop beside the Pleasant Valley Bridge alongside the river and the famous Church Pool.

According to Jamie and other fans of Church Pool, folks come from all over the world to fish there and other parts of the West Branch. Jamie personally has met people from Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom—the list goes on and on.

"Church Pool is just a fantastic pool," says this disarmingly friendly fishing guide. It's not unusual to see Jamie at Church Pool with his clients practicing the fine art of casting.

"For many years fly fishing was looked upon as a totally upper class sport," he said. "But it's fishing. The only difference is the type of delivery system you use with different types of bait."

Though many fly fisherman would take umbrage at this statement most people who fish, says Jamie, probably first started out as a kid with a sliver of a branch from a tree, some twine, an earthworm and a makeshift hook and bobbin.

"There's just so much you can do with spinning gear," said Jamie, who caught his biggest fish with a rod and reel—an 8 ¾ pound large-mouth bass—when he was a teenager. But as soon as fly fishing caught his fancy, there was no going back.



Fly fishing guide Jamie McAllister

"There is an art form to fly fishing that attracted me," he said. "Once you learn how to cast you just want to learn more and more."

According to Jamie the consummate fly fisherman or fisherwoman must have knowledge of the various insects that attract the trout, understand how different weather patterns, climates and water levels affect the fish.

Jamie also learned another valuable skill when he inherited his grandfather's fishing equipment, which was made of wood and netting. After a stint working for Ovation constructing guitars, Jamie translated those woodworking skills to his own line of fishing nets—one of which is used for a prize at the annual Riverton Fishing Derby, which will be held on Saturday, April 16th this year.

While talking to Jamie it is easy to imagine the love he has of the river and fly fishing.

"When you reach the pinnacle of fly fishing you can be somewhere standing in a stream or river and you become part of the scene—you're not encroaching on it. You are entering a different world or level of life a lot of people don't see.

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**BARKHAMSTED—INCLUDING THE VILLAGES OF RIVERTON AND PLEASANT VALLEY**

# Barkhamsted

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### *Continued...* **McAllister's Hatch Dream**

"I've had days when eagles flew right above me where I could touch their bellies. And, when you're in the middle of a heavy hatch say of mayflies or cream Cahill near evening, they look like a bunch of little stars floating around."

This month Jamie is hosting free fly tying sessions at his shop at 111 River Road in Pleasant Valley on April 21<sup>st</sup> from 7 to 9 p.m. He will also host sessions on May 5<sup>th</sup> and May 19<sup>th</sup>.

And you can be sure he will be handing out free advice on Opening Day!



Fly fishing on the West Branch of the Farmington River in Barkhamsted.

(Photo by Ross Herzog)

### **Farmington River Major Factor In Barkhamsted Lifestyle, Prosperity and Development**

by Kevin Noblet

Member, Barkhamsted Economic Development Commission

The Farmington River is at the center of Barkhamsted's economic life and always has been. Even before the town was settled in the mid-1700s, Indians, trappers and loggers fished the waters and used them as a kind of highway in and out of the rugged country. Water power attracted many early settlers, who set up mills and factories along its banks, some of them lasting well into the last century. The Farmington's two branches shaped the town's three main villages: Riverton and Pleasant Valley along the west branch, and Barkhamsted Hollow, submerged since the 1940s beneath the Barkhamsted Reservoir, on the east branch.

The river is still fished and traveled, even though the native Americans and pioneers have been replaced by sports fishermen with expensive fly rods, paddlers in colorful kayaks and canoes and summer visitors floating downstream on inner tubes and rafts. And it still attracts "settlers" – many a 21<sup>st</sup> Century inhabitant discovered the place on a fishing or paddling trip, fell in love with it and made a home here. (This writer is one of them.) The west branch is flanked by state forests for much of its seven-mile passage through Barkhamsted, and is part of a 14-mile stretch added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in 1994.

"The Farmy" has a reputation among knowledgeable trout fishermen as one of the Northeast's finest places to cast a fly or lure. It is fed by the cold tail waters of another reservoir, the Colebrook, the meandering, nutrient-rich Still River, a combination that makes for an ideal year-round habitat for trout and the insect life they feed on. And "year-round" means just that—at places like famed Church Pool in Pleasant Valley, fishermen are plentiful in January and February even when the river is rimmed with ice.

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## **Farmington River Major Factor In Barkhamsted Lifestyle, Prosperity and Development**

An important factor of the Farmington's popularity among fishermen is easy access, with public parking lots at the Riverton and Pleasant Valley bridges and at People's State Park, and many smaller pull-offs on East and West River roads. Also, the state regularly stocks the river with fresh trout and has designated two stretches for catch-and-release fishing only.

The state forests provide stopping-off spots for kayakers, canoeists and tubers, many of whom usually put in at Riverton and follow the river as far as Pleasant Valley or even onto New Hartford.

Some fishermen grouse about the heavy "plastic hatch" on sunny weekend days, and, on occasion, the banter between them and the paddlers gets quite colorful. But in the end, those in both camps agree—the more people who use and enjoy the river, the greater number there are who will truly appreciate and care for it. (For their part the trout don't seem to mind the occasional batch of paddlers or even splashy tire-tubers. They usually return to their feeding right after the flotilla passes.)

The river's attractions are a favorite topic of conversation for Jamie McAllister, owner of McAllister's Fly Shop, just southwest of the Pleasant Valley Bridge. "I've met people from all over the world who come here to fish," he says. He checks off a list of distant locales the visitors have come from: Australia, Russia, Japan, Canada, "and that weird little country, New Jersey!"

McAllister, who first opened his shop in Riverton three years ago and moved to Pleasant Valley in December, feels the town and the state could do more to unlock the Farmington's economic potential as a premier fishing destination.

"It's just barely being touched in this area," he says. McAllister suggests a more aggressive stocking program, better marketing efforts as well as more incentives and flexibility for businesses.

Barkhamsted's Economic Development Commission (BEDC), created last year, is tackling several initiatives aimed at creating a more receptive climate for many types of businesses, including those that are recreation-oriented.

Fishermen and canoeists are important to nearly all of Riverton and Pleasant Valley's businesses, including the grandfather of them all, the Old Riverton Inn. Mark and Pauline Telford have run the picturesque inn for the last 31 of its 214 years. They offer special packages for paddlers and have discount programs for fishing guides who bring overnight guests. Mark Telford estimates that some 10 to 15 percent of the Inn's guests are fishermen.

At the Riverton General Store, owner Leslie DiMartino says about 25 percent of her business comes from people attracted by the river, to paddle, fish or just sight-see. "One of the biggest draws in this town is the river," she says. DiMartino believes most of those people find the river through word of mouth or simply on their own, and would like to see the town do more to effectively market it. This is a key issue for the BEDC.



# Barkhamsted

## EDC

**BARKHAMSTED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

## Fishing Enthusiasts To Converge on Town for Opening Day Derby

*Saturday April 16, 2011*



As some old fisherman once said, “A good day of fishing is a good day of fishing,” and thousands must agree. For more than 50 years folks have come to Barkhamsted for the Riverton Fishing Derby—once known as the Hitchcock Chair Fishing Derby—to cast their lines and hope to snag a trophy catch and win one of the day’s coveted prizes.

Many who come to town will do this with a full belly thanks to the Riverton Volunteer Fire Department and area merchants. The festivities begin at 4 a.m. on the morning of April 16<sup>th</sup> at the Fire Department where, for a small donation, fishermen and fisherwoman of all ages can dine on breakfast sandwiches, pancakes, sausage, juice and coffee.

But don’t forget to be down at the riverbanks or in the river before 6 a.m. because that’s when the Fire Department sirens signal the beginning of Opening Day and the Derby. The Derby is open to anglers of all ages but you must be back at the fire department with your catch before 10 a.m., the time for the awards ceremony.

The tournament is free of charge and is held in all kinds of weather. Prizes include a rocking chair donated by Still River Antiques and handcrafted fishing nets by Jamie McAllister of McAllister’s Fly Fishing downriver in Pleasant Valley.

The Riverton General Store, Rose’s Kitchen, Peter Greenwood Glassworks, The Old Riverton Inn, Sweet Peas, Elyse Harney Real Estate, Main Stream Canoe and Kayak, McAllister’s Fly Shop, Riverton Self-Storage and a small group of men known as the Trophy Trout Club have all kicked in to sponsor the Fishing Derby.

**So grab your gear and head to Barkhamsted this year for the Riverton Fishing Derby! The streams and rivers are stocked with trout and that sly old trophy trout is just waiting to be snagged!**

For more information about the Opening Day Derby, please visit:

The Riverton CT website: <http://www.rivertonct.com/events.html>

The Litchfield County Times: <http://countytimes.com/articles/2011/04/12/life/doc4d9d1e9b0522b955364675.txt>

The Connecticut Post: <http://www.ctpost.com/news/article/Opening-Day-exciting-for-local-anglers-1338091.php>

