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**Grant helps raise awareness of water pollution for Torrington students. ‘It all goes to the ocean’**

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TORRINGTON — Teachers Jamie Mack and Catherine Haase want their students at Torrington High School to know that what happens in their backyards doesn’t always stay in their backyards.

Ground water, aquifers, and waterways here can affect the sea, although the nearest beach on the Sound is some 50 miles away.

“The Naugatuck River originates here in Torrington and has a direct impact on Long Island Sound,” Mack said. “Yard waste, animal waste, all that stuff can have a negative impact.”

“I don’t think it’s common knowledge what a watershed is,” Haase said. “I think it’s great that the community is going to learn, and the young kids will learn.”

Mack teaches science and specializes in oceanography. Haase, a world language teacher, wants to make sure that multilanguage learning (ML) students at THS can also get involved in a new project called the Long Island Sound Schools Network.

The Torrington public school system is one of six Connecticut-based and four New York-based systems in the network, committed “to the protection of local watersheds, the Sound and our one global ocean,” according to a press release from Connecticut Sea Grant, a University of Connecticut-based program that facilitates grant funding for participating schools.

Funding is provided from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Long Island Sound Study.

 All 10 schools are within the Long Island Sound watershed. Among the Connecticut schools, Torrington is the furthest from the Sound. The 40-mile Naugatuck River, the only major waterway beginning and ending in Connecticut, is a tributary of the Housatonic River, which it joins in Derby. The last 11 miles of the Housatonic, from Derby, is another 11 miles.

“Our project centers around informing the Torrington community about how their actions can impact that watershed and how, in order to have a positive impact on Long Island Sound, we need to take care of the natural resources here in town,” Mack said.

When Mack applied for the grant, she asked other teachers for help. Haase said, “I suggested that we could make sure that all of these materials and information were also available in Spanish, and that we could also involve some of our ML learners, our multilingual learners, into the process of presenting these materials.”

Mack and Haase plan to visit the fifth-grade classes at Forbes and Southwest schools to involve them in a watershed experiment.

“We’re creating watershed models,” Mack said. “It’s basically a tray with clay, and then it’s going to have some mountains, and the kids are going to be able to put some stuff on it, stuff like glitter and food coloring, representing litter and chemicals. And then they spray it with a water bottle to represent rain and see where it goes. It all goes to the ocean.”