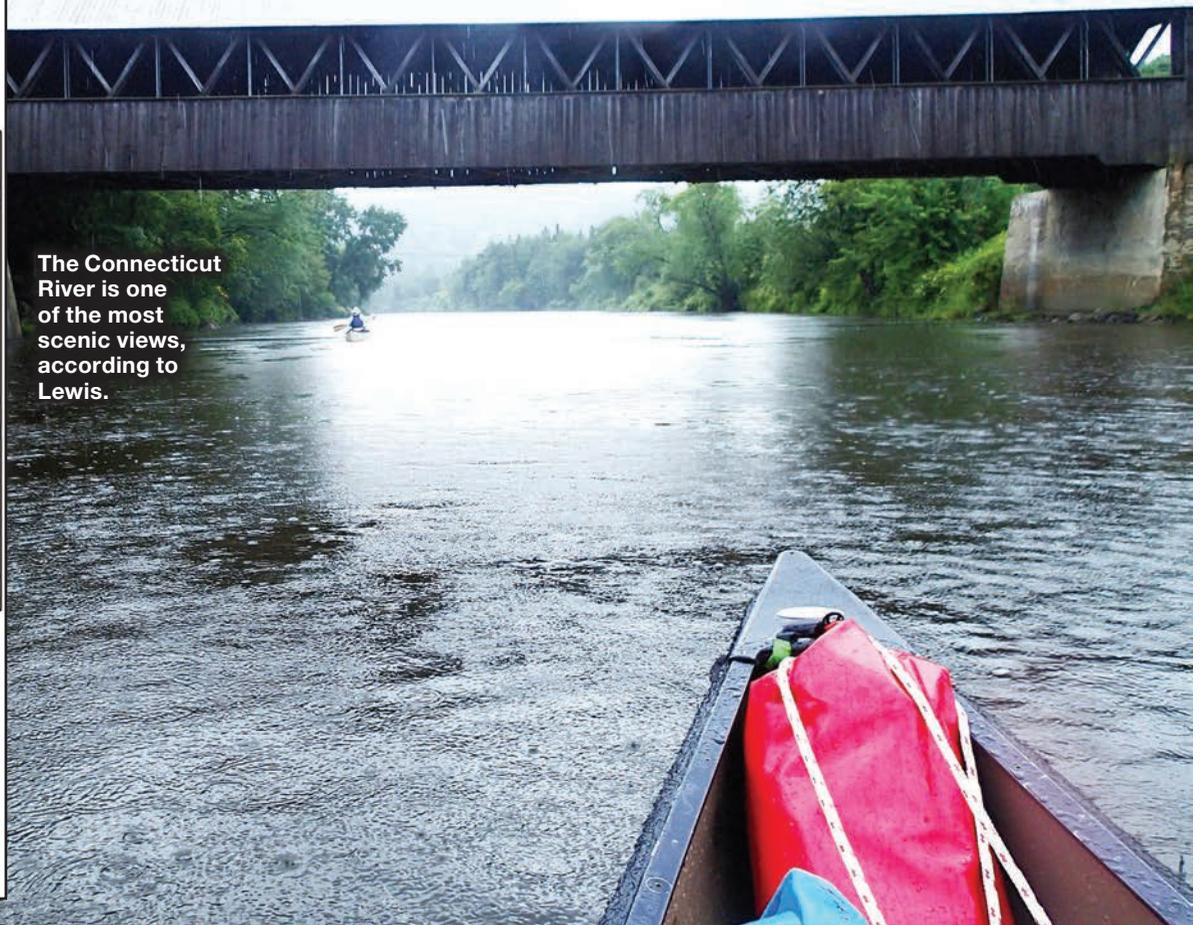


The Connecticut River is one of the most scenic views, according to Lewis.



# Long tidal paddle

Tim Lewis loves the river and the great outdoors

by Sarah Barr  
Staff Writer

**I**f I set my mind to it, I do it.” That’s how Tim Lewis, a resident of Rocky Hill and the new president of the Great Meadows Conservation Trust, describes himself.

After three years he still hadn’t completed his quest to finish paddling the length of the Connecticut River and it bothered him.

“It gnawed at me,” Lewis, 66, said.

Over a two-week period in August the dream finally came true. But it took a long time, and a lot of life’s hurdles to navigate, to paddle the Long Tidal River.

This 400-mile water journey does not begin at the source of the Connecticut River at the Fourth

Connecticut Lake in Pittsburg, N.H. It begins with a boy from Rocky Hill, who briefly also lived in Wethersfield, and whose father flipped houses for a living.

They moved to Florida where they were snowbirds for about four years.

“I practically grew up on Lake Hayward [in Connecticut]. My first job was moving lawns. I would do about 20 lawns a summer, get some money in my pocket and all it would do was get me back to the lake,” Lewis recalled of summertime back in his home state.

“We had a canoe, a rowboat and sailboat, but there is something about a canoe that is really special. It can be so quiet and slip through the water so efficiently,” he said.

“The design is timeless. It has

existed for thousands of years and still remains one of the most efficient means of travel. It’s a beautiful match to the water. I’ve done it all my life,” he added.

By the time the family moved back to Rocky Hill, Lewis was in fifth grade and paddling was, and still is, his passion.

Over the years he has experienced dozens of rivers, mostly in the Northeast. Aside from the Connecticut River, Farmington River, Hudson River and several smaller bodies of water, he has also paddled the Colorado River. But the Connecticut River is special to him.

In 2016, Lewis and his friend Paul Glasscock of Vernon were paddling Section Seven of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail when they discovered the

**“There is something about a canoe that is really special. It can be so quiet and slip through the water so efficiently.”**

**– Tim Lewis**

Connecticut River Paddlers Trail Map. That immediately piqued the interest of these seasoned downriver canoe racers, so they quickly planned a two-week trip, averaging 30 miles a day that began in August of 2017.

“I am the planner [of the team]. I look at the possibilities and make the modifications. I do all the planning and navigating. Paul does all the meal prep and all the cooking. That’s the deal,” Lewis said.

“Our days were long but filled with beautiful views. We paused for swims and an occasional rope swing. Water levels were high and so were our spirits,” he wrote on his form for

recognition as a Source to Sea Paddler, which sends certification of those who complete the trek down the river.

The duo thought they were on schedule with their adventure. Then they met up with some river buddies. That sounded like fun for them, but apparently not for the Boston Terrier who was along for the ride. Lewis said the dog bit his hand and that ended the trip.

Other postponements came up along the way that extended the hiatus including the COVID-19 crisis. Then another paddling partner, Amy Thornton of Florence, Mass.,



**Tim Lewis paddles towards his goal of completing his Connecticut River voyage.** Courtesy photos

talked to him about his frustration of not finishing and that inspired them to put together a plan in about 10 minutes.

In August, they paddled the missing section of the river, about a 90 mile stretch that included New Hampshire, Vermont and Massachusetts. It took three years, two friends, and one river, but the passion project was finally complete.

"Am I done paddling the Connecticut River? Never. It is a beautiful river," he said.

"There will be more day paddles, more camping trips, and maybe even another trip from source to sea," he wrote on his certification form.

Lewis is not done when it comes to preserving the river, either. For four years he's been a member of the Great Meadows

Conservation Trust and is now its president.

The organization resists development of the region and preserves parcels of land along the river in Rocky Hill, Glastonbury and Wethersfield in their natural state and for agricultural purposes.

His leadership skills and paddling skills get rave reviews.

"Although I've known Tim for a number of years, it's through our common work for the Great Meadows Conservation Trust that I've come to appreciate his love of the land. It's also how I learned about his incredible paddling prowess," Sandi Kelly of Rocky Hill said.

"When Tim told me of paddling the length of the Connecticut River, I wasn't surprised. It made perfect sense, it's exactly what he would do. Tim thrives on undertaking extreme physical challenges while enjoying nature to the maximum.

"He's always quick to offer to lead a kayaking group for GMCT or to give his insight into

best practices for stewardship of our land trust parcels. He's calm and thoughtful and has been a steady leader during his term as president of the GMCT. The land trust is fortunate to have him as a leader," she added.

Lewis is always appreciative of his partners and teammates.

"We try to protect the land – it is good bottom land, in the flood plain, when the river is in a natural cycle [flooding in the spring], the river replenishes, brings in sediment, deposits soil from up river, and it's rich agricultural land," he said.

Whatever the river touches is like gold to Lewis, so if he isn't paddling, he's planning for the future.

**RHL**

*For more information go to [ctconservation.org/great-meadows-conservation-trust-inc](http://ctconservation.org/great-meadows-conservation-trust-inc).*

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