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**Media Contact:**

Peter Fazekas  
Director – Public Relations  
Aquarion Water Company  
Phone: (203) 336-7651

## **Aquarion Water Company Announces Winners of Statewide Aquarion Environmental Champion Awards**

*Seventh annual awards recognize standout efforts to preserve  
Connecticut's environment*

**BRIDGEPORT, CONN. – June 6, 2017** – On Saturday, June 3, Aquarion Water Company announced the winners of the seventh annual Aquarion Environmental Champion Awards at a ceremony held at Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo.

Aquarion accepted hundreds of nominations from across the state in four categories: Business, Non-Profit Organization, Adult and Student (Grade 9-12). The awards recognize volunteer projects that have significantly contributed to the improvement of environmental quality through the protection, conservation, restoration and stewardship of Connecticut's water, air, soils, and plant and wildlife habitats.

“Aquarion appreciates the many outstanding efforts throughout our state, seeking new ways to preserve Connecticut's natural beauty and resources,” said Charles V. Firlotte, President and CEO of Aquarion Water Company. “We are pleased to recognize the organizations and individuals who share Aquarion's commitment to being stewards of the environment by dedicating their time, energy and talents to these important initiatives.”

This year's impressive business, nonprofit and adult winners received a \$2,500 grant to the environmental nonprofit of their choice, and the student award was a \$1,000 prize. The winning entries for 2017 are:

**Large Business: *Thule Group, Seymour*** - Thule took on the task of building a culture of sustainability going far beyond environmental laws and regulations. The company has made commitments to areas of environmental consciousness including energy conservation, waste reduction and recycling. Since 2014, Thule has reduced its CO2 greenhouse gas emissions by almost 25-percent, and now draws 80-percent of the electricity it uses from renewable sources. The new solar panel grid on the roof of the Seymour Engineering Center and Manufacturing

Operations facility shows Thule's commitment to reducing the company's impact on the environment and climate.

**Non-Profit: *Aspetuck Land Trust, Westport*** - In 2016, Aspetuck celebrated three significant accomplishments: 50 years of conservation success, 1,000 members supporting its work, and 1,700 acres of green space it has helped to protect throughout Westport, Weston, Fairfield, Easton, Wilton, Redding, and Bridgeport. This land protected by the group provides a safe home for over 500 species of mammals, birds, amphibians, and plants and is accessible to the public for outdoor recreation and scientific education. Other notable accomplishments include a three-year project with Connecticut DEEP to restore salt marshes with native plants along the Saugatuck River and the maintenance of 40 miles of hiking trails along its 45 nature preserves.

**Adult: *Fred Grimsey, Waterford*** - Fred Grimsey's fear for the health of the Niantic River in southeastern Connecticut convinced him to buy a boat and use it to pump out the waste tanks of pleasure craft using the river. Last year, his efforts kept 16,000 gallons of sewage out of the Niantic River and Sound. Grimsey has worked tirelessly to preserve the remaining natural areas of the Niantic River watershed in their clean, scenic state with his non-profit, Save the River-Save the Hills. He also launched a Water Quality Monitoring program to help reduce runoff polluting the river during rainstorms.

**Adult: *Kevin Zak, Naugatuck*** - Kevin Zak decided to single-handedly clean up the trash that was accumulating along a one-mile stretch of the Naugatuck River near his home. He joined with some of his like-minded neighbors to form the Naugatuck River Revival Group, which coordinated efforts with similar organizations to extend the cleanup campaign further along the river. Zak also organized the first Naugatuck River canoe and kayak race. He invited community leaders to participate, including Waterbury's mayor and state senators, and these officials soon after decided to establish a 7.1-mile greenway along the Naugatuck. Zak also influenced state legislature to produce a bill making the destruction of osprey nests along the river illegal.

**Student: *Marissa Peck, Shelton High School*** - Using only school science lab equipment and a small grant she won, Marissa Peck set out to create a new kind of plastic that would resist degradation in fresh water but would completely degrade in the ocean. Her hypothesis was that a pollution-free polymer created from a simple water-soluble substance, like corn or potato starch, could be coated in a substance that protects it in fresh water but dissolves in salt water. Although her experiment resulted in the creation of plastics that stood up better to salt water than fresh, Peck plans to continue her research to identify a permanent solution for oceanic pollution in college.

Photographs from Saturday's ceremony are available at [www.aquarionwater.com](http://www.aquarionwater.com).

#### ***About Aquarion Water Company:***

Aquarion Water Company is the public water supply company for more than 625,000 people in 51 cities and towns throughout Connecticut, as well as serving customers in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. It is the largest investor-owned water utility in New England and among the seven largest in the U.S. Based in Bridgeport, Conn., it has been in the public water supply business since 1857. Across its operations, Aquarion strives to act as a responsible steward of the environment and to assist the communities it serves in promoting sustainable practices.

For more information on Aquarion Water Company and its subsidiaries, please visit [www.aquarionwater.com](http://www.aquarionwater.com) or [www.facebook.com/aquarionwater](http://www.facebook.com/aquarionwater).

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