

Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee

Washington Lempster Marlow Gilsum Sullivan Surry Keene Swanzey Winchester Hinsdale
2016 Annual Report

The Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) was established in 1994, one year after the Ashuelot River was enrolled into the State Rivers Management and Protection Program. Members are nominated by local municipal officials and appointed by the Commissioner of the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES).

The volunteer **Ashuelot River water quality monitoring program** continued for its sixteenth season, in conjunction with the NHDES Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP). ARLAC members, working with community volunteers, participated in a spring training session, leading to monthly sampling May through September. The Ashuelot River is classified as "class B," meaning that it is considered suitable for fishing, swimming and other recreational uses.

- We sampled 11 sites along the River's 64-mile length, and 3 sites along the South Branch in Swanzey.
- We obtained E. coli samples from June through September, and total phosphorous samples from July through September.
- The cost of lab analyses was covered by contributions from Conservation Commissions along the River and NHDES.
- Over 190 hours were logged by 20 volunteers. New volunteers are always welcome!
- A quick look at this year's results:

E.coli--most samples met the "class B" level for surface waters. However, the September sampling exceeded Class B levels (showing contamination) at Ashuelot sites from the Stone Arch Bridge in Keene to Hinsdale, and the South Branch. This likely reflects high flows experienced that day due to prior heavy rain and more run-off.

pH levels—continue to be acidic, with readings just below the standard of 6.5 especially in the upper reaches of the Ashuelot (Stone Arch Bridge in Keene & towns north) and the South Branch.

Dissolved oxygen, total phosphorus, chloride, turbidity, and specific conductance remained within the standard.

As mandated by DES, **ARLAC reviews and comments on state permit applications** within the River corridor that have potential impacts on the River. Included this year were 10 Wetland or Shoreland projects in Marlow, Gilsum, Keene, Swanzey, and Winchester. We continued to follow the progress and reports regarding the West Street Dam and proposed Hydro station, and participated in review of the Forest Management Plan for the Dillant Hopkins Airport. The Falls Brook restoration in Swanzey was completed this year and supported by ARLAC.

We strive to educate ourselves on a broad array of issues associated with the River and its watershed. We hope to be a resource that works well between the interests and concerns of the citizens in the watershed and State authorities. Activities included:

- Serving as a resource to Keene State College students who were conducting senior projects.
- Working with six Monadnock Regional High School students in water quality monitoring.
- Participation in both regional and state-wide meetings covering topics such as: NH Instream Flow protection, dam removal, and stream connectivity.
- Participation in the Open Space Conservation Fair in Keene.
- Dialogue with US Army Corps of Engineers regarding management of USACE corridor properties.

The **Annual River cleanup** took place September 23 and 24 in conjunction with the Connecticut River Watershed Council's Source to Sea Clean-up and co-sponsored by the Cheshire County Conservation District and the City of Keene. The Ashuelot River Campground joined in providing manpower and canoes for the event.

- 70 volunteers collected over a ton of trash in Swanzey and Keene from the Ashuelot River and Beaver Brook.
- 50 tires were removed from the Ashuelot River; 29 removed by Keene State College students.
- ARLAC received the Source to Sea Cleanup Make a Difference Award for our longstanding service.

We continue to have a Facebook presence as the *Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee*.

River monitoring data can be viewed at des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/vrap/data.htm.

Current E.coli results can be viewed during the monitoring season at www.ctriver.us.

ARLAC meets the third Tuesday monthly at 7 p.m. at the Keene Public Library. We invite citizens and town officials to contact their local ARLAC representatives with any concerns or interest in participating as a town representative.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Skuly, Chairman

2016 Membership: Gus Merwin & Carl MacConnell, Marlow; Pablo Fleischmann, Gilsum; John Davis, Surry; Jim Holley & Eloise Clark, Keene; Barbara Skuly & Chuck Mills, Swanzey; Christopher John, Winchester; Brett Thelen, Harris Center for Conservation Education.