

# Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee

---

Washington Lempster Marlow Gilsum Sullivan Surry Keene Swanzey Winchester Hinsdale

## 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

The Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee (ARLAC) had a busy year overseeing permits and projects along the length of the Ashuelot River. River monitoring occurred in the warmer months for the 18<sup>th</sup> year showing low pH continued as a concern and the wet weather conditions fostered higher E.coli counts. The full report can be seen at <https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/vrap/ashuelot/index.htm>. Guests from other organizations attended our meetings to discuss topics of mutual interest. Cleanup along the Ashuelot occurred September 21-22, and more than a ton of trash was removed from Swanzey, Keene and Marlow.

ARLAC followed permit activities and commented where appropriate. These included Eversource pole replacement in Winchester; bank erosion and tree removal in Winchester, oil tank replacement at Bretwood Golf course in Surry, shore land disturbances in Washington, oil tank replacement in Keene and campground expansion in Swanzey. An agricultural exemption for an oxbow wetland filled in Surry was not approved.

Several permits occupied more time, discussion and follow-up letters by the Chair. These included the repair of the dam and dike at Goose Pond in Keene (impacts on existing vernal pools); new drainage pipes for the Winchester St. area of Keene (non-point source pollution into the Ashuelot); Jones and Cranberry Bog culvert replacements in Winchester (letter of support for ARM funds). Also letter of support for ARM funding of Thompson Brook restoration project in Surry.

Two incidents in Gilsum raised concerns. The group continues to monitor a Town gravel pit close to the river because of concern with erosion releasing sediments. Illegal tree and brush removal at Gilsum Woods residential area was addressed and a restoration plan approved. The City of Keene has reached an agreement with DES regarding its Stream Inventory Maintenance program. They can work from shore to mow the tax ditches without a permit. Any entry into the water requires a permit. ARLAC is concerned there is increased downstream flooding and sedimentation due to the work.

ARLAC followed two hydro-electric projects proposed for the River. West Street Hydro in Keene ultimately withdrew its FERC application after several years of studies, deciding the reduced rates for energy credits did not merit the investment. Nash Mill Hydro in Marlow is continuing with its required studies and will determine the economic viability at a later date.

DES has two new initiatives of interest to LACs statewide. New wetland rules have been drafted reducing time frames for review. This will bypass LACs and town Conservation Commissions in the decision making process in many instances. The second initiative, the Instream Flow Program, tries to balance the needs of river and lake users while protecting flows for aquatic life. DES will work with the Army Corps of Engineers, hydro-operators and users. The upstream half of the Ashuelot, above Surry Mt. dam, is third in line of designated rivers in the state for protected instream flow designation.

ARLAC was granted "intervenor" status by the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC) after receiving a PBN (Permit by Notification) of work by Liberty Utilities (LU) to install a new 8" gas pipe 17' beneath the Ashuelot in Keene near the Winchester St. bridge. ARLAC's goal is to protect the river from contamination during the drilling process and ensure best management practices are followed at all phases of the project. To that end, several members have attended "discovery" sessions in Concord with LU engineers, lawyers and other interested parties to have questions answered about procedures.

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.

2018 membership: Gus Merwin & Carl MacConnell, Marlow; Pablo Fleischmann, Gilsum; John Davis, Surry; Jim Holley & Eloise Clark, Keene; Barbara Skuly, Swanzey; Paul Hubner, Winchester.

Submitted by,  
Eloise Clark, Clerk