



Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC)

Annual Report FY 2017 (Oct. 1, 2016 – Sept. 30, 2017)



Participants on the Lamprey River Eco-paddle

Photo courtesy of Peter Sawtell

We are pleased to feature an outreach activity on the cover of the 2016 annual report. The Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC) had much to share this year.

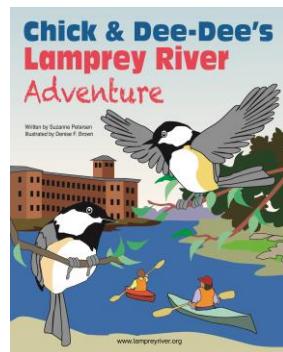
- For the first time, the committee sponsored an eco-paddle on the saltwater portion that offered participants a chance to meet researchers who are engaged in eelgrass mapping, river herring spawning, oyster restoration, and water quality.
- The committee celebrated twenty years of progress protecting the Wild and Scenic Lamprey River. The original designation took place when the US Congress amended the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act on November 12, 1996 to add 11.5 miles of the river in Lee and Durham. Another 12 miles in Epping were added in May of 2001.
- The National Park Service awarded the committee a grant to write the *Twenty Years of Progress* report to tell the story of how the river came to be designated as Wild and Scenic, what has been accomplished so far, and what future work might look like. It will also provide guidance to river groups seeking Wild and Scenic designation. The report will be available at www.lampreycouncil.org and distributed to all Lamprey River towns and New Hampshire representatives in Washington, DC.
- *Chick and Dee-Dee's Lamprey River Adventure* was published and shared widely in the Lamprey River towns. Local libraries and elementary schools hosted readings, allowing children and parents to learn about the history and natural assets of the river.
- The committee commissioned an archaeological study of Sullivan's Falls in Durham, bringing to light part of the Lamprey River's history that had been largely forgotten or lost.
- The committee commissioned a survey of stream crossings in the middle and upper watershed towns. The report highlights culverts and crossings that are most at risk of failure in heavy storm events. The committee hopes to get this information to town planners and public works administrators to assist them in preparing for the worst.



Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC) Accomplishments: Representatives from seven of the fourteen towns in the Lamprey River watershed worked hard to implement the comprehensive rivers management plan with help from towns, planning commissions, land protection organizations, wildlife professionals, and citizens. The final plan was approved on September 26, 2013 and is available at town offices and on www.lampreyriver.org.

Education and Outreach:

- The committee's website, www.lampreyriver.org, continued to be a public clearing house of Lamprey River information and resources.
- LRAC displays at town fairs and events at libraries encouraged local folks to learn about the river and gave them a chance to share concerns.
- In May, the workgroup partnered with New Hampshire Fish and Game to educate the public about river herring at the "Herring Aid" event at the Macallen Dam in Newmarket. Approximately 60 children and adults helped to count the fish and escort them from the fish ladder holding tank to the river where they were released.
- Using a grant from the National Park Service, the LRAC published its *Twenty Years of Progress* report as a model for current and future Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Four fourth grade classes from Mast Way School in Lee made extensive use of *The Lamprey River Curriculum*.
- *Chick and Dee-Dee's Lamprey River Adventure* children's book was widely shared. Free copies were provided to all local libraries and elementary schools. Over 100 people attended 8 readings to meet the author.



History:

- The committee commissioned an archaeological study of Sullivan's Falls in Durham, bringing to light part of the Lamprey River's history that had been largely forgotten or lost. The report is available at http://www.lampreymriver.org/UploadedFiles/Files/Sullivan_Mills_Redacted_102116.pdf.pdf
- The LRAC made a significant contribution toward the purchase of land for Schoppmeyer Memorial Park in Newmarket and participated in planning. The park was created to commemorate Chris Schoppmeyer, former LRAC representative, law enforcement officer with state and federal wildlife agencies, and overall good citizen.

Land Protection:

- Working with partners such as the Southeast Land Trust, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, town conservation commissions, and others, the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee continued to provide expertise toward protecting ecologically significant land along the river. As of September 2017, LRAC had leveraged funding totaling \$4,934,881 to protect 3512 acres and 16.3 miles of river frontage. For every dollar LRAC provided, three dollars from other sources (such as landowner donations of land value and matching funds from towns and conservation organizations) were used.

The 531 acre Mast Road Natural Area in Epping was acquired by SELT in 2011 with funding from LRAC and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. Tons of garbage have been removed. Access to unauthorized motorized vehicles has been blocked using gates and guard rails. Deep channels caused by ATV use have been reconfigured to retain water and revert to ponds and vernal pools. The former eyesore has been carefully restored to maximize multiple habitats for use by rare birds, turtles, and mammals. The efforts are already paying off.



Visitors at the grand opening in May enjoyed seeing this beautiful vernal pool, formerly a heavily damaged ATV trail.

Photo by S. Petersen

Project Review:

- The project review workgroup commented on seven projects that required state environmental permits.
- Complaints or concerns about activities along the river were investigated. When appropriate, the committee notified local code enforcement officers and NHDES and requested follow-up.

Recreation:

- In August, the committee hosted its first public Eco-paddle on the tidal section of the river. Participants met with local experts on paddling ergonomics, eelgrass mapping, river herring, oyster reef recovery, and water quality.
- Recreation Grants provided to Newmarket in 2016 enabled the public to access the river for fun and competition. Kayak racks at Schanda Park and Piscassic Park allowed paddlers to rent boats right at the river's edge without having to load the boats onto vehicles. The Second Annual Lamprey River Splash and Dash hosted by Newmarket Recreation grew to attract a diverse crowd of competitors.
- A recreation grant awarded to Raymond in 2016 enabled children at the Lamprey River Elementary School to enjoy the new Eco-center Trail and better connect to their namesake river.

Water Quality and Quantity:

- LRAC continued to provide financial assistance the Lamprey River Watershed Association to test and report water quality data as part of the New Hampshire Volunteer River Assessment Program. With severe reductions in state support for water quality monitoring, Wild and Scenic Subcommittee funding ensured that years of data were not interrupted by cuts to the state program.
- Work continued to collate and interpret water quality data spanning 24 years to create a report that is accessible and understandable to the public. Despite a few areas of low dissolved oxygen, the river is otherwise meeting criteria for "fishable and swimmable" conditions. To view the report, visit http://www.lampreycouncil.org/UploadedFiles/Files/water_qual_23_yr_report_2016.pdf
- Flows in the Lamprey returned to normal following two years of drought. As a result, NHDES did not need to release any "relief pulses" to help fish survive. As one of two pilot rivers in the NHDES instream flow management program, the Lamprey serves as a model for other rivers in the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program whose instream flow management plans are being drafted.

Wildlife and Ecology:

- In Newmarket, 35,920 alewife passed through the Macallen Dam fish ladder during the annual spring spawning run. Of those fish, 19,281 passed through the Wiswall Dam fish ladder. While the numbers for this year's run are disappointing compared to runs over the previous 5 years, it is only a little below the long term average at Macallen Dam. The next obstacle to full access is Wadleigh Falls in Lee. Despite significant effort at the state level, privately-owned Wadleigh Falls will remain an impassable obstacle to fish passage for the foreseeable future.
- Results of a stream crossing assessment for the middle and upper Lamprey River watershed were collated and made available to towns to help them identify culverts and bridges that are most vulnerable to damage from severe storms.

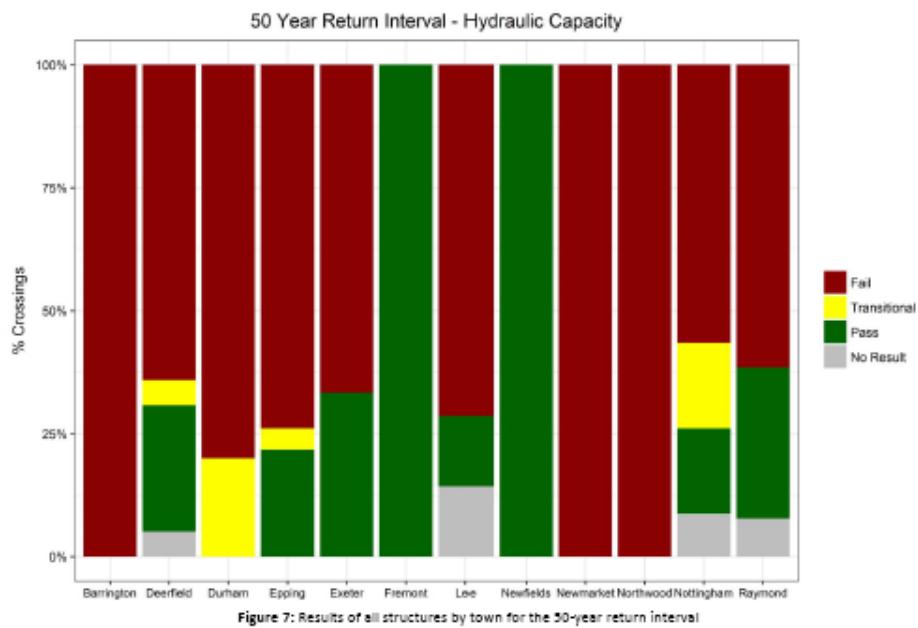


Figure 7: Results of all structures by town for the 50-year return interval

Plans for 2018 and Issues to Watch: The full committee will continue its main duties to work on issues identified in the *2013 Lamprey Rivers Management Plan* and review projects proposed for the quarter mile corridor around the designated rivers. The LRAC will continue to support research, volunteer water quality monitoring, and outreach efforts. The fiftieth anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act will provide the public with opportunities to connect to the Lamprey River and the other rivers that are designated by the US Congress as nationally significant.

Respectfully submitted,

Joseph Foley, chair