

# Local Advisory Committee Involvement and Influence with New Hampshire Legislation

## Local Advisory Committees Can Influence State Laws

While Local Advisory Committees (LACs) are not required to provide testimony on proposed legislation, they have the opportunity to provide such testimony as an organized group of individuals who are dedicated to ensuring the conservation, preservation, and overall wellbeing of their river and/or watershed. While all New Hampshire citizens have the opportunity to provide their opinions on legislation, LACs have a stronger voice as organized committees authorized under state law to advise the NHDES commissioner and the New Hampshire Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) on the management of their rivers.

## How Does the LAC Find River Management-related Bills?

The NHDES Rivers Management and Protection Program maintains a [legislative tracking spreadsheet](#) on the RMAC forum. As part of its advisory duties, the RMAC and RMAC's Policy and Legislation Subcommittee routinely track and comment on legislation relative to the Rivers Program itself, legislation affecting designated rivers, legislation specific to the Instream Flow Program, and legislation affecting rivers and watersheds in general.

NHDES is also actively involved in New Hampshire legislative activities relating to natural resources and the environment. Each year, NHDES tracks bills that relate to NHDES programs or that otherwise may affect the agency. Legislative activity at NHDES (including the NHDES Legislative Calendar and NHDES Bill Tracking Matrix) can be found on the [NHDES Legislation webpage](#).

To search for any Legislative Service Requests (LSRs) or bills, including those not being tracked by the Rivers Program or NHDES, visit the [NH General Court website](#).

## Local Advisory Committee Positions

Should an LAC have an opinion on proposed legislation, they have the opportunity to influence the bill through their support or opposition. LACs can support or oppose either a whole bill or parts of a bill. If they support or oppose part of a bill, we recommend proposing an amendment to change the bill text to something that the LAC supports.

Options for LAC positions on bills for legislative testimony include:

- Support.
- Support with amendment.
- Oppose.

Members of the New Hampshire Senate and House of Representatives are all private citizens who care about the thoughts and opinions of other citizens of New Hampshire. As such, they want to hear what people have to say about legislative matters. If you have something to say, don't hesitate to speak up!

## **What LACs Can Do to Influence a Bill through Support or Opposition**

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### **Contact a Legislator and/or Sponsor(s) of a Bill:**

State representatives and senators welcome phone calls or emails. You can find and contact your [state representative](#) or your [state senator](#) directly, and/or can also contact the sponsor(s) of the bill.

### **Testify at Hearings**

LAC's can nominate a representative to testify at a hearing on behalf of the LAC. LAC members can also testify at hearings as individual, private citizens of New Hampshire. In either case, it is important that whoever is testifying clearly identifies who they are representing (an LAC or themselves as private citizens), and whether the statements one is making are their personal opinions, those of the LAC as a whole, or those of another organization with which they might be involved. Those who will be providing testimony are required to sign in when they arrive. Committees typically only allow speakers three minutes to present their testimony, so keeping testimony brief and concise is recommended. Preparing written notes can be helpful to keep you on track. Any questions, comments, or discussion of the committee will not impact the allotted time an individual has to speak.

### **Submit Letters of Testimony in Person**

An LAC representative can deliver letters of testimony in person. If doing so, be sure to make enough copies for each member of the committee. This information can be found by accessing the linked bill docket number in the NHDES Rivers Management and Protection Program [legislative tracking spreadsheet](#), then clicking on the bill status, then clicking on "current committee," selecting the name of the committee, then counting the committee officers, secretary, researcher, and committee members. Often the committee clerk will want two copies so that one can be retained with the committee's records. Always be sure to have few extra copies on hand to share with sponsors or interested members of the audience. When you arrive, provide a copy of the letter to each of the committee members, officers, and staff BEFORE the hearing begins, as it can be difficult to distribute the letter after it has begun.

### **Submit Letters of Testimony by Email**

An LAC can also email letters of testimony. This is an easy way of reaching all of the committee members, even those who may miss the hearing, and it is simple to copy the bill sponsor(s) and Rivers Program staff on your testimony at the same time. The webpage for each legislative committee (the page that lists all of the committee members and officers described above) includes a link to *Email All Committee Members* or *Email Entire Committee*.

### **Writing and Formatting Letters of Testimony**

Customizing and personalizing letters of testimony can make them more impactful. Some organizations/committees use letterhead and list all of their members on their letters and some will simply state their organization/committee in the letter. Representatives will be receiving multiple pages of bill text, information, letters, etc. at every hearing, so the more concise you can make letters, the easier it will be for the committee to more clearly understand the message. As such, the first and last paragraphs of the letter are the most important, as oftentimes a legislator skimming a letter will read only the introduction and conclusion. As a result, attempt to state the LAC's position (support, support with amendment, oppose) in the first sentence or two of the first paragraph and restate it in the concluding sentence or two in the last paragraph.

## General Format of a Letter of Testimony

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Date of hearing (Month, Day, Year)

The Honorable (First Name) (Last Name), Chair  
(House or Senate) (Full Committee Name)  
(Location of Hearing), (Room Number of Hearing)  
Concord, NH 03301

**RE: (HB / SB Number)** (*bill title as written*)

Dear Chair (Last Name) and Members of the Committee:

**Introduction:** The (Name) River Local Advisory Committee (Acronym) is writing to express its (position) for (House or Senate) Bill (Number), which (slightly reword the bill title/objective to bring focus to the main point of your position).

**If there is an amendment, this can be formatted differently such as:** “The (Name) River Local Advisory Committee (Acronym) appreciates the opportunity to comment on (House or Senate) Bill (Number) which provides for Local Advisory Committees to submit letters of testimony at legislative hearings. (Acronym) supports the bill but requests an amendment.

**State Position:** State why your group supports or opposes the bill here. Choose up to three strongest points that support your position and state them here. Conclude with something such as; (Acronym) (supports or opposes) (House or Senate) Bill (Number) because...

**Amendment:** If you are proposing/requesting an amendment, explain your support/opposition with the bill and then include a short, separate paragraph stating something such as: (Acronym) requests an amendment to (House or Senate) Bill (Number) because... As such, (Acronym) recommends the following amendment to (House or Senate) Bill (Number): (Strike the portion you wish to eliminate and add bold and italicized text to which you wish to include).  
**Example:**

Amend RSA 000-A:00-a II (j) as inserted by section 2 of the bill:

(j) A letter of testimony written will be considered by the hearing committee ~~only if it is delivered in person to the committee.~~ **if it is delivered in person or sent electronically via email to the committee chair, who will then distribute it to committee members.**

**Summary of LAC:** Include a brief summary of what your LAC is, what it does, the interests represented on the LAC, and how it exists to aid/manage the conservation, preservation, and overall wellbeing of the designated river your LAC represents. This should only be a few sentences and can be copied into all other letters of testimony as a generic statement about the committee.

**Conclusion:** Briefly conclude with one or two sentences that restates why your LAC takes the position it does on (House or Senate) Bill (Number) because (briefly summarize the reason).

**Contact Info:** Provide one line with contact information such as phone number and/or email address that representatives can have should they want to contact a committee representative [such as the chair] to further discuss the testimony or ask for further information/knowledge about matters regarding the bill that the committees may have.

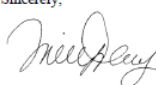
**Signature:** Sincerely, (Chair Signature), Chair Name, (Acronym) Chair

**cc:** Sen(s). or Rep(s). Primary Sponsor  
Sen(s). or Rep(s). Other Sponsors  
(Name) River LAC Representatives  
Local River Management Advisory Committee Chairs  
Robert R. Scott, NHDES Commissioner  
Tracie Sales, NHDES Rivers and Lakes Program Manager  
Rivers Management Advisory Committee

First list the primary sponsor(s), then the senator(s) in alphabetical order, then the other sponsors. Sometimes there are only one or two, while other times there can be upwards of 15 representatives on one bill. All will need to be listed. You should also send a copy to each member of your LAC since the letter is being submitted on behalf of the entire LAC. Sharing letters of testimony with other LAC chairs can help let other LACs know what your LAC is doing and can encourage them to write their own letters of testimony and/or encourage collaborate efforts in the future with regards to legislative activity. The NHDES Rivers Management and Protection Program would appreciate receiving copies of letters of testimony to record the activities of the LACs and assist NHDES in writing their own letters of testimony that can also support LACs. Lastly, include other individuals/organizations/committees that you believe would appreciate a copy of the letter.

## Example of a Letter of Testimony

<p><b>Voting Members:</b>  <b>Michele L. Tremblay</b>          Chair          Conservation          Community</p> <p><b>Larry T. Spencer</b>          Vice Chair          Conservation          Commissions</p> <p><b>Edna Feighner</b>          Historical/Archaeological          Interests</p> <p><b>Christopher Hodgdon</b>          NH Fish &amp; Game          Commission</p> <p><b>Mark Lombardi</b>          Granite State          Hydropower          Association</p> <p><b>Frederick J. McNeill</b>          Municipal Officer</p> <p><b>Allan G. Palmer</b>          Business &amp; Industry          Association</p> <p><b>Norman Sims</b>          Recreational Interests</p> <p><b>Ruth Ward</b>          Local River Management          Advisory Committees</p> <p><b>Donald L. Ware</b>          Public Water Suppliers          Vacant          Agricultural Community</p> <p><b>Non-Voting Members:</b>  <b>Jennifer Gilbert</b>          NH Office of          Strategic Initiatives</p> <p><b>Mark Hemmerlein</b>          NH Department of          Transportation</p> <p><b>Kayla Henderson</b>          NH Department of          Safety (Interim)</p> <p><b>John Magee</b>          NH Fish &amp; Game          Department</p> <p><b>Gail McWilliam Jellie</b>          NH Department of          Agriculture,          Markets &amp; Food          Vacant          NH Department of          Natural and Cultural          Resources</p> <p><b>Staff:</b>  <b>Tracie Sales</b>          Program Manager</p> <p><b>Jen Drociak</b>          Watershed Coordinator</p> <p><b>Mariah Mitchell</b>          Program Assistant</p>	<p>N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program  <b>N.H. Rivers Management Advisory Committee</b></p> <p>March 5, 2019</p> <p>The Honorable Suzanne Smith, Chair          House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee          Legislative Office Building, Room 305          Concord, NH 03301</p> <p><b>RE: HB 475 relative to establishing a shoreland septic system study commission.</b></p> <p>Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Committee:</p> <p>The Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) appreciates the opportunity to comment on House Bill 475, which will establish a study commission to examine the impact of failing private shoreland septic systems on the state's public waterbodies. The RMAC supports this bill but requests a minor amendment.</p> <p>Septic systems installed without state approval, and those constructed prior to 1967 when inspections and state approval were first required, inevitably include septic systems that inadequately treat wastewater. As such, these inadequate or "failing" septic systems can lead to unsafe levels of <i>E. coli</i> bacteria for swimmers and boaters, especially children, and the increased number of potentially toxic cyanobacteria blooms we are now seeing that close our beaches and threaten the health of people, pets, and wildlife.</p> <p>New Hampshire needs to find ways in which to address the inadequate private septic systems that are causing poor water quality in New Hampshire's rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds, thereby threatening safe drinking water, recreation, and the economic value of these waterbodies. The challenges that this study commission will need to address are the links between private property and public waters, the expense involved with septic system upgrades, and the single full-time New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Subsystems Surface Bureau enforcement coordinator for the entire state. As such, the RMAC agrees that these issues need to be examined via a comprehensive study to determine the most effective method for identifying potential inadequate septic systems and to determine what approach or approaches can be taken to remedy these inadequacies.</p> <p>The RMAC requests an amendment to the membership of the study commission whereby the representative of the rivers community may be any representative of rivers interests in New Hampshire, and does not need to be a member of a local river management advisory committee authorized under RSA 483:8-a. The RMAC recommends the following amendment to HB 475:</p> <p>Amend 485-A:44-a II (j) as inserted by section 2 of the bill:          (j) A representative of a <del>local rivers management advisory committee</del> <b>local rivers management advisory committee</b> rivers interests appointed by the New Hampshire Rivers Council.</p> <p>29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; Tel: 271-2959; Fax 271-7894  <a href="http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/rmac/index.htm">http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/rmac/index.htm</a></p>
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<p>The Honorable Suzanne Smith          Chair, House Resources, Recreation and Development Committee          HB 475 March 5, 2019          Page 2</p> <p>The RMAC is a legislatively created body charged to work with NHDES to administer RSA 483, the Rivers Management and Protection Program. The Governor and Council appointed Committee is comprised of members from business, agriculture, hydroelectric, municipal government, water supply, conservation, recreation, fish and game, and historical interests. Among its other responsibilities, the RMAC is charged with reviewing legislation relevant to the Program and with advising the NHDES Commissioner on the merits of such legislation.</p> <p>In conclusion, the RMAC supports the establishment of the shoreland septic system study commission authorized by HB 475 but requests a minor amendment relative to the rivers interests membership of the commission.</p> <p>Should you have any questions regarding our testimony, please feel free to contact me at 603.796.2615 or <a href="mailto:MLT@naturesource.net">MLT@naturesource.net</a>.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>  <p>Michele L. Tremblay          RMAC Chair</p> <p>cc: Rep. Judith Spang          Sen. Jeb Bradley          Sen. Dan Feltes          Sen. Martha Fuller Clark          Sen. David Watters          Rep. Dennis Malloy          Rep. Lee Oxenham          RMAC Representatives          Robert R. Scott, Commissioner, NHDES          Rene Pelletier, Assistant Director, Water Division, NHDES          Ted Diers, Administrator, Watershed Mgmt. Bur., NHDES          Tracie Sales, Rivers and Lakes Programs Manager, NHDES          Local River Management Advisory Committee Chairs</p> <p>29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; Tel: 271-2959; Fax 271-7894  <a href="http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/rmac/index.htm">http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/rmac/index.htm</a></p>
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