



FROM: Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee

SUBJECT: 2019 Annual Town Report

The Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee (PRLAC) has been designated as *the* group of appointed local representatives that oversees the Pemigewasset River corridor (one quarter mile on either side of the river) that traverses the municipalities of Ashland, Bridgewater, Bristol, Campton, Franconia, Franklin, Hill, Holderness, New Hampton, Plymouth, Sanbornton, and Thornton. PRLAC members review and comment on state and local permits for activities impacting the corridor, and they communicate with municipalities and citizens regarding corridor management. The NH Dept. of Environmental Services (NHDES) is not staffed to visit most permit application sites, and they have asked PRLAC to perform this task for them. Site visits by PRLAC are conducted with the property owner or an agent. We often recommend some changes, but we have no authority to deny approval. In calendar year 2019, NHDES asked PRLAC to perform ten onsite visits at sites that had submitted applications for permits. The Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC) provides administrative and technical assistance to PRLAC.

The Pemi is a Class B river, meaning that it has high aesthetic value and is acceptable for swimming and other recreational activities, fish habitat, and for use as a public water supply after treatment. Our mission is to do those things necessary to maintain the Pemi's Class B water quality status. Historically, the Pemi has had a wide variety of surface water problems, and PRLAC has had much experience in identifying potential water quality issues before they become a crisis, and make suggestions for prevention and remediation.

**Key Events:** PRLAC remained focused on its role as intervenor in the Northern Pass permit application process. PRLAC representatives had the honor of being the last to provide oral testimony before the state's Site Evaluation Committee (SEC) just prior to the committee deliberating and rejecting the permit. PRLAC continued to provide testimony for the NH Supreme Court as it formulated its response to Northern Pass' request for reconsideration of SEC's decision. Finally, several PRLAC representatives celebrated the NH Supreme Court's decision to uphold the SEC's rejection of the permit for Northern Pass.

After the SEC completed its deliberations, PRLAC had an opportunity to focus on additional tasks. We were able to start taking up some of the items described in the "Pemigewasset River Corridor Management Plan" (<http://lakesrpc.org/PRLAC/files/PemiCorrMgmentPlan2013.final.pdf>). Specifically those "Water Quality" action items of Appendix N were reviewed, and there were discussions on how to proceed with several of the activities that were identified in this section of the plan.

In 2019, PRLAC completed its 18th year of regular water testing on the Pemi and three of its tributaries. Water quality testing is in concert with NHDES' Volunteer River Assessment Program (VRAP). Testing takes place at 9 stations from Bristol to Thornton, and runs from April into September. Tests are conducted for Dissolved Oxygen, pH, Turbidity, Specific Conductance, temperature and chloride; all key

elements in assessing overall river health. Periodic tests are also made for E coli, total phosphorus and nitrogen at popular recreation sites on the river.

The five PRLAC volunteer members that participated in water sampling travelled over 500 miles in their own vehicles and contributed many hours of their own time to participate in this activity. The analytical results of the quality indicators show that water quality continues to be good, with the only exception being a lower than neutral pH at the majority of the sites tested. Historically, the pH levels show a tendency to be slightly acidic and below NHDES limits for water quality standards. Although the pH levels in 2019 were not any different from previous years, all other indicators were fine and consistent with the Pemi's historical profile, and the river remains in great shape. The full results of our testing are analyzed and posted on NHDES website (<https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/vrap/pemigewasset/index.htm>).

In mid-May SkiFanatiks hosted a river clean-up event with a good turnout of 20 people. They provided free kayak/canoe rental and shuttle services for anyone who agreed to pick up trash along the river from Memorial Bridge (Robins Nest Road) in Thornton to Branch Brook Campground in Campton. Refreshments and a 50/50 raffle followed the paddling. Consider joining us for the Pemi River Clean-Up Day in 2020!

**Focus in 2020:** As mentioned earlier, PRLAC will return to work on several goals described in the 2013 Pemigewasset River Corridor Management Plan. Four years ago, the focus was stormwater runoff and its implications, and we shall continue to focus on this with every permit application we review. Stormwater runoff is already creating problems in our region such as flooding, erosion, and non-point source pollution. We have also started the process of prioritizing additional work for the 2020 calendar year. This will likely include a return to seeking an update/revision to the "Pemigewasset River Corridor Management Plan". We anticipate that it may take up to two years to obtain the funds, identify the necessary resources, contemporize and then update and republish this valuable document. Lastly, PRLAC will be operating under new DES rules for how the state's Local Advisory Committees will respond to development along the identified river corridors. It may take some time to integrate those rules and operate under new scope and time requirements that DES now places on us.

This year PRLAC welcomed four additional members, and we continue to engage our river corridor communities. Each of the PRLAC towns may appoint up to 3 members to the Committee, and representation is encouraged.

PRLAC continues to benefit from the financial support we receive from the majority of the Pemi Corridor towns that we work most closely with. For that, we are very thankful! Your contribution goes directly towards protection of this key corridor resource. All corridor communities receive our monthly meeting agendas and minutes. PRLAC meets at 7 p.m. on the last Tuesday of the months of January through November; usually at Plymouth's Pease Public Library. All are encouraged to attend, and you can find out more information from the following website: <http://www.lakesrpc.org/prlac/prlacindex.asp>.

William Bolton, Chair  
PRLAC