

YEAR-END REPORT FOR SOUHEGAN RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE **(SoRLAC)**

The Souhegan River Local Advisory Committee is chartered by the state of NH to advise state and local authorities on matters pertaining to protection of the Souhegan River and the land within 1/4 mile of the shoreline. The Committee is made up of three members each from the six corridor towns along the Souhegan: New Ipswich, Greenville, Wilton, Milford, Amherst, and Merrimack. Meetings are the third Thursday evening of each month in one of the corridor towns. Agendas and minutes are published at www.nashuarpc.org/about/related-organizations/sorlac . Meetings are informal and everyone is welcome to attend and participate.

SoRLAC met ten times this year and considered a number of projects that were being planned within the ¼ mile corridor of the Souhegan River. Among these were updating the Milford Wastewater Treatment Plant, planning for a new DPW garage in Merrimack, a new elderly housing project in Merrimack, a new building at Hitchner Mfg in Milford, a new subdivision near Indian Ledges in Merrimack, regrading and paving across from Watson Park in Merrimack, new pumps at MVD, encouraging public acquisition of Horseshoe Falls in Wilton and upgrading of trails along Stony Brook, upgrades to Buckley's Cafe in Merrimack, and following up on several gas station upgrades in Merrimack and Milford.

George May has served as chairman since the creation of SoRLAC in 2000. This June he retired as chair but remains on the Committee. Cory Ritz of New Ipswich was elected as new chair. Two new positions were created, Associate member and Member at Large – we welcome Cathy Joly and Cam Lockwood from Temple as new members respectively. We also welcome Jim Taylor, recently retired from the Merrimack Wastewater Treatment Facility, as a new member representing Merrimack.

The Town of Wilton has one member at present, Bill Mahar. There are openings for two more and we encourage interested Wilton citizens to come to a meeting and apply to join the LAC.

During the year members attended the annual LAC workshop in Concord in the spring and the annual Sustainability Fair in Wilton.

The Committee has adopted a list of ten suggestions for all construction along the river which is available on Facebook at Souhegan River LAC and includes requirements for snow, salt, and sand storage, open bottom culverts, gravel wetlands and outdoor lighting. We encourage local planning boards to adopt these protective measures also.

We also suggest that each of the towns erect signs with “Souhegan River” and “protected river” signs at all bridge crossings. We further suggest that all towns erect smaller signs at all brook crossings in the hope that identifying that stream will help protect it and the river it flows to.

One of the most iconic spots along the Souhegan is the Horseshoe in Wilton. We would like to see this as public conservation land. The property is for sale but funds need to be raised.

We encourage the police stations in all river towns to set up secure boxes to collect unused prescription and nonprescription drugs on a 24 hour basis in order to prevent them from being flushed down toilets and eventually ending up in the river and poisoning fish, turtles, and frogs.

The Committee has identified a few places that have eroded behind the Boys & Girls Club and across from the newly completed cleanup of the Fletcher Paint site and plans to do some demonstration plantings there in the spring.

Instream Flow rules are now in place for the Souhegan River. This will help protect the fish and habitat during periods of extremely low flow. Additional work will be necessary in the future to allow for proper storage to be kept in reserve. NH DES is now working to implement these same rules for other protected NH rivers. The Souhegan was the first.

SoRLAC works with the Souhegan Watershed Association (SWA) on a water quality monitoring program that has collected chemical and biological data on the river for the past 20 years. Up to date information and past data is available at www.souheganriver.org.

Respectfully submitted, Cory Ritz, Chair

The Town of New Ipswich has two members at present, Kleta Dudley and Cory Ritz. There is an opening for one more and we encourage interested New Ipswich citizens to come to a meeting and apply to join the LAC.

The Town of Greenville has one member at present, Marshall Buttrick . There are openings for two more and we encourage interested Greenville citizens to come to a meeting and apply to join the LAC.

The Town of Amherst has two members at present, Rich Hart and Robert Clemens . There is an opening for one more and we encourage interested Amherst citizens to come to a meeting and apply to join the LAC.

The Town of Merrimack has a full complement of three members, George May, Nelson Disco and Jim Taylor. We encourage Merrimack residents to come to a meeting and voice interests or concerns.

The Town of Milford has one member at present, Celeste Barr. There are openings for two more and we encourage interested Milford citizens to come to a meeting and apply to join the LAC.

YEAR-END REPORT FOR SOUHEGAN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION (SWA)

SWA is a non-profit organization looking to protect the Souhegan River and all the tributaries that flow into it in the towns of Ashburnham, New Ipswich, Greenville, Greenfield, Mason, Temple, Wilton, Lyndeborough, Milford, Mont Vernon, Amherst, Bedford, and Merrimack.



Bedford, and Merrimack.

Four programs that SWA sponsors are water quality monitoring, raising salmon in schools, cleanups, and canoe trips.

Water quality on the Souhegan this year was about the same as in the recent past with one exception that skewed results for the season. In June the beginning of the rainstorms that continued pretty much all summer brought up the E. coli count to levels seldom seen. Typically heavy rains increase the E. coli levels, especially after a prolonged drought. The dissolved oxygen levels, which give a good picture of the health of the river, were excellent all summer long. The river is stressed when passing through population centers, otherwise it remains in good health. Details for this and past years are available at www.Souheganriver.org.

Plans are being made for including Temple's brooks in the monitoring program. And as usual, there are always positions for additional volunteers.

Signs warning against eating any fish from the river in the Milford area are a result of the cleanup of the Fletcher Paint site near Kaley Park. The rest of the river is OK, but note that the state also cautions people against eating more than four servings of fish per month that were caught in any state rivers mostly because of arsenic. Obviously more work needs to be done in protecting our rivers. The Souhegan is stocked with hatchery-raised trout that are safe to catch and eat.

The Florence Rideout Elementary fourth graders again raised a healthy 200 baby salmon in their classroom and then released them into the Souhegan in June. Our best school. Maybe someday.

Cleanups in Greenville and Wilton again produced lots of trash.

SWA participated again in the Sustainability Fair in Wilton. We would also like to see The Horseshoe preserved as conservation land.

There is now a small access for canoes and kayaks along the road into Kaley Park. Other accesses in Amherst and Merrimack need maintenance.

We repeat the LAC suggestion that all towns in the watershed put identification signs at all river and brook crossings. It's a small one-time expense to promote awareness that this community cares.

We also ask that all citizens not to dispose of pharmaceuticals or other chemicals by flushing them into a toilet that may eventually get into the river and poison fish and frogs.

