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Resources

Staff:

Tracie Sales
Program Manager

Jen Drociak
Watershed Coordinator

Mariah Mitchell
Program Assistant

N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program

N.H. Rivers Management Advisory Committee

April 23, 2019

The Honorable Martha Fuller Clark, Chair
Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Senate House, Room 103
Concord, NH 03301

RE: HB 326 *Relative to the definition of prime wetland.*

Dear Chair Fuller Clark and Members of the Committee:

The Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) is writing to express its support for House Bill 326 as introduced, which modifies the definition of prime wetland to include narrow wetland areas that provide significant wetland function.

The proposed expanded definition of prime wetland would allow municipalities to include narrower portions of wetlands in their designation. These narrower portions could be fringe wetlands, low-gradient feeder stream systems, or connectors between two larger wetland systems, which provide significant habitat for macroinvertebrate, fish, birds, and wildlife. These narrower portions can provide a significant contribution to the wetland functions and values of the prime wetland. The RMAC believes the current exclusion of these narrower portions is arbitrary and not based upon science.

The RMAC requests that the House amendment to HB 326 relating to highway-right of-ways be clarified. The wording suggests that highway rights-of-way should not be considered prime wetlands or prime wetland buffers, but the sentence is unclear.

The RMAC is a legislatively created body charged to work with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (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.

In conclusion, the RMAC supports HB 326 as introduced relative to the definition of a prime wetland because it would include sensitive narrower portions of these wetlands which can be as significant as the larger wetland itself in their functions and values.

The Honorable Martha Fuller Clark
Chair, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee
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Should you have any questions regarding our testimony, please feel free to contact me at 603.796.2615 or MLT@naturesource.net.

Sincerely,



Michele L. Tremblay
RMAC Chair

cc: Rep. Chuck Grassie
Rep. Joshua Adjutant
RMAC Representatives
Robert R. Scott, Commissioner, NHDES
Thomas O'Donovan, 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