

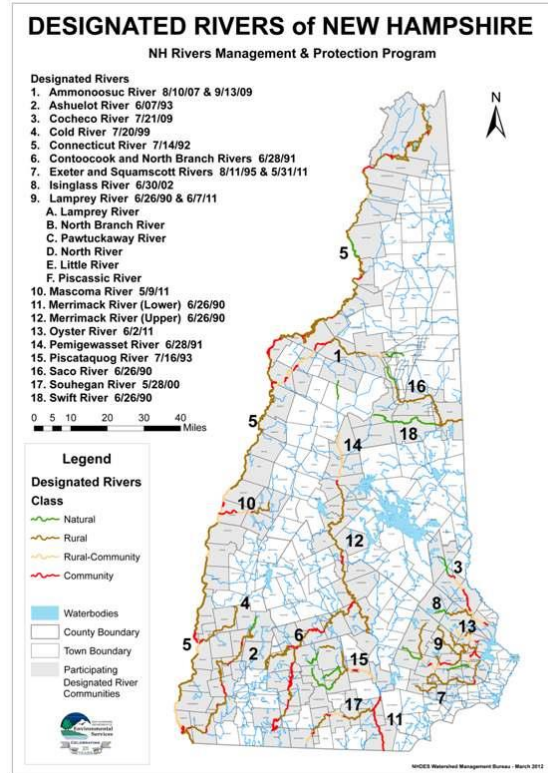


# New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program Rivers Management Advisory Committee Biennial Report: Fiscal Years 2016-2017



The purpose of the Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP), established in 1988 and defined in RSA 483, is to protect certain New Hampshire rivers, called designated rivers, for their outstanding natural and cultural resources. The program is administered by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) and uses a two-tier approach to manage and protect rivers at the state and local levels through the advisement of the state Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC) and the Local River Management Advisory Committees (LACs).

As of June 30, 2017, there were 18 rivers or river segments designated under RSA 483 totaling 990 river miles and representing 126 towns, places, and State Parks. These 18 rivers had over 200 volunteers in 21 LACs overseeing their management (the Connecticut River has multiple LACs due to its length). One full time and one part-time staff administer the Rivers Program, with an additional full-time staff administering the Instream Flow Program.



The RMPP is primarily a volunteer-based program, and most of its achievements are the result of the work of the volunteer members of the RMAC and the LACs. The Governor and Council appointed RMAC is composed of seventeen members representing various business, conservation, public service, and state agency interests. LAC members are nominated by their local communities and appointed by the NHDES Commissioner, and represent interests including local government, business, conservation, recreation, agriculture, and riparian landowners. The time spent by RMAC and LAC volunteers on river protection efforts during Fiscal Years 2016-2017 totals approximately 37,262 hours, and is valued at \$927,830.<sup>1</sup>

## RMPP Accomplishments

**Warner River Nominated to the RMPP:** The nomination of the Warner River, flowing through the towns of Bradford, Warner, Sutton, Webster, and Hopkinton, was submitted on June 1, 2017 and will be considered during the 2018 legislative session. A second group proposed the

<sup>1</sup> Calculated using the 2016 New Hampshire volunteer rate of \$24.90 per hour.  
<https://www.independentsector.org/resource/the-value-of-volunteer-time/>.

nomination of the Androscoggin River, but ultimately, the Androscoggin River Committee decided not to move forward with the nomination submission.

**Instream Flow Program Expanded to All Designated Rivers:** In December 2015, the legislature recommended the expansion of the Instream Flow Pilot Program, initially applied to the Lamprey and Souhegan rivers, to all designated rivers. The Pilot Program successfully demonstrated that minimum flows can be defined, and management actions applied, which will ensure that rivers continue to flow and the needs of both humans and wildlife can be met. In order to expand the program, an effort was begun to revise the Instream Flow Program rules, Env-Wq 1900, using a series of public meetings to solicit public input. Formal rulemaking is expected to occur in 2018.



**RMAC Supports Legislation for Clean Water and Healthy Rivers:** The RMAC submitted 21 testimony letters on water quality and river-related bills during the 2016 and 2017 legislative sessions. The RMAC and Rivers staff not only supported legislation, but provided testimony and met numerous times in work sessions with key legislators and concerned parties to craft mutually agreeable bill language for the Instream Flow Program and the Rivers Management and Protection Program.

**RMAC Agrees to Advise on Shoreland Program:** The RMAC and its lake counterpart, the Lakes Management Advisory Committee (LMAC), agreed to jointly act as a stakeholder advisory body to continue the work of the sunsetted Shoreland Advisory Committee. The LMAC and RMAC provide diverse representation of stakeholders who are ideally poised to provide the necessary perspective of lakes and rivers for the continued refinement of the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act.

**RSA 483 Updated:** The 2016 legislative session enacted a four-year RMAC effort to update RSA 483, ensuring that river protection and instream flow laws remain relevant and free from unnecessary administrative burdens. The RMAC solicited input from the LACs on proposed changes during six regional LAC meetings. Resulting statute changes included the application of the Instream Flow Program to all designated rivers, simplifications to the membership requirements for RMAC and LAC members, definition changes reflecting scientific progress, and the elimination of long range management plans as separate documents from the river corridor management plans developed by LACs. A further change was made in RSA 483-B, the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act, to limit Shoreland jurisdiction to the first 50 feet from the river for newly designated first through third order streams.

**RMPP Nomination Rules Simplified:** The RMAC successfully recommended revisions to the rules for river nominations, Env-Wq 1800, to clarify the process and align the rules with recent changes to RSA 483. The point-based nomination evaluation system was eliminated, shortening the rules by six pages, and greater emphasis placed instead on ensuring public and community support for river nominations.

## Local River Management Advisory Committee Activities

LACs are the voice of the river in the communities through which the river flows, provide a forum for discussion river management, and are valuable conduits for educating community members about river protection. LAC members sample water, assess stream habitat, review permit applications, and host events to promote stewardship of their rivers.

**Permit Applications Reviewed to Protect Rivers:** LACs reviewed 377 actions requiring a federal, state or local permit, submitting comments to permit reviewers in support of clean water and healthy riparian habitat. To help ensure that LACs receive permit applications for activities which may impact designated rivers, NHDES staff developed the [Designated River Corridor Web Map](#), an interactive map that identifies which projects are located in a designated river corridor. The map tool then provides the contact information permit applicants need to ensure that LACs receive a copy of the application.

**Signs Educate the Public about Rivers' Protected Status:** Three LACs purchased and installed six sets of Protected River signs on the Lower Merrimack, Souhegan, and Oyster rivers. These signs signify the river's importance to the state's natural and cultural heritage, and bring visibility, awareness, and interest in the river's location and protected status to travelers through the area.



**Workshops Offer the "How To" of River Protection:** Committees across the state hosted a variety of workshops geared toward increasing public knowledge on topics such as septic system maintenance, residential stormwater control tools, invasive aquatic plant species, stream bank restoration, and more.

**Recreational Opportunities Promote River Appreciation:** LACs sponsor or support recreational activities on or around their rivers. Some LACs promoted events on the water such as paddling trips and boat parades, while other groups worked adjacent to their rivers installing signs and interpretive trails or supporting public events such as "Hike It, Bike It, Like It," a summer recreational series offering guided tours of three of the Lamprey River's key historical and natural areas, and the Splash and Dash- 5K Fun Run.



**Middle School Students Help Restore Warren Brook:** The Cold River LAC has been instrumental in the Warren Brook Restoration Project to repair river bank damage to one of the river's primary tributaries caused by a major flood. The project entailed restoring the serpentine shape of the brook and its wildlife habitat, with restoration of 900 feet of the brook completed. The LAC recruited 120 middle school students from five towns who planted 1,100 plants along the stream bank to prevent erosion.



**LAC Adds Valuable Input on Creosote Remediation Project:** The Lower Merrimack River LAC ensured that the best environmental protection practices were employed for a creosote remediation project adjacent to the river, and that mitigation funding from the land owner was applied locally to Nashua's Merrimack River waterfront. The LAC also continues to lobby with municipalities, with land owners, and in their permit application comments for public river access, river trails, and right of ways along the lower Merrimack River.

**Local Children Learn about the Lamprey River:** Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee members visited elementary schools to educate children about the river and its environment. The committee was also awarded a National Park Service grant to illustrate a children's book on Lamprey River history and nature called *Chick and Dee-Dee's Lamprey River Adventure*.

**Upper Merrimack River LAC Assesses Water Quality and Habitat:** The Upper Merrimack River LAC monitored seventeen sites through habitat assessments, *E. coli* testing, field water chemistry, and biomonitoring. Since 1995, the LAC has hosted Bug Nights, a popular education event which is part of the Upper Merrimack Monitoring Program. On Wednesday nights from January through May, participants assess river health by sorting and identifying benthic macroinvertebrates collected in rock baskets deployed in the river over the summer.



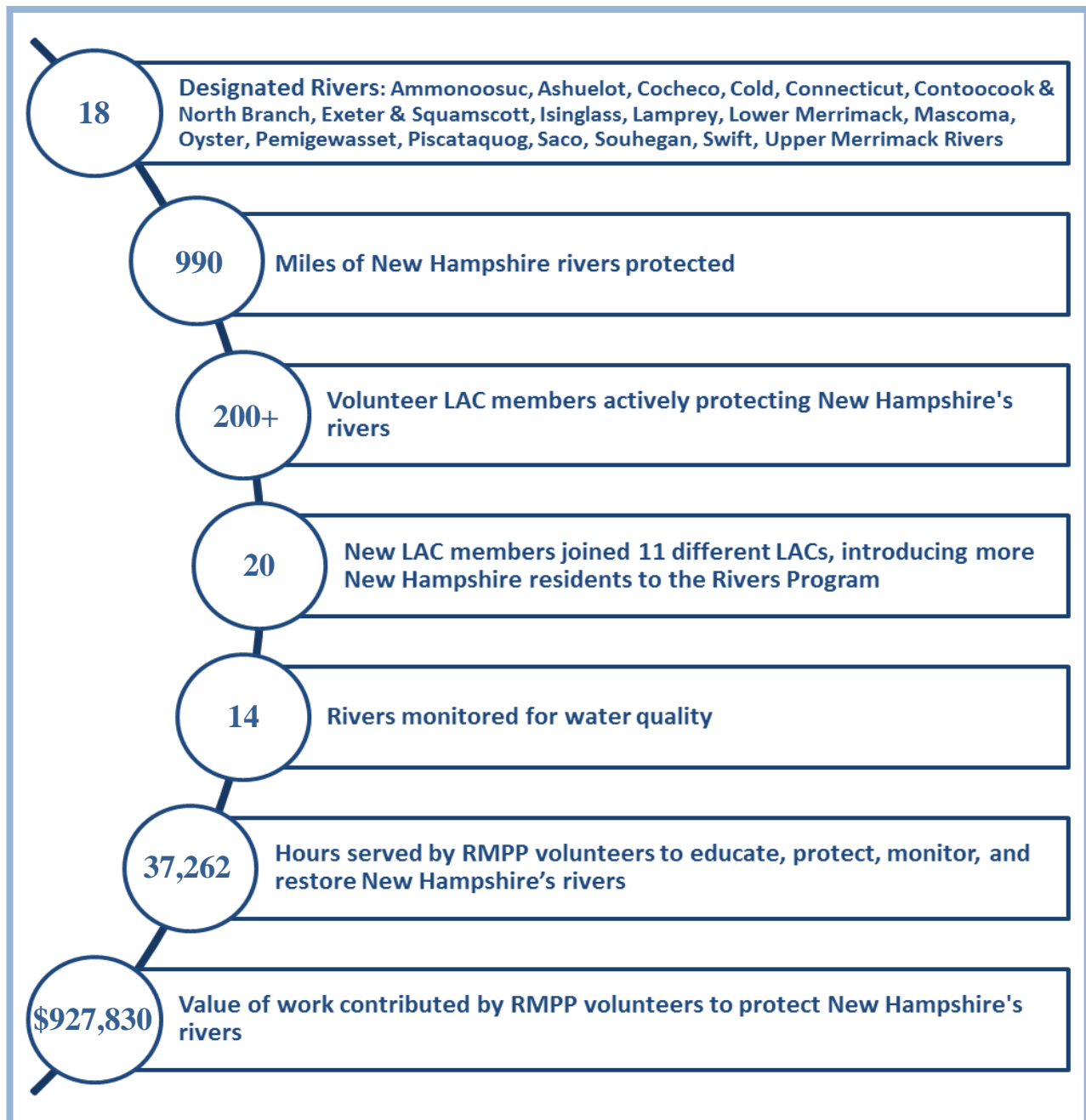
**Ammonoosuc River Stream Crossing Assessment Project:** The Ammonoosuc River LAC partnered with the Ammonoosuc Conservation Trust (ACT) to improve and restore connectivity in the watershed to allow the wild brook trout access to spawning areas previously blocked by culverts. The LAC also participated in ACT's Clean Water Healthy Trout initiative to protect trout habitat and target sections of river for restoration.



**LACs Clean Up Rivers:** Many LACs organize river cleanups to protect water quality and habitat as well as to bring LAC members and local community members together on the river. For example, the Ashuelot River LAC hosted river cleanups in the fall of 2015 and 2016 in conjunction with the Connecticut River Conservancy's Source to Sea Cleanup, and was awarded the Source to Sea Makes a Difference Award for longstanding service.

**LACs Voice Concerns on Federal Energy Projects:** Worried about the potential impact of the project on their river, the Pemigewasset River LAC became an intervenor in the Northern Pass project, ensuring that disturbance around rivers along the powerlines would be minimized. The Connecticut River Headwaters, Upper Merrimack, Ammonoosuc, and Lamprey river LACs also monitored and participated in the Northern Pass project. Other federal energy projects that LACs reviewed and commented on were the Seacoast Reliability Project over the Oyster River, the Kinder Morgan Pipeline Project across the Souhegan and lower Merrimack rivers, and numerous hydroelectric dam licensing efforts on the Connecticut, Pemigewasset (impacting the upper Merrimack), Ashuelot, and Mascoma rivers.

## New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program Fiscal Years 2016-2017 – By the Numbers



### For More Information

For further information about the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program, visit the NHDES website at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/index.htm> or contact the Rivers Coordinator, 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-2959; [riversprogram@des.nh.gov](mailto:riversprogram@des.nh.gov).