

Warner River Nomination to the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program

Project Summary – October 2016

The Warner River Nomination Committee, made up of representatives from Bradford, Warner, Sutton, Webster, Hopkinton, and the Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission is considering nominating the Warner River to New Hampshire's River Management and Protection Program (RMPP) where it will join the Merrimack, Contoocook and sixteen other rivers of outstanding character. The nomination committee is holding public information sessions in November 2016 in each town to share its research with the public and listen to comments and answer questions. Public notices with meeting dates and times will be posted in each town. Landowners abutting the Warner River will be notified of the information sessions by first class mail.

In the fall of 2013, the Warner Conservation Commission (WCC) approached Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC) for assistance in nominating the Warner River to NH's RMPP, as described in RSA 483. NH's RMPP was established in 1988 in an effort to give communities a tool to protect certain rivers for their outstanding natural and cultural resources. Rivers protected under the RMPP are known as designated rivers.

The impetus for considering nomination came in 2012 when Ben Nugent, a cold water fisheries biologist with NH Fish & Game, approached the WCC with a proposal to add the Warner River watershed to his assessment of NH rivers and streams that still support populations of native brook trout. The WCC partnered with Ben and George Embley of Basil Woods Trout Unlimited to engage area volunteers and wildlife experts to learn more about the water quality, insects and conditions necessary to support native brook trout in our region.

The process of designation begins with the development of a River Nomination document by an individual, group or organization outlining the river's values and characteristics. Local support from municipal officials, residents and other interested organizations must be sought and reported. Upon completion, the nomination document is submitted to the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Commissioner for review and a formal public hearing is held. If approved by NHDES, it is forwarded to the New Hampshire General Court to be voted upon by the legislature. If the nomination passes the legislature and the Governor signs the bill, RSA 483 will be amended to designate the river for protection under the RMPP.

After the Warner River receives the official status of a designated river, a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) is formed. Made up of volunteers representing a variety of river interests and each of the communities within the watershed, the LAC is responsible for developing and implementing a River Corridor Management Plan which documents the river's existing conditions and makes recommendations for how to protect the river and its many uses for generations to come.

With the nomination document drafted, public information sessions will be an opportunity for the public learn about the special qualities of the Warner River, ask questions about the nomination process and understand how the Warner River and its watershed communities will benefit from achieving designation within NH's RMPP.