

# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

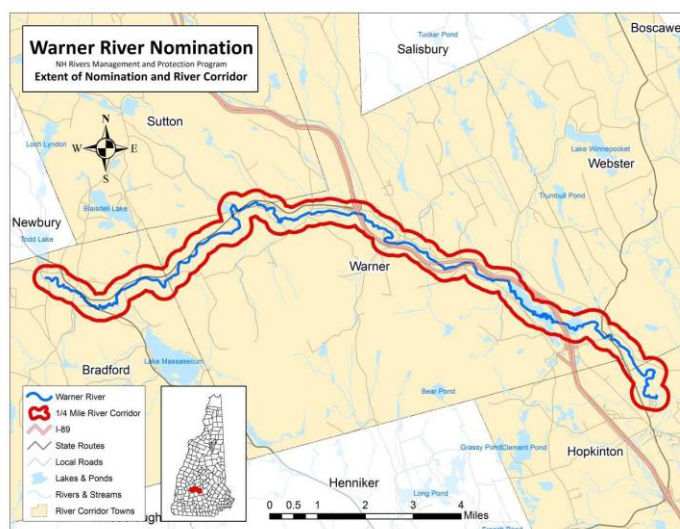


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## The Warner River

The Warner River is seeking designation as a protected river under the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program. The 20 mile long nominated river begins on the West Branch Warner River at its confluence with Andrew Brook in Bradford, continues on to the Warner River where the West Branch meets Hoyt Brook, and ends at the confluence with the Contoocook River in Hopkinton, which is also a New Hampshire designated river. With a watershed drainage basin of over 148 square miles across Merrimack and Sullivan Counties, the Warner River is an integral part of central New Hampshire's landscape. The river helps define the five communities of Bradford, Sutton, Warner, Webster, and Hopkinton through which it flows.



The river is largely free flowing with three dams actively impounding water, and eight other dams either breached or in ruins. The large watershed is steep and rocky and produces fast-rising, high-volume runoff during severe storms. Water quality in the river is generally good. New Hampshire's Draft 2016 Section 305(b)/303(d) Surface Water Quality Report lists several sites along the river as impaired for supporting aquatic life due to pH. A few of the lakes and ponds in the watershed such as Lake Massasecum and the beach at the Silver Lake Reservoir in Warner have occasionally been impaired for swimming due to *E. coli*, and Blaisdell Lake in Sutton and Tom Pond in Warner have also been impaired for aquatic life due to total phosphorus, pH, and chlorophyll-a.

### Geology

Glaciers were present in the Warner River Valley during the Pleistocene Epoch 2.59 – 0.012 million years ago. When the glaciers retreated, they left behind till and through the process of ice melt, stratified deposits were created along streams, channels, and lakes. These deposits were saturated with water and formed stratified-drift aquifers. The most expansive aquifers are found near the termination of the Warner River, as this area was once a glacial lake. However, aquifers are found along the entirety of the river channel and play a vital role in supplying municipal water for the towns of Hopkinton and Warner.

In the past, there has been minor commercial extraction of metamorphic minerals along the Warner River. Almandite, a common type of garnet, was mined and used primarily as an industrial abrasive. Soapstone was also extracted in Warner for use in stoves and hearthstones. Neither of these minerals is mined today.

## History

The Pennacooks were the area's first inhabitants. Artifacts such as projectile points, scraping tools, hearths, and even human remains have been found in the river corridor. In the 1740's settlers built log cabins and a sawmill, only to have them burned to the ground by the Pennacooks. It was not until after the French and Indian War in the 1760's that a settlement could be established. Francis Davis established the first permanent sawmill in 1763 and mills became the backbone of the area's economy. Other industries which rely on mills sprang up and produced woolen cloth, hard-iron, clock weights, wooden boxes, gloves, shoes, bobbins, toys, wood turned chairs, baseball bats, crutches, cotton cloth, clothes pins, hubs, milk can stopples, transformers, and special power supplies. Early residents of the Warner River were concerned about the river's water quality, and in 1906 mill owners were cited for breaking the law by dumping sawdust into the river.

Noteworthy historical sites occurring in the river corridor include the Dalton, Waterloo, and Bement covered bridges, as well as the Lower Warner Meeting House, all of which are listed on the National Historic Register. The Waterloo District, with its 24 houses, cemetery, school house, railroad depot, and mill building, is also listed on the National Historic Register.



## Wildlife, Habitat and Vegetation

The Warner River forms a natural greenway corridor between multiple large protected open space areas including the Chandler Reservation in Warner, the Warner Town Forest, and the Mount Kearsarge State Forest Park, which stretches into Sutton, Wilmot, Andover, and Salisbury. Rare, threatened, and endangered plant and animal species within the river corridor include sclerolepis, found in only two locations in New England, small whorled pogonia, American water-alwort, the common loon, and Blanding's turtle. Over two-thirds of streams in the watershed also support the natural reproduction of native brook trout. More than 20 percent of the land area within the river corridor has been identified as the highest ranked wildlife habitat in the state as noted in the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan. The river corridor is an excellent location for observing wildlife such as moose, black bear, fisher, and bobcat due to the proximity of large areas of conserved open space.

## Recreation, Boating and Fishing

The Warner River corridor offers a wide variety of recreation opportunities such as wildlife observation and walking in the Bradford Pines Natural Area, hiking and hunting in the Mink Hills, and organized sports at Warner's Riverside Park. A small section of the [Concord - Lake Sunapee Rail Trail](#) follows the Warner River from just north of Tom Pond to Bradford, offering walking and biking opportunities with future expansion planned. Also, a state primary snowmobile trail crosses the river on Joppa Road via the Dalton covered bridge.

Fishing, kayaking, canoeing, and swimming are popular on the Warner River, which is easily accessed in many locations from NH Route 103. Seasonally variable flows offer whitewater paddling unique to this part of the State including numerous class IV rapids and a three-foot dam sluice. American Whitewater identifies the Warner River as a highly popular destination due to its large watershed, long whitewater season, and incredible in-stream features. Several dams along the river impound sizeable swimming holes that are enjoyed in the summer months. The New Hampshire Fish and Game's Freshwater Fishing Guide claims the Warner River to be an excellent location for brook and rainbow trout fishing, with varied fish habitat, and good access to the river.

## 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/>, 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).