

Newsletter Spring 2016

www.lampreyriver.org



Daring Herring



Photo courtesy of NH Fish & Game

River herring is the common term used to describe two species of anadromous fish: alewives and blueback herring. Rivers along the eastern seaboard once teemed with these fish in the spring as they migrated from the ocean to breed in our rivers.

Populations are now in serious decline. Human dams and unsustainable activities on land and in the sea are largely to blame. The federal government is considering listing these fish as endangered species.

Even with fish ladders and lots of help from fish and game professionals, river herring face many challenges. They can legally be netted in salt water. From statistics of tagged fish and from visual observations at Macallen Dam in Newmarket, clearly many fish do not pass the ladder designed to help them migrate. The overall rate of successful passage is only 42%. Fast water during flood years (i.e., 2006, 2007) significantly impairs returns, because the water is too turbulent for fish to find or pass the ladders. With three years of data, the fish ladder at Wiswall Dam in Durham is passing 21-38% of the fish that pass through Macallen. With the installation of the fish ladder at Wiswall Dam, it was hoped that river herring would have access to the entire Lamprey River and its tributaries. Sadly, that is not the case. Even though the dam at Wadleigh Falls in Lee is breached on two sides, the natural falls are too steep for the fish to pass. The dam is under private ownership and the landowner does not want to discuss minor modifications to the river bottom that would enable fish to pass. Each year, masses of non-viable eggs are often found at the base of Macallen Dam and Wadleigh Falls.

River herring were recognized as being one of three "outstandingly remarkable values" in the Lamprey River's Wild and Scenic River designation by the US Congress. Currently, the Lamprey River has one of the strongest runs of alewives on the East Coast. The continued presence of these fish in the Lamprey is important locally and nationally.

Visit <http://www.lampreyriver.org/about-us-current-research-river-herring> to read the summary of a presentation by Kevin Sullivan of the N.H. Department of Fish and Game from December 8, 2015. Click here for Kevin's slides. [Set A](#) [Set B](#) [Set C](#) [Set D](#)

Overcoming (Woody) Obstacles

Paddling the Lamprey River is an activity enjoyed by many. The Annual Lamprey River Canoe Race starts at Mary Blair Park and ends at the Route 87 bridge. Canoeists and kayakers who try to paddle past that end point will encounter several serious obstacles as they continue to Wadleigh Falls in Lee. Over the years, Many trees have fallen into the river. Sometimes paddlers can sneak around or under, but more often, they need to take the boat out of the water, carry it up steep slopes often covered by poison ivy, get past the blockage, carry the boat back down steep slopes, and try to continue on until the next blockage. Paddlers often ask, "What, if anything, can be done with this section?"



Photo by Ryan Foley

With that question in mind, the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee and the Lamprey River Watershed Association set out by canoe and kayak in 2014 and 2015 to evaluate and document the problems and consider some possible solutions. They found six sites that are impassable under any circumstance. They encountered other obstacles that might be passable under some circumstances, but would still require a degree of skill and physical strength. A few obstacles could be made passable to recreational paddlers if a few branches were trimmed.

Woody material in streams cannot just be removed because someone might wish it to be so. Woody material is a natural and important component of healthy streams. It provides habitat to fish and other aquatic animals, it helps to slow flow, it adds shade to help keep the water cool, and many laws are in place to support those functions. Removing large woody material requires heavy equipment and permits. On the other hand, woody material can sometimes pose a safety hazard to people or infrastructure, such as bridges.

After documenting each blockage and evaluating safety threats if nothing were to be done and estimating ecological impacts if material were to be relocated, the group offered the following recommendations:

- Place signs at the Route 87 bridge and at the canoe access at Wadleigh Falls to alert paddlers that this section of the river has many blockages that require portages.
- Organize small groups of volunteers to hand-trim overhanging branches to reduce snagging. This would be most effective starting at Wadleigh Falls and working upstream.

- Continue to monitor the river for changes over time and under varying water level and flow conditions. If conditions worsen significantly and are deemed to present a significant risk to bridges downstream, consult with the NH Department of Environmental Services and a conservation work group to create a plan for relocation of woody material that protects humans and river banks. This would require permits and substantial funding.

When the snow melts and the river once again beckons, go out and enjoy. Recognize that the some parts of the Wild and Scenic Lamprey are scenic and others are wild.

To view the entire report, please visit

http://www.lampreyriver.org/UploadedFiles/Files/woody_obstacles_report.pdf.

Overcoming (Dam) Obstacles



The Lamprey is a great river for canoeing and kayaking, but in addition to woody obstacles, paddlers sometimes face another issue: how to get around dams safely and without trespassing on private property. At Newmarket’s Macallen Dam, help is on the way. As part of a lot-line adjustment review for property on Elm Street and off Lincoln Avenue, the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee suggested to the developer that granting an easement for paddlers and their boats would be a much-needed public service and a good use of a sliver of land that is not suitable for building due to its proximity to the river. With town support to iron out legal issues, the easement was finalized in December.

Specifically, the easement covers the following:

“...irrevocable portage easement for the limited purpose of public use to launch non-motorized watercrafts onto the Lamprey River consisting of 6,017 sq. feet or 0.136± acres... together with the non-exclusive right of pedestrian ingress and egress to maneuver over those portions of the Grantor Parcel reasonably necessary to access and exit from said easement area (the “Portage Easement”). There shall be no vehicular access to the Proposed Portage Easement area or storage of any kind within the area.”

The easement also allows provisions to the developer to make the portage safer by installing stairs, signs, or other normal portage features. These possible improvements will be studied this spring and the committee will work with the developer to see these come to fruition. Stay tuned!

Get ready, get set, get outdoors!



April 23: Lamprey River Canoe Race, starts at Mary Blair Park, Rte. 27, Epping
See www.epping.nhliions.org for race registration form and info.

May 7: “Herring Aid”, 10-noon, Macallen Dam, Rte. 108, Downtown Newmarket
Help NH Fish & Game count and move river herring from the fish ladder and on to their voyage upstream. You’ll probably also meet sea lampreys and see-through baby American eels! Free, no registration needed.

May 14: “It’s spring... time to get pumped!”, 10-noon, Durham Public Library, 49 Madbury Road
Learn how to keep your dollars from going down the drain by understanding your septic system: how your septic system works, simple steps to keep your septic system going strong, latest technology, Q&A session with the pros. Free, no registration needed. Co-sponsored by the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee, NH Department of Environmental Services, and Strafford Regional Planning Commission.

June 26: Lee 250th Family Paddle, 1-3 P.M., Lee Public Canoe Access, Route 152
Enjoy a leisurely paddle upstream and back while taking in the view. Please contact dawn.genes@lrwa-nh.org for details and to register. Co-sponsored by the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee, the Lamprey River Watershed Association, and the Town of Lee.

Quotable Quote:

One of the most tragic things I know about human nature is that all of us tend to put off living. We are all dreaming of some magical rose garden over the horizon instead of enjoying the roses that are blooming outside our windows today.
--Dale Carnegie



National Park Service: Call to Action Grants

The National Park Service (NPS) will turn 100 years old in August 2016. Most Americans are familiar with the crown jewels that comprise the national parks, but the NPS is much more than just the parks. It also encompasses national monuments, historic sites, public walking and water trails, and Wild and Scenic Rivers.

As a partner in the Wild and Scenic Rivers System, the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee applied for and was awarded a 100th anniversary Call to Action grant to help improve passive recreation in the Lamprey River watershed. The committee in turn requested applications from local towns to serve as partners. We are pleased that Raymond and Newmarket were selected for assistance.

Raymond has put in significant time creating a plan for a nature trail near the Lamprey River Elementary School. Teachers there have been taking students along an informal trail for years, but the trail lacked real planning and signage. This summer, the trail will be shifted away from ecologically sensitive areas and toward more resilient terrain. Twelve interpretive signs will be designed and placed along the trail to highlight soil and habitat shifts at the different stops. A kiosk will also be designed and installed to orient visitors and offer guidance for appreciating the trail. The trail will be used primarily by school groups when school is in session, but during off-hours, the public will be free to explore and learn. The ultimate goal will be to create an eco-center that features a nature trail and public access to the river for canoes and kayaks.



How could we resist this from Newmarket's grant application?

"Happy summer campers on the Piscassic River, photo taken nearly four years ago. This was the last time we were able to provide this opportunity to our campers. The hassle of transporting our kayaks back and forth to water access became logistically too difficult."

Newmarket has an active recreation department and owns several kayaks for public use. What is lacking is a location near the river to launch the boats. After consulting with the conservation commission, two easement sites were identified that could accommodate kayak racks. This summer, kayak racks equipped with locking devices will be installed at Schanda Park on the salt water portion of the Lamprey River and at Piscassic Park located at the freshwater confluence of the Piscassic and Lamprey rivers. These boats will be available to recreation campers as well as the general public

Check Your Fly, Please

They're back! Black flies are annoying, but they are almost always a sign that nearby streams have good, clean water. They are difficult to control, and only somewhat less difficult to avoid. The best bet is to cover up when outside and stay inside when they are most active (9-11 A.M. and 4-7 P.M.). As the Maine Black Fly Breeders Association says, black flies are truly defenders of the wilderness.



<http://www.maineblackfly.org>

Thompson Farm in Durham Conserved

On March 29, 2106, almost 54 acres of prime agricultural land and wildlife habitat with 3500 feet of frontage on the Lamprey River were officially conserved in perpetuity under the care of the Southeast Land Trust. The long and complex process of preparing the conservation easement on the Thompson Farm in Durham was completed by the simple act of a few signatures.



Photo courtesy of Southeast Land trust

The Wild and Scenic Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC) has been involved with many projects like this. Using federal funds, the committee has played a critical role in protecting prime habitat and natural resources in an area that is facing development pressures greater than most places east of the Mississippi. In so doing, the LRAC has helped this region progress toward the goal of 15% conserved land. The LRAC cannot own land due to National Park Service regulations, but its funds have often provided a jumpstart for leveraging other funds from land trusts, towns, targeted programs, and private donations. In the case of the Thompson Farm, \$141,000 from the LRAC helped to attract an additional \$327,450 from other sources. This investment will help to ensure protection for the drinking water intake area for the Town of Durham, highest ranking wildlife habitat in the state, focus area for the endangered New England cottontail rabbit, and prime farmland soils. In addition, this property is near other conservation land, resulting in an expansive area of protection.



Kitty Miller (left) from the LRAC presents Kim Laughton (right), with an antique "E. L. Thompson & Sons" milk bottle. Kim and her sister promised their mother that they would make sure the family's land was protected for the future. Duane Hyde, conservation director for the Southeast Land Trust, is seated in the background.

Photo by R.H. Lord

Federal funding for the LRAC's land protection efforts has largely dried up, at least for now, but over the past twenty years, the LRAC has used \$4.9 million to leverage protection for almost \$21 million of outstanding property along the Lamprey River. That's something to drink to!