

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2010



Spring came a bit early to New England this year, with a winter that faded quickly and then became almost summer-like. The Lamprey took on a lot of new water with heavy rains and runoff. The frequent floods left some residents stranded on temporary “islands”, river banks and roads eroded, and most people wishing for sunshine. The heavy rains seem to have subsided, but several tributaries are still brown with silt. The river is “wild and scenic”, with significant historical and ecological attributes, but it is susceptible to damage, as we saw.

History and Archaeology

The new bridge at Wiswall Falls in Durham is nearing completion. The former, single lane bridge and its old abutments were removed last fall. The middle piling will not be replaced, but the granite stones will remain on-site, integrated into three facings of the new abutments. The new, single-lane span has been put in place and the bridge should be open for traffic before summer. Most of the funding for repairs was provided by FEMA, but the Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC) helped the bridge retain its beauty and historic value by funding the facing of one of the abutments that is visible from John Hatch Park. Under the leadership of LRAC's Dick Lord, Durham's Wiswall Historic Interpretive Committee will be creating interpretive materials for John Hatch Park and exploring opportunities for a new fish ladder and canoe launch to be located on site.

A public forum is being planned to showcase two projects funded last year by the LRAC. Neat Line Associates did historical research on the mills of the Lamprey and created maps that can show pictures and details when one clicks onto the mill site. Curt Mackail researched the history of the Wiswall Falls mills and produced a video telling the story. Both of these projects will be showcased at the event and later they will be available on the committee's website.

Citizens of Lee are probably aware that the the historic Towle-Glidden house at Wadleigh Falls fell victim to an arsonist in April. Fortunately, the damage was largely superficial and the structure is still sound and well worth saving. The LRAC is actively working with the Lee Historic Committee and the Lee Heritage Commission to get the house nominated to NH's Historic Register.

Recreation

The Lamprey River Advisory Committee has secured the appropriate permits and is set to work with the Town of Lee to build a new canoe access/launch at Wadleigh Falls, Lee's first public access point to the river. With so much of land adjacent to the river as private property, the committee is working hard to increase the public's access to the river. This new access site should help residents explore new areas of the river and build a wider appreciation for its long-term protection.

Education and Outreach

The website, www.lampreyriver.org, is due for an upgrade. The goal is to make the site more current, user-friendly, and interactive. We look forward to sharing the new look and options. Stay tuned...

Vernal pools were the place to be and explore this spring. Working with a biology class at Newmarket High School, we explored and mapped a pristine vernal pool in Newmarket for practice. The class later visited two more pools in Durham to gather information that The Nature Conservancy, the Town of Durham, and the NH Dept. of Environmental Services can use for their conservation databases.



Vernal pools are temporary bodies of water that are critical for certain amphibians. They often are overlooked and not given adequate protection, because they may appear to be dry during part of the year. Photo by S. Petersen

Wildlife and Ecology

As part of its efforts to keep track of what lives in and around the river, the committee has commissioned a study of the fish living in the tributaries of the river. Crews will be out this summer catching fish, recording their statistics, and releasing them back to the river.

The committee will once again be actively trying to address the problem of controlling invasive Japanese knotweed. These tall, fast-growing, aggressive plants are common on disturbed sites, and once established, they are extremely difficult to eradicate. One herbicide regimen was tested last year with some success and a new regimen will be trialed this year. Once the best management practice is established, the committee and its partners will enlist the support of the public to contain the enemy and make the watershed safe for native plants and the animals that rely on them.

Water Quality and Quantity

The committee was a co-sponsor of "The Road Less Salted" workshop held May 13 at the Hugh Gregg Conservation Center in Greenland. The workshop presenters and attendees learned how road salt is increasingly getting into our streams and ground water. They then discussed strategies for reducing the amount of salt that is applied to our roadways and parking lots. The conference was largely a follow-up to the LRAC's 2009 conference on watershed issues. The committee funded the videotaping of the workshop. For those interested in more information about road salt or in viewing the DVD, please contact Sharon at s-meeker@comcast.net or Suzanne at rgrims@gwi.net.