



Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee Annual Report FY 2012 (Oct. 1, 2011 – Sept. 30, 2012)



*The fish ladder at Wiswall Dam
photo by S. Petersen*

Outside the domain of the committee's own work, a long-awaited improvement to the river came in the form of the new fish ladder at Wiswall Dam in Durham. For 250 years, native fish have been unable to reach their historic spawning grounds upstream in the Lamprey River due to big dams. When the ladder opened in May, fish were waiting and needed no prodding or encouragement to use it. Since that time, more than 20,000 river herring and other anadromous fish have successfully swum up the ladder and up river.

Historically, the Lamprey River has had over 100 dams and mills along its 47 mile length. In the last few decades, four big dams remained. These dams blocked fish passage and impaired the natural ecological functions of a free running river. The McCallen Dam in Newmarket has had a fish ladder for many years. The Wadleigh Falls Dam in Lee is breached and is still a tough obstacle for migrating fish, but some do get past. The Bunker Pond Dam in Epping was removed for safety reasons in the summer of 2011. The Wiswall Dam in Durham was the final obstacle.

After many attempts by Durham over many years to plan and fund a fish ladder, the Natural Resources Conservation Service provided more than half the needed funding to get the Wiswall project under way. The Town of Durham contributed the remainder. The total price tag for the project was approximately \$1.9 million.

LRAC Accomplishments: The LRAC, now bigger and better than before, had a busy and productive year. This was the first full year of work from representatives from all fourteen towns in the Lamprey River watershed. To reflect the addition of the upper Lamprey River and the main tributaries (Little, North, North Branch, Pawtuckaway, and Piscassic), the Lamprey River Advisory Committee became the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee. The committee reviewed and commented on five project proposals for the main stem Lamprey River and the five designated tributaries. Significant work toward the river management plan was pursued.

Land Protection: Working with partners such as the Southeast Land Trust, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, town conservation commissions, and others, the Wild and Scenic sub-committee continued to provide expertise and funding to protect an additional 34 acres of shoreline of ecologically significant land along the river, bringing the total protected since 1999 to 3951 acres.

Education and Outreach: The sub-committee was again very active in reaching out to the public to inform and encourage wise use of the rivers' resources.

- Two DVDs, "Connecting Lives on the Lamprey River" and "Spring into Vernal Pools", were added to the LRAC collection and were distributed at no charge to libraries, cable access channels, and conservation commissions within the Lamprey's drainage area. A Lamprey River film festival was held in February.
- An improved and more user-friendly website for the public, replaced the website that was originally created in the 1990s. The site is garnering good interest; in May alone, nearly 700 viewers visited the site.
- In April, the sub-committee partnered with students at Epping River High School to study and document local vernal pools. One visit was undertaken with the goal of providing documentation to NH DES, while another was performed by students as part of a community service day.
- The committee led efforts to establish an annual Family Fun Day at Epping's Mary Blair Park. Participants came from the Town of Epping, environmental non-profits, the State of New Hampshire, and students.
- For the fourth year, the committee funded three small grants up to \$5000 each for creative and worthwhile projects. One grant supported the creation of a master plan to develop Epping's Mary Blair Park. A second grant was used to produce a plan for nature and historic trails at Mary Blair Park. The third grant was used to create a detailed database of dams on the lower Lamprey with the goal of identifying opportunities to increase fish migration.

Wildlife and Ecology: The opening of the Wiswall Dam fish ladder was celebrated. The sub-committee submitted comments on the project that focused on reducing accidental entrapment of turtles and ensuring their safe passage. The results of a two year fish survey funded by LRAC and completed in 2011 were presented to the committee by NH Fish and Game.

History: The sub-committee partnered with a Durham committee to create two additional kiosk panels at Wiswall Falls. One panel made use of NRCS historic mitigation money to document mill remains and the new fish ladder. The other panel, funded by LRAC, was a memorial to John Hatch, artist and key proponent of the Lamprey River.

Recreation: The sub-committee celebrated the opening of the Lee Public Canoe Launch at Wadleigh Falls with a fall canoe trip for the public. To prepare for the content of the sign at the site, the sub-committee funded NH Fish and Game to survey the river upstream to determine what, if any, woody material might safely be removed to improve canoe passage while maintaining valuable fish habitat.

Water Quality and Quantity: The sub-committee has long supported the monitoring efforts of the Lamprey River Watershed Association to test and report water quality data, and that tradition was continued in 2012. With severe reductions in state support for water quality monitoring, LRAC funding ensured that years of data were not interrupted. Results were reported to the Volunteer River Assessment Program and are available at NH Dept. of Environmental Services.

Project Reviews: The expanded committee reviewed and commented on several projects that were submitted to the state. Among the most significant were the expansion of paved surface at the Walmart Distribution Center in Raymond, a health care satellite in Epping, and the United Veterans Club in Raymond.

Plans for 2013: The full committee will continue to fulfill its main duties of producing the rivers management plan and reviewing projects proposed for the quarter mile corridor around the designated rivers. Utilizing the Wildlife Action Plan and the Coastal Conservation Plan to augment the 2007 LRAC management plan land protection priorities, the Wild and Scenic sub-committee will continue to be a strong presence in multiple, on-going efforts to protect and conserve land along the Lamprey River. The LRAC plans to fund small grants again in 2013. Partnering with the Lamprey River Watershed Association and others, the LRAC will continue to support research, volunteer water quality monitoring, and outreach efforts. Recent scientific investigations show that nitrogen loading (coming mainly from run-off from the land and failed septic systems) are problems for the rivers and the Great Bay Estuary. The LRAC plans to continue to promote a watershed approach to those problems.

2012 LRAC members included:

Barrington: Ellen Conklin, Steve Conklin

Brentwood: Emily Schmalzer

Candia: Richard Snow

Deerfield: Harriet Cady, Wes Golomb (resigned in July)

Durham: Bill Hall, Jim Hewitt (resigned in April), Richard Kelley (resigned in August), Ann Lightbody (appointed in August), Dick Lord, Rachel Stevens (appointed in August)

Epping: Joe Foley, Jenn Rowden

Exeter: Todd Piskovitz

Fremont: Fred Lindahl

Lee: Jere Beckman, Sharon Meeker, Kitty Miller, Preston Samuel

Newfields: Alison Watts

Newmarket: Michelle Daley, Peter Wellenberger

Northwood: Jim Hadley (resigned in March)

Nottingham: Mike Russo (vice chair), Bonnie Winona-Mackinnon

Raymond: Patrick Bower (chair), Kathleen Hoelzel, Ted Janusz

special appointment: L. Mike Kappler (resigned in April)

Associate Member: Dawn Genes, executive director, Lamprey River Watershed Association

Specialists:

Laurel Cox, land conservation

David Viale, land conservation

Suzanne Petersen, outreach and education

National Park Service: Jim MacCartney

Contact: www.lampreyriver.org

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'PB', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Patrick Bower, Chair
Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee