



**Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC)**  
**Annual Report FY 2018 (Oct. 1, 2017 – Sept. 30, 2018)**



*Schoppmeyer Park Dedication Ceremony, Newmarket*

*Photo courtesy of Dave LeGault*

We are pleased to feature a new Lamprey River park on the cover of the FY2018 annual report. The Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC) was heavily involved with improving public access this year:

- The LRAC contributed significantly to Newmarket's efforts to create a memorial park to honor Chris Schoppmeyer. The LRAC donated funding to help secure an easement on the property, landscape design to create a space for remembering Chris and his fellow law enforcement officers, and graphic design help to create a kiosk panel about the Lamprey River. The new park is conveniently located on Route 108 behind the Newmarket Community Church Thrift Shop and has benches, a picnic area, and a kayak dock. The Newmarket Recreation Department plans to install a kayak rack (previously donated by the LRAC) to hold boats that can be rented for exploring this impounded section of the river. Future plans for the kayak dock include a handicap launch assist system.
- The committee worked with Trout Unlimited to improve canoe passage on more than four miles between Epping and Lee. This natural section of the river has been largely inhospitable to paddlers for several years due to several large downed trees. After careful consideration for both public access and important wildlife habitat, enough wood to enable canoe passage was removed from the river way and repositioned back in the water to protect ecological values. Many thanks to the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation for funding this important pilot project.
- In partnership with the LRAC, the Epping Conservation Commission began work on a multi-year effort to improve access at the Tilton Conservation Area on Route 87. This site is a public canoe launch area and serves as the finish line for the annual Lamprey River Canoe Race and also marks the beginning of the improved Epping to Lee section noted above. Preliminary work included adding gravel to the parking lot to allow vehicles to turn safely, creating plans to revive the floodplain trail, and improving signage on site. Future work will include reconfiguring the canoe launch to improve safety and reduce erosion.
- As part of a Small Grant to the Newmarket Recreation Department, the LRAC provided program funding and educational support to novice paddlers. The project helped to increase awareness of ecological issues affecting the river and Great Bay and improved participation in the Lamprey River Splash and Dash race.
- For the second year, the committee sponsored an eco-paddle on the saltwater portion that offered participants a chance to meet researchers who are engaged in river herring migration, oyster restoration, eelgrass recovery efforts, and water quality issues.



## **About the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC)**

The LRAC is comprised of volunteer representatives nominated by the towns of the Lamprey River watershed and appointed by the commissioner of the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). These volunteers serve as liaisons to NHDES and have two main duties: 1) Create a river management plan that protects or enhances the values for which the river was designated for extra protection under the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program under RSA 483 and 2) Review and comment on development or redevelopment project applications for the quarter mile corridor that parallels each side of the main stem Lamprey River and five designated tributaries and that require a state permit such as a wetlands or alteration of terrain permit.

The LRAC also serves as a partner to the National Park Service to protect and enhance the “outstandingly remarkable values” for which a 23 mile segment of the main stem Lamprey River was designated by the US Congress as a National Wild and Scenic River. As part of this partnership, the LRAC receives funding from the National Park Service (CFDA # 15.962 National Wild and Scenic Rivers System) to support its activities.

For more information about the Lamprey River and the LRAC, please visit [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org).

## **LRAC Accomplishments:**

Representatives from nine of the fourteen towns in the Lamprey River watershed worked hard to implement the comprehensive rivers management plan with help from towns, planning commissions, land protection organizations, wildlife professionals, and citizens. The final plan was approved on September 26, 2013 and is available at town offices and on [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org).

## **Education and Outreach:**

- The committee’s website, [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org), continued to be a public clearing house of Lamprey River information and resources.
- LRAC displays at four town celebrations and six presentations at town libraries encouraged local people to learn about the river and gave them a chance to share concerns.
- In May, the workgroup partnered with the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department to educate the public about river herring at the “Herring Aid” event at the Macallen Dam in Newmarket. Approximately 55 children and adults helped to count the fish and escort them from the fish ladder holding tank to the river where they were released.

- Using a separate, competitive grant from the National Park Service, the LRAC published and shared its *Twenty Years of Progress* report as a model for current and future Wild and Scenic Rivers.
- Three fourth grade classes from Mast Way School in Lee made extensive use of *The Lamprey River Curriculum* and participated in a river-based science field trip.

### **History:**

- In Durham, the LRAC provided funding to build the Thompson Forest kiosk framework and will help to provide historical content for the kiosk panel.
- The LRAC provided historical content and artistic advice for kiosks at Schoppmeyer Park in Newmarket.

### **Land Protection:**

- Working with partners such as the Southeast Land Trust, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, town conservation commissions, and others, the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee continued to provide expertise toward protecting ecologically significant land along the river. As of September 2018, LRAC had contributed funding totaling \$4,934,881 to protect 3512 acres and 16.3 miles of river frontage. For every dollar LRAC provided, three dollars from other sources (such as landowner donations of land value and matching funds from towns and conservation organizations) were used.
- The LRAC awarded a grant of \$5000 to the Barrington Conservation Commission, in partnership with Strafford Regional Planning Commission, for the purpose of updating its natural resource inventory and planning for strategic conservation action. Final products will include co-occurrence mapping where multiple natural resource features are co-located or are in near proximity. The maps will include the most up-to-date conservation data, such as climate change resilience studies, to support wildlife habitat, preserve working farms and forests, and ensure clean water resources. The template for producing the GIS maps can be easily shared with other communities that need to update their natural resource inventories or conservation planning. The headwaters of the Little River, one of the five state-protected tributaries of the Lamprey River, are located in Barrington. Protection of the tributaries is essential to the protection of the Lamprey River.

### **Project Review:**

- The project review workgroup commented on 23 proposed development or redevelopment projects along the main river and tributaries that required state environmental permits.
- Complaints or concerns about activities along the river were referred to local code enforcement officers who then contacted NHDES for enforcement as appropriate.

## Recreation:



photo by Preston Samuel

With help from a generous grant from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, paddling conditions between Epping and Lee were improved as part of a pilot project to enhance canoe passage while protecting ecological values of instream wood. The LRAC worked in partnership with Trout Unlimited to evaluate each obstacle and remove enough wood to allow canoe passage at base flow. The wood was relocated back into the river to protect fish habitat. Work was completed in late August and a public paddle will be offered in early October.

- In partnership with the LRAC, the Epping Conservation Commission began work on a multi-year effort to improve access at the Tilton Conservation Area on Route 87. This site is a public canoe launch area and serves as the finish line for the annual Lamprey River Canoe Race and also marks the beginning of the improved Epping to Lee section noted above. Preliminary work included adding gravel to the parking lot to allow vehicles to turn safely, creating plans to revive the floodplain trail, and improving signage on site. Future work will include reconfiguring the canoe launch to improve safety and reduce erosion.
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## Water Quality and Quantity:

- The LRAC continued to provide financial assistance the Lamprey River Watershed Association to test and report water quality data as part of the New Hampshire Volunteer River Assessment Program. Wild and Scenic Subcommittee funding ensured that years of data were not interrupted by cuts to the state program.
- Work continued on a project to collate and interpret water quality data spanning 25 years to create a report that is accessible and understandable to the public. Despite a few areas of low dissolved oxygen, the river is otherwise meeting criteria for “fishable and swimmable” conditions. To view Part I of the report, visit [http://www.lampreyriver.org/UploadedFiles/Files/water\\_qual\\_23\\_yr\\_report\\_2016](http://www.lampreyriver.org/UploadedFiles/Files/water_qual_23_yr_report_2016).

[pdf](#). Part 2 of the report will be available shortly at [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org) under the “multi-media center/Lamprey River research” tab.

- Flows in the Lamprey were above average following three years of low water. NHDES did not need to release any “relief pulses” from dams to help fish survive. As one of two pilot rivers in the NHDES instream flow management program, the Lamprey serves as a model for other rivers in the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program whose instream flow management plans are being drafted.

### **Wildlife and Ecology:**

- In Newmarket, about 60,000 alewives passed through the Macallen Dam fish ladder during the annual spring spawning run. Of those fish, about 45,000 passed through the Wiswall Dam fish ladder in Durham. The Macallen tally is close to average for the past ten years, while the Wiswall tally is the best since the fish ladder there opened in 2012. The next obstacle to full access is Wadleigh Falls in Lee. Despite significant effort at the state level, privately-owned Wadleigh Falls will remain an impassable obstacle to fish passage for the foreseeable future.
- The LRAC funded acoustic bat surveys at eight sites in Epping, Lee, Nottingham, and Raymond. Results were analyzed by software and then verified by human experts. Seven of the eight species expected in New Hampshire, including three species that are listed as endangered in New Hampshire, were detected.
- The LRAC awarded a grant to NH Fish and Game to support the creation of nesting habitat for Blanding’s turtles. With the widening of Route 108, soft shoulders frequently used by females to lay eggs were hardened to discourage deposition of eggs and subsequent road kill of mothers and hatchlings. New nesting areas were created in well protected areas far from the road. Preliminary data show that turtles visited the created site and might have laid eggs.

### **Plans for 2019 and Issues to Watch:**

The full committee will continue its main duties to work on issues identified in the *2013 Lamprey Rivers Management Plan* and review projects proposed for the quarter mile corridor around the main stem Lamprey River and the five designated tributaries. The LRAC will continue to support research, volunteer water quality monitoring, and outreach efforts. Special projects for 2019 include the following:

- A follow-up study of turtles along the main stem Lamprey River is being planned.
- At the Route 87 landing in Epping, canoe access will be revised to improve safety and reduce erosion. A public canoe access sign will be installed and the existing kiosk will be updated. The floodplain nature trail will be repaired and improved.
- Phase 3 of the long-term water quality analysis will be undertaken.
- A new community grant program will be developed to help towns and civic organizations pursue projects related to the Lamprey River.