



Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC)
Annual Report FY 2014 (Oct. 1, 2013 – Sept. 30, 2014)



Releasing River Herring into the Lamprey above the Macallen Dam, Newmarket

photo by S. Petersen

River herring once choked rivers in the spring as they made their annual migration from the sea back to native spawning grounds inland. These runs have largely died due to dams and other obstacles common to most modern rivers. The Lamprey River is an exception and has one of the strongest runs on the East Coast. Investments of time, money, and energy to help the fish overcome the obstacles have produced tangible results. The fish ladder at Macallen Dam in Newmarket passed over 90,000 fish this year. Upstream at Wiswall Falls in Durham, the fish ladder there passed 30,000 fish. New Hampshire Fish and Game transports fish up to Pawtuckaway Lake so that as much habitat is utilized as possible despite obstacles higher in the river's drainage area.

The fish being released here came up the ladder and were part of a public education event to build awareness of the fish and their importance to the river. Participants were also able to see and handle baby American eels (glass eels) and a few juvenile sea lampreys that also make use of the fish ladder.

The presence of thousands of imperiled river herring is one of the factors that earned the Lamprey River's designation as a Wild and Scenic River. Something's fishy here and that is, as the U.S. Congress acknowledges, an "outstandingly remarkable resource."



LRAC Accomplishments: The LRAC had another busy and productive year. Representatives from most of the fourteen towns in the Lamprey River watershed worked hard to begin implementing the comprehensive rivers management plan with help from towns, planning commissions, land protection organizations, wildlife professionals, and citizens. The final plan was approved on Sept. 26, 2013 and is available at town offices and on www.lampreyriver.org.

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. The total protected since 1999 is 2803 acres and 9.98 miles of river frontage. For every \$3 of LRAC money spent, an additional \$7 was leveraged from other sources.
- Updated and more accurate flood maps were produced for the Lamprey. These maps will be very useful in helping to identify and prioritize land protection efforts going forward.
- Because the infusion of new land protection money is difficult to secure, the land protection team began work on recognizing protective efforts by landowners that improve soils and water in and along the rivers.

Education and Outreach:

- The committee's website, www.lampreyriver.org, continued to be a public clearing house of Lamprey River information and resources.
- LRAC displays at public events invited local folks to learn about the river and gave them a chance to share concerns.
- In April, the workgroup partnered with New Hampshire Fish and Game to educate the public about river herring at the "Herring Aid" event at the Macallen Dam in Newmarket. Children and adults helped to count the fish and escort them from the fish ladder holding tank to the river where they were released.
- For the sixth year, the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee funded small grants up to \$5000 each for creative and worthwhile projects. Special invitations were sent to towns to work on partnership projects. The Town of Lee used its Small Grant to document wildlife and habitat resources at the town's Rothwell conservation property on Route 152. Public paths will be designed and prepared based on the findings. Future projects might include planning and building rain gardens at local schools.
- Four fourth grade classes from Mast Way School in Lee made extensive use of The Lamprey River Curriculum, culminating in a field trip to Mary Blair Park where they performed water quality tests, studied aquatic invertebrates, took the history tour, and learned about the risks of building in a floodplain.
- In a partnership with Epping Summer Recreation, children were given the opportunity to become Lamprey Rivers Junior Rangers. Participants learned about Lamprey River geography, history, wildlife, recreational opportunities and safety, and current pollution

issues. Fifteen young ambassadors were awarded patches and are ready to share their knowledge of the river. A similar program is available for families to do on their own at www.lampreyriver.org.

- A summer recreational series, “Hike It, Bike It, Like It” offered guided tours of three of the Lamprey’s key historical and natural areas. The series will be offered again in 2015.

Wildlife and Ecology:

- The Macallen Dam fish ladder passed 90,000 river herring this spring and the Wiswall fish ladder passed 30,000. The next obstacle to full access is Wadleigh Falls in Lee. A study by New Hampshire Fish and Game showed that no fish pass the steep falls there despite the breached dam. No plans for a fish ladder are being pursued, but researchers are looking at ways to improve passage at the site by rearranging rocks to slow flow, lower the slope, and create rest areas.
- As a follow-up to two previous studies on endangered brook floater mussels and other rare mussels, a final study was commissioned. Preliminary data show that brook floaters are critically imperiled and extirpation seems likely. No new adults were found and no juveniles were encountered. The cause of the decline appears to be burial from flooding events, but acidic conditions or unsuitable water quality have not been ruled out.
- Based on recommendations in a tributary fish survey from 2011, research was commissioned to study which culverts pose the greatest problems for fish migration. Results will serve as a starting point for partnerships with towns to address the problems.
- A video featuring naturalist/artist David Carroll and the importance of local turtles was pursued. The final product should be available in 2015.

History:

In 2013, LRAC led the petition in Durham to have Wiswall Falls park officially named in memory of John Hatch, artist and key proponent of the Lamprey River. A fourth and final panel for the Wiswall Falls kiosk featuring John Hatch was completed. In total, two panels now tell the history of the site, one explains the balancing act between historical preservation and fish passage, and the fourth panel highlights the efforts of citizens to protect the Lamprey River.

Recreation:

- Paddling on the Lamprey is a key activity for many. Certain stretches are not navigable due to downed trees and other large woody material. The committee has partnered with the Lamprey River Watershed Association and representatives from paddling and fish conservation groups to study the feasibility of relocating some of the material to improve passage and reduce the need to portage over sometimes steep slopes. The topic is complicated and often controversial. Care must be taken before any changes are made.
- The Lee Public Canoe Access was a gift from the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee to the Town of Lee in 2011. The subcommittee has designed and funded a permanent sign to replace the temporary sign at the site. At the time of this report, installation was being planned.

Water Quality and Quantity:

- LRAC has long supported the volunteer monitoring efforts of the Lamprey River Watershed Association to test and report water quality data and that tradition was continued in 2014. With severe reductions in state support for water quality monitoring,

Wild and Scenic Subcommittee funding ensured that years of data were not interrupted. Results were reported to the Volunteer River Assessment Program and are available at the New Hampshire Dept. of Environmental Services.

- The water quality workgroup spent significant time collating years of data from multiple sources with the goal of making these data more accessible and understandable to the public.

Project Review:

- The project review workgroup reviewed and commented on several projects that were submitted to the state for environmental permits. Among the most significant were plans for parking expansion at the New England Dragway in Epping, parking expansion at a daycare facility in Epping, a 42 lot subdivision in Nottingham, and the Route 108 widening project in Durham-Newmarket. The committee does not have the authority to approve or deny permits, but its comments are considered by NHDES prior to issuance of permits.
- Several complaints or concerns about the river were investigated. When appropriate, the committee notified NHDES and requested follow-up.

Plans for 2015 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 designated rivers. The land protection workgroup will continue to be a strong presence in multiple on-going efforts to protect and conserve land along the Lamprey River. The Wild and Scenic Subcommittee plans to fund small grants again in 2015 and pursue outreach projects that engage citizens to appreciate the river's resources. Partnering with the Lamprey River Watershed Association and others, the LRAC will continue to support research, volunteer water quality monitoring, and outreach efforts. The water issues workgroup will continue to rebuild and reinvigorate its efforts.

Respectfully submitted by



Joseph Foley, Wild and Scenic chair
Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee

2014 LRAC members included:

Barrington: vacant

Brentwood: Emily Schmalzer

Candia: Al Hall, Richard Snow (chair)

Deerfield: Harriet Cady

Durham: Anne Lightbody, Dick Lord, Rachel Stevens, Ann Welsh

Epping: Joe Foley, Jenn Rowden

Exeter: Todd Piskovitz

Fremont: Pat deBeer, Fred Lindahl

Lee: Sharon Meeker, Kitty Miller, Preston Samuel

Newfields: Alison Watts

Newmarket: Michelle Daley, Peter Wellenberger

Northwood: vacant

Nottingham: Mike Russo

Raymond: Kathleen Hoelzel, Ted Janusz, Carolyn Matthews

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

Specialists/Staff:

Phil Auger, land conservation

Laurel Cox, land conservation administrator

David Viale, land conservation

Suzanne Petersen, outreach and education

National Park Service: Jim MacCartney

Contact: www.lampreyriver.org