

Recreation and Public Enjoyment



Visitors have a dog-gone good time on the river. Photo by Breakaway Media.

Background

Because water is so essential to our survival, emotional well-being, and sense of beauty, people have a natural affinity for water; they seek to be near it and enjoy activities associated with it. These activities include walking, bird-watching, picnics, photography, fishing, boating, and swimming. When people can enjoy the natural and cultural assets of the rivers and their corridors, they form a connection to the rivers and are inspired to protect them. Long-term enjoyment of the rivers is dependent on being able to access the rivers and enjoy them appropriately through low-impact activities. The recreational resources along the rivers were recognized by the State of New Hampshire in designating the rivers into its river protection program.

Goal

Improve and increase appropriate, non-motorized opportunities for public enjoyment along and in the Lamprey River and its designated tributaries (Little, North, North Branch, Pawtuckaway, and Piscassic rivers).

Accomplishments

- Created a popular Lamprey River Tour Map and Guide for river-based recreational opportunities in the Wild and Scenic River towns of Epping, Lee, Durham, and Newmarket.

- Partnered with the Durham Historical Association to offer a tour of the Doe Farm conservation area, showcasing its historic and ecological values.
- Worked with Durham to develop the park at historic Wiswall Falls in Durham. Headed the Wiswall Historic Interpretative Committee to create three panels of a four-panel exhibit. Developed a plan for a parking lot, canoe launch, and a fenced picnic area.
- Provided a Small Grant to the Town of Deerfield to develop the Deerfield Community Trail network and map.
- Purchased land in Lee, gave it to the town, and constructed a launch for non-motorized boats on Highway 152 near Wadleigh Falls.
- Partnered with the Town of Epping to present a “Family Fun Day” at Mary Blair Park. Awarded two Small Grants to the Epping Recreation Department and the Epping Historical Society to plan trails and other activity areas in the park.
- Partnered with Raymond Recreation and the Lamprey River Watershed Association to offer the “Raymond Regatta and Family Fun Day” at the Lamprey River Elementary School in Raymond.

Key Future Actions

- Expand and enhance plans for recreation and public enjoyment activities that include the entire Lamprey River and its five designated tributaries. Seek planning and financial assistance from the National Park Service and other similar organizations. Utilize their expertise to expand recreational opportunities for people with handicaps.
- Enhance or create additional recreational tour maps to include the towns in the middle and upper Lamprey River and the tributaries:
 - Make use of the proposed Robert Frost Scenic Byway trail developed by the Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission.
 - Gather information from town recreation departments, historical committees, local fishing and boating groups, landowners, and holders of conservation easements to document access points, historical and cultural sites, and/or scenic vistas in each town. List appropriate activities for each site. Label all sites as handicap accessible or not.
 - Seek funding and planning support from the National Park Service and other similar organizations to support additional Lamprey River tour map(s).
- Work with partners (including town recreation, conservation, and historical committees) to support at least one major event per year with some river-based activities at riverside parks in a different town each year. Examples of activities include:
 - road races that have obstacles that mimic conditions in the river such as dams, downed trees, trash, habitat for animals, endangered plants and animals, etc.

- “Bike It, Hike It, Like It” combination activities for specific audiences such as bicyclists, family groups, etc.
- Mary Blair Family Fun Day
- Raymond Regatta
- walks that introduce the public to the natural resource features of conserved properties or town forests (e.g., Doe Farm)
- winter fun days
- Work with towns to develop appropriate recreational areas:
 - Durham: Complete plans for the Wiswall Dam Park to include designing the fourth panel for the kiosk, addressing parking issues, building a canoe launch, and creating a handicap accessible picnic area.
 - Epping: Follow through on the Mary Blair Park plan to construct nature trails and signage for the natural playground.
 - Raymond: Investigate the plausibility of refurbishing and reopening the beach area at the Lamprey River Elementary School.
- Advocate for appropriate non-damaging use of river recreational resources.
 - Report erosion issues to towns and potential funding agencies.
 - Use maps and kiosks to inform the public on ways to reduce recreational erosion.
- Encourage riverside landowners to allow for public access along the river:
 - Study the feasibility and consequences of micro-easements that could encompass stand-alone or pooled properties.
 - Provide information on amendments to RSA 212:34 that limit landowner liability when the public uses private property.
 - Study the feasibility, legal ramifications, and consequences of public access if the landowner is compensated by the town through reduced taxes or other incentives to allow public access.