Over the course of the last 20+ years, the Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC) has been tasked with promoting the revitalization, conservation, and wise development and use of the natural resources of the Lamprey River Watershed. During that time, LRAC has organized itself into Working Groups in order to efficiently administer the dual programs of the Coastal Wild and Scenic Program and the State Designated Rivers Program. There are seven Working Groups, one of which is the Recreation Working Group. Members of the Recreation Working Group are outdoor enthusiasts with many years of combined experience in hiking, camping, canoeing/kayaking, and related activities.

With the Swivel Trail (a four-mile footpath located in Durham and Lee) completing the final elements of the perfect outdoor experience, the Recreation Working Group began to ask whether or not it was possible to create a similar experience along the shores of the Lamprey River.

Base on a Call to Action was instituted, which enabled LRAC to apply for a 100-year anniversary. As part of their centennial goals of renewed conservation, and wise development and use of the natural resources of the Lamprey River Watershed, LRAC has organized itself into Working Groups in order to efficiently administer the dual programs of the Coastal Wild and Scenic Program and the State Designated Rivers Program. There are seven Working Groups, one of which is the Recreation Working Group. Members of the Recreation Working Group are outdoor enthusiasts with many years of combined experience in hiking, camping, canoeing/kayaking, and related activities.

Due to the river’s Federal Designation, the National Park Service offers significant funding opportunities for planning and land acquisition projects. In 2016, the National Park Service celebrated its 100-year anniversary. As part of their centennial goals of renewed stewardship and engagement, a community assistance program titled “A Call to Action” was instituted, which enabled LRAC to apply for a grant to commission a study that would investigate the feasibility of a trail from Epping to Newmarket.

Stratham Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) was contracted by the LRAC to prepare a series of maps within the project area. These maps were used during a series of listening sessions in each of the four Wild and Scenic towns.

After reviewing the maps produced by SRPC, LRAC met with three of the four conservation commissions in the project area to evaluate the amount of interest for the plan, and to discuss any concerns that the groups might have. In general, the commissions were supportive of the plan.

Next, LRAC met with three land trusts who own properties or easements in the project area, including: Southeast Land Trust of NH (SLT), the Nature Conservancy (THC), and the forest Society (FS). As part of their continued effort to engage private interests, LRAC contacted representatives of the three additional communities within the project area (all three communities are located in Lee).

Finally, LRAC conducted listening sessions in each of the four towns in the study area to determine the preferred location for the footpath; the dates of those meetings are as follows:

- September 16, 2015 – Durham Police Station
- September 17, 2015 – Lee Public Safety Complex
- September 21, 2015 – Newmarket Town Hall
- September 22, 2015 – Epping Town Hall

At the end of this project, the deliverable was a final report. This report included all base maps with trail routing preferences developed by the advocacy groups and a short letter-type narrative that summarized the project.

Within the report there was a detailed narrative describing the planning process for the footpath on an segment-by-segment basis. It should be noted that this is a conceptual layout and many of the property owners have not been contacted or agreed to participate in certain locations. Also, no on-the-ground evaluations have yet been conducted on the environmental factors that would be affected by such locations.

The concept of the Lamprey River Footpath is a very aggressive plan that will not be accomplished overnight. Consent for the plan will have to be built through the public participation process on a town-by-town basis.