



## Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC)

Annual Report FY 2016 (Oct. 1, 2015 – Sept. 30, 2016)



*The Lamprey River Upstream of Newmarket's Macallen Dam*

*Photo courtesy of Beth Fisher*

We are pleased to feature Newmarket on the cover of the 2016 annual report. The town and the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC) had a very fruitful year.

- Acting on a suggestion by the LRAC Project Review Workgroup, the town worked with the owner of a proposed development to ensure public access to the river by creating an easement for canoe portage off Elm Street and Lincoln Avenue.
- New Hampshire Fish and Game counted more than 92,000 river herring passing through the Macallen Dam during the spring migration. This represents the best run in the history of this fish ladder. Participants attending the annual “Herring Aid” event learned about this important migration and helped to send the fish on their way to spawning areas upstream.
- The Great Bay Stewards were awarded a LRAC Small Grant to help install a demonstration rain garden in a neighborhood near the Piscassic River. The LRAC grant was used to provide much needed excavation work on a very rocky site. The LRAC was glad to help the Stewards with their “Soak up the Rain” initiative to reduce stormwater pollution from reaching the river.
- The old, worn-out kiosk frame at Schanda Park collapsed last winter. The panel created jointly in 2011 by the LRAC and the Newmarket Conservation Commission survived the fall and was salvaged. The LRAC funded and meticulously built a new, sturdier kiosk and reinstalled the panel.
- The Newmarket Recreation Department won a passive recreation improvement grant from the LRAC and used the money to purchase and install racks for town-owned kayaks that are available to recreation program participants and for rental by the general public. Two racks were installed at Schanda Park and two more are ready for installation next spring at Piscassic Park, both sites owned by the Newmarket Conservation Commission.
- The Newmarket Recreation Department won a Small Grant from the LRAC that was used to help outfit the first (and subsequent) Lamprey River Splash and Dash kayak race and boat theme parade on the tidal portion of the river. The event, held on August 20, was a successful partnership that also included several local businesses.



**Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC) Accomplishments:** The LRAC had another busy and productive year. Representatives from ten 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).

### 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 2016, LRAC had leveraged funding totaling \$4,915,781 to protect 3497.09 acres and 15.9 miles of river frontage. For every dollar LRAC provided, more than two dollars from other sources such as landowner donations of land value and matching funds from towns and conservation organizations were used.

In June, Sharon Meeker, former Land Protection Subcommittee chair, received the conservation community's Ashton Hallett Award at the Southeast Land Trust's annual meeting. The award recognized her 36 years of service and leadership on three different Lamprey River organizations.



Sharon Meeker accepts the Ashton Hallett Award at the Southeast Land Trust's annual meeting. Also pictured is SELT Executive Director Brian Hart who presented the award. Photo courtesy of SELT

### 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 town fairs and events at libraries 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 seventh year, the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee funded Small Grants up to \$5000 each for creative and worthwhile projects.



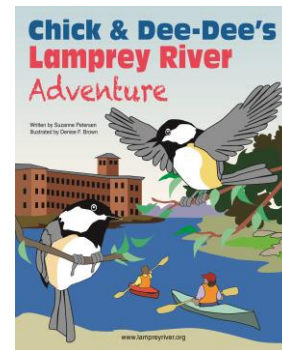
The Great Bay Stewards used their Small Grant to excavate a site being used for a rain garden demonstration project in Newmarket.



The Newmarket Recreation Department used its Small Grant to establish the annual Lamprey River Splash and Dash kayak race and themed boat parade.

- The LRAC received a grant from the National Park Service to document its twenty years of progress as a model for current and future Wild and Scenic Rivers.

- *Chick and Dee-Dee’s Lamprey River Adventure* children’s book was published. Free copies were provided to all local libraries and elementary schools. The public was invited to attend readings to meet the author and illustrator.



- A well-attended septic system workshop was offered in Durham in partnership with the Strafford County Planning Commission and the NH Department of Environmental Services.
- 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. Teachers and parents from Epping and Raymond joined in to help expand the program to those towns.

### **Wildlife and Ecology:**

- The Macallen Dam fish ladder passed a record 92,000 river herring this spring. 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.
- As part of a site visit for a proposed development project, an important turtle nesting area was identified. Efforts to protect the site with a conservation easement are on-going.

### **Recreation:**

- Acting on a suggestion by the LRAC Project Review workgroup, Newmarket worked with the owner of a proposed development to ensure public access to the river by creating an easement for canoe portage off Elm Street and Lincoln Avenue.
- In partnership with the Lee 250th celebration, the LRAC and the Lamprey River Watershed Association offered a family paddle.
- The old, worn-out kiosk frame at Schanda Park collapsed last winter. The panel created jointly in 2011 by the LRAC and the Newmarket Conservation Commission survived the fall and was salvaged. The LRAC funded and meticulously built a new, sturdier kiosk and reinstalled the panel.
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### **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 2016. With severe reductions in state support for water quality

monitoring, Wild and Scenic Subcommittee funding ensured that years of data were not interrupted by cuts to the state program.

- Water quality data spanning 23 years were collated 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 the report, visit [http://www.lampreyriver.org/UploadedFiles/Files/water\\_qual\\_23\\_yr\\_report\\_2016.pdf](http://www.lampreyriver.org/UploadedFiles/Files/water_qual_23_yr_report_2016.pdf)
- The severe drought of 2016 left the river lower than usual. In accordance with the Lamprey River Instream Flow Management Plan, NHDES conducted four relief pulses using water released from dams on Pawtuckaway Lake. These releases are intended to mimic natural and seasonal flow conditions and provide temporary relief to aquatic organisms to ensure their survival.
- The Spruce Hole Aquifer was opened in Durham to provide public water. The project, the first of its kind in New Hampshire, involves artificial recharge of raw water from the Lamprey River during periods of plentiful flow for use by the Durham-UNH Water System during periods of low flow which often coincide with peak water demands during the fall semester at UNH.

#### **Project Review:**

- The project review workgroup commented on twelve projects that required state environmental permits.
- Complaints or concerns about activities along the river were investigated. When appropriate, the committee notified local code enforcement officers and NHDES and requested follow-up.

**Plans for 2017 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 LRAC will continue to support research, volunteer water quality monitoring, and outreach efforts. Changes at NHDES with the rivers and lakes management and protection programs might result in a more watershed-based approach to protecting designated waterways and water bodies.

Respectfully submitted,



Richard Snow, chair