

Land Protection

Goals:

- *Protect lands that support the ecological health and recreational uses of the Lamprey River and its surrounding landscape.*
- *Continue to work with landowners and municipalities to foster interest and action in permanent conservation of lands associated with the rivers.*

Background

The most effective long-term strategy for protecting resources of the river is voluntary land conservation, either through a conservation easement or land acquisition/purchase for conservation purposes by a municipality or qualified conservation group. Protecting the best and/or most sensitive land helps to protect the water and the overall environment that relies on that water.

The State of New Hampshire, local municipalities, and landowners have other tools for protecting the significant natural resources of the Lamprey River watershed, but these have notable limitations:

- Regulatory approaches (such as shoreland protection rules) provide minimum, yet important, protection to the river. These regulations are subject to the political priorities of elected officials and can be modified in ways that are not always beneficial to the river or its resources. Despite regulations, protected shorelands and wetlands are sometimes legally developed.
- Deed restrictions and covenants might seem to protect land, but they are impermanent, subject to interpretation and amendment, and difficult to enforce.
- Voluntary resource stewardship by individual landowners often varies from one owner to the next, and is not as durable, over the long term, as a conservation easement.

A conservation easement is a legal agreement between a landowner and a qualified conservation organization or agency in the form of a deed that permanently protects the land from harmful development.

Conservation easements are granted in perpetuity and apply to the land regardless of who might own it in the future. Land under easement often remains privately owned and managed. Typically, easements are used for agriculture, forestry, wildlife habitat, scenic views, drinking water source protection, passive recreation, and education. All uses not specifically prohibited by the easement are allowed to continue provided they are compatible with the conservation purposes of the easement. The land trust or municipality that holds the easement is normally legally obligated to monitor it annually to assure that the easement terms are being adhered to and enforce its terms, if necessary.

The LRAC partners with towns, state agencies, and land trusts on land protection projects. The committee is not organizationally structured to hold either title to land or conservation easements; instead, it provides information and assistance to landowners about the natural resource values of their property and ways to conserve their property if they are interested. The committee can provide funds to cover some land transaction costs such as appraisals and surveys, and can provide funds to cover a portion of the land acquisition costs.

The LRAC's policy is to match or leverage its funds with those of other conservation groups to further the collective conservation goals of communities, landowners, and environmental protection partners. Because the LRAC's land protection funds are provided by the US Congress, this policy also assures Washington that federal dollars are being leveraged at the local level. Expenditure of these funds is subject to the conditions of the *1995 Lamprey River Management Plan* which was referenced in the federal designating legislation. The pertinent language in this regard is as follows:

The National Park Service will not own or manage any lands along the river and does not support condemnation of land along the river. Federal funds can be made available to land trusts and local communities for the purchase of lands or conservation easements that advance the purposes for which the river was designated (for the Lamprey River: ecological, archaeological, and fisheries protection). The National Park Service considers providing funds subject to the following conditions:

- *The acquisition is from willing sellers only.*
- *An appropriate local, state, or nonprofit entity and not the National Park Service holds title and management responsibility for any purchased lands or easements.*

Lamprey River Advisory Committee Land Protection Ranking

The LRAC has developed a set of criteria for prioritizing funding for land conservation. In addition to these priorities, each property is evaluated for its unique qualities. Some properties that do not meet the criteria listed below might still have unique assets that would be worthy of consideration. In some instances, certain priorities might conflict, such as wildlife protection and recreational access. The criteria neither guarantee nor disqualify any particular project from receiving funding. All projects are considered on a case-by-case basis to optimize best outcomes.

First Priorities:

- land with at least 1,000 feet of main stem, Wild and Scenic Lamprey River frontage
- properties on which easements can be placed on the entire property
- properties which are threatened by development
- properties whose owners are ready to take steps to conserve the land, or whose circumstances require resolution of the land's future
- properties with significant wildlife habitat or other special features: soils, open space, cultural/historic features

- properties currently being used as productive open space: e.g. farming, forestry, etc.

Second Priorities:

- properties with at least 500 feet of main stem or designated tributary river frontage
- properties which protect land at least 500 feet from the river bank
- properties offering recreational access to the river
- first priority land whose owners are reluctant to take action imminently
- land which connects to other conservation lands
- land which is part of a large, unfragmented block of undeveloped land

Third Priorities

- properties along tributaries to the Lamprey River
- land which must be purchased outright (as opposed to easements)
- parcels smaller than 5 acres
- parcels with less than 500 feet of river frontage
- properties which protect land less than 500 feet from the river bank
- parcels deemed to be largely undevelopable

Committee volunteers and land protection staff work with towns and partner organizations to contact owners of high priority properties. Property owners are urged to communicate with any of these to explore conservation options before making decisions to develop their land. The LRAC cannot pay more than the full appraised value for a property. Landowners may also choose to donate all or part (a bargain sale) of the property or easement value.

As of December 2024, the Lamprey River Advisory Committee has helped to permanently protect 3,843 acres with more than 19.1 miles of frontage in 5 towns in the Lamprey River watershed.

In addition to permanent land protection, LRAC Community Grants have been used by Barrington and Raymond to help develop land conservation planning maps.

Key Future Actions

action	potential partners & resources
Work with partners to identify individual properties that are located in areas identified by the State of New Hampshire as high priorities for permanent protection. Inform landowners about their property's special features that make them priorities for permanent protection. Inform them of	<p>Southeast Land Trust (SELT)</p> <p>The Nature Conservancy</p> <p>Society for the Protection of NH Forests</p>

conservation options and offer support with the process of protecting their land.	local conservation commissions
Continue to support research on the resources of the Lamprey rivers and their corridors to identify additional key lands to protect. This includes inventories of rare wildlife and plants, important agricultural soils, sensitive or otherwise important habitats, and recreation and cultural assets. Other topics to study include how climate change could impact river flow dynamics or the degree to which wildlife can connect with the critical resources they need while identifying the barriers that prevent these animals from reaching these resources.	Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP)
Seek out funding opportunities and partnerships that support permanent land protection efforts in the landscape of the Lamprey River and its tributaries.	Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve
Support broad outreach programs that foster stewardship of private lands by landowners.	NH Fish and Game Department
	University of New Hampshire
	Bear-Paw Regional Greenways
	Coastal Conservation Plan
	NH Wildlife Action Plan
	Trails for People & Wildlife Guidebook

To view the map of land protection projects that have included LRAC funding, click [here](#) or see page 41 in Appendix B.