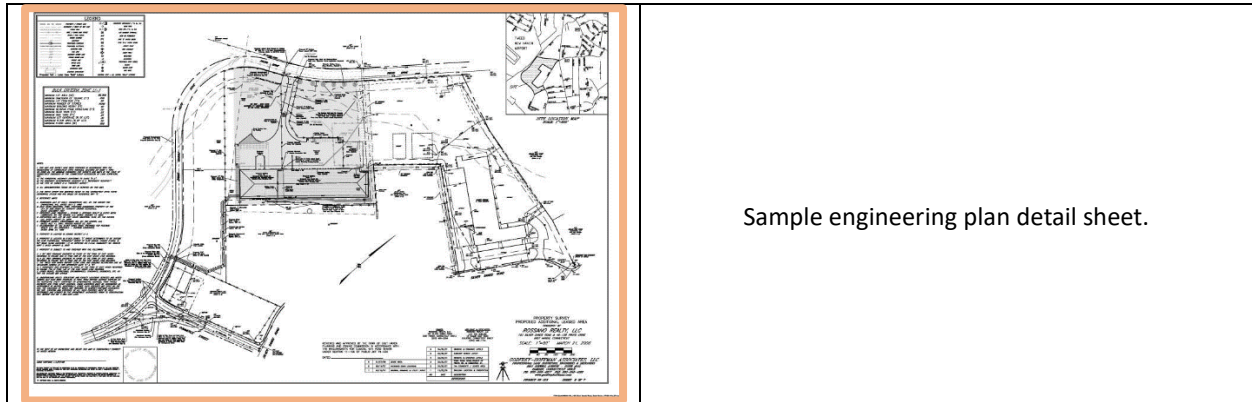


Project Review

Goal:

Ensure that river protection goals are adequately considered during project review at local, state, and federal levels.



Background:

Under the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Act, RSA 483:8-a III, [Chapter 483 NEW HAMPSHIRE RIVERS MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION PROGRAM \(state.nh.us\)](https://www.state.nh.us/secretary/483.htm), Local River Management Advisory Committees (LRACs), including the subcommittees of the Connecticut River Joint Commissions, have been given the duty of reviewing permit applications for projects with the potential to impact the resources for which the river was designated. Specifically:

RSA 483:8-a III. The duties of such committees shall be:

(b) To consider and comment on any federal, state, or local governmental plans to approve, license, fund, or construct facilities or applications for permits, certificates, or licenses, that may alter the resource values and characteristics for which the river or segment is designated.

This jurisdiction covers the quarter mile corridor on both sides of a designated river. (See Designated River Corridors map in Appendix B, page 38.) The Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC) is responsible for reviewing projects along the Lamprey, Little, North, North Branch, Pawtuckaway, and Piscassic rivers. Similarly, the Wild and Scenic Subcommittee is advisory to the National Park Service relative to the National Wild and Scenic River designation, with a goal of protecting and enhancing the designated segment river (covering the main-stem Lamprey River from West Epping to the confluence of the Piscassic River in Newmarket) where federal permits or projects are concerned. The LRAC is “the local voice of the river” in these processes, with state and federal legislative charters to back that voice and ensure that it is heard. Comments generated by the LRAC are advisory and must be considered by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES); however, the LRAC does not have the authority to grant or deny permits.

In addition to projects that require permit(s) from NHDES, the Committee welcomes the opportunity to confer with local planning boards on projects that might impact the rivers but that do not require NHDES authorization.

The LRAC typically reviews four types of permits that are under the jurisdiction of NHDES. If any part of the project includes alterations in the quarter mile river corridor, the entire project is subject to review.

- [Alteration of Terrain](#)-For projects that would convert at least 100,000 square feet (or 50,000 in a protected shoreland zone) from a natural or lightly developed condition to a heavily developed condition (example, converting farmland or forest into a housing development).
- [Shoreland](#)- For projects that would remove natural vegetation to enable construction within the state-protected 250-foot protected buffer zone. (Example, building a residential structure that cannot feasibly be built farther back from the river).
- [Wetlands](#)- For projects that propose to dredge or fill a wetland (example, creating a stream crossing or filling wetlands to expand a parking area).
- [Permits-by-Notification](#)- These are expedited wetlands permit projects that meet certain criteria and will result in minimal disturbance. The LRAC chair has the authority to waive review and intervention (example, culvert repair or minor utility line repair). If the chair does not sign the waiver, the project is subject to full review as a major wetland impact.

In addition to review of proposed projects, NH RSA 483 also directs local river advisory committees to advise the NHDES commissioner on matters that pertain to the management of the designated rivers. In this capacity, the LRAC makes advisory comments to NHDES and others concerning proposed changes to legislation (e.g., land protection funding by towns and town conservation commissions, shoreland protection, and change-of-use tax revenue) or issues of concern that might impact the rivers.

In order to perform this important advisory duty, project review is undertaken by LRAC members who have a variety of backgrounds and skills. When possible, a representative from the town in which the project is proposed contributes to the review. The members look at local and state regulations and best watershed protection standards that pertain to riverside buffers, stormwater management, construction practices, and post-construction maintenance plans. Special attention is given to the presence of rare or threatened wildlife species or habitats, steep slopes, public access, public water supply areas, changes to infiltration into the soil, and cultural/historic features.

Key Future Actions:

- Review and comment on local, state, and federal permits and projects within LRAC's jurisdiction that have the potential to affect the quality and quantity of water, stream flow, ecology, and other river resources.
- Participate, when possible, in preliminary project design meetings, studies, and similar processes that could help streamline and optimize planning for beneficial actions,

projects, or permits related to the river and its resources. Communicating about projects early in the planning process can help to reduce conflict later in the process.

- Create or adopt a project review training program to help new LRAC members gain skills and confidence to perform this important responsibility.
- Submit letters of testimony pertaining to proposed legislation as needed.
- Create a formal procedure for handling requests for pre-application reviews making use of best watershed protection standards.
- Send annual reminders to town managers and zoning boards that RSA 483:8-a III requires that local river advisory committees be provided the opportunity to review materials and offer comments for proposed projects in the quarter mile corridors of the designated rivers, regardless of whether a state permit is required.