

## Newsletter Winter 2026



### **2025: Dry, Dry, Dry**

According to NHDES, “The summer of 2025 was the driest summer in the 131-year period of record for New Hampshire, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Several key factors combined to create a flash drought, where drought conditions rapidly intensified. Although the current drought has had a rapid onset and intensification, there likely won’t be a rapid retreat. This drought is predicted to continue through the winter and possibly into the spring.”

The Lamprey River is one of two NH State-designated rivers that has a water management plan in place. (The other is the Souhegan River.) By law, all NH State-designated rivers must have a water management plan, but the Lamprey was chosen early on by NHDES to be a test river. This plan allowed the fish in the Lamprey River to have an increased ability to survive the dry summer. River hydrologists at NHDES carefully monitor the amount of water flowing in the river. Based on years of research that informed the water management plan, if the flow is too low for a certain number of days, NHDES orders a “relief pulse” of water. This relief pulse comes from a two-day release of water held back by a few dams in the upper watershed. This release results in a slight lowering of the impounded lake, but nothing that lake residents would notice. The water is intended to provide a few days’ relief to fish; it is not intended to improve paddling conditions. Regardless of season, relief pulses can happen when conditions warrant the release. NHDES ordered three relief pulses during the summer and fall of 2025. If the drought continues, relief pulses might be ordered this winter, too.

### **River News in NH**

The Lamprey River is one of 19 rivers designated under the NH River Management and Protection Program. Each NH-designated river has a local advisory committee. In addition to these local river advisory committees, the state has a Rivers Advisory Commission. Every other year, the local advisory committees and the state river commission submit reports to NHDES to track numerous trends and statistics. The 2024-2025 biennial report was released in November 2025. Click here to learn what has been happening with designated rivers statewide and what the rivers commission has been working on. [2024-2025 RMPP Biennial Report](#).



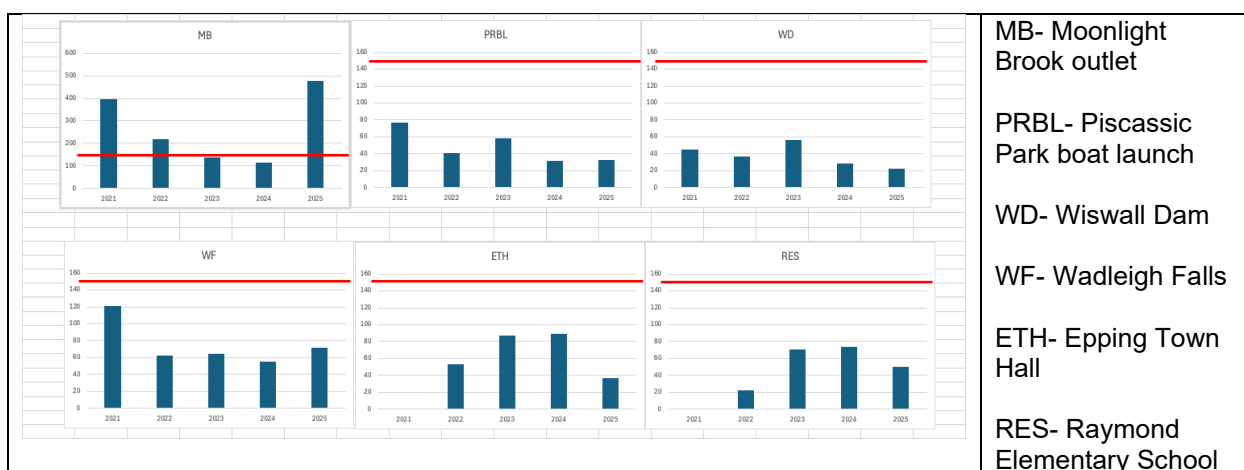
New Hampshire Rivers  
Management and Protection  
Program logo

## Community Grants Available

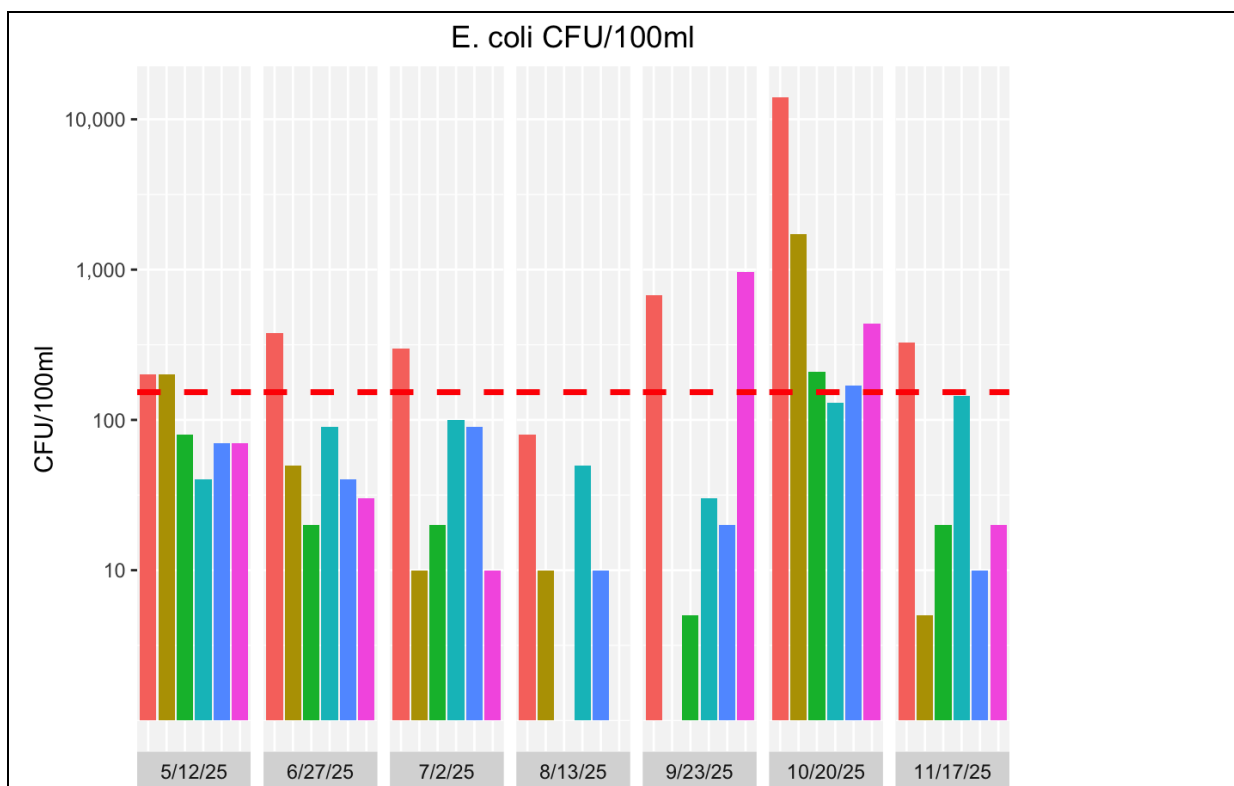
The first half of 2025 was a time of great uncertainty for the Lamprey River Advisory Committee. Federal funding was being cut, programs were being eliminated, and great pressure was placed on many federal workers to resign or be fired. As a subunit of the National Park Service, we were in a precarious situation. As of January 2026, we can say with some certainty that we are alive and will continue to receive our promised federal funding for the next few years. That means that we can continue to offer community grants that help to support the goals outlined in the *2025 Lamprey River Management Plan*. Key areas include protecting clean water and improving degraded water, studying and protecting wildlife, improving and enjoying passive recreation along the rivers, protecting local history, and engaging the community in our efforts. The management plan can be found [here](#) and the grant application can be found [here](#). If you have a good idea, please contact [info@LampreyRiver.org](mailto:info@LampreyRiver.org) and we will help you through the application process.

## 2025 Bacterial Tracking

This was the fifth year that the LRAC has funded bacterial tracking at six recreational sites along the Lamprey River and at six sites along Moonlight Brook in Newmarket. Bacterial tracking involves measuring several types of fecal bacteria and identifying the source or sources, such as dogs, birds, cows, and humans. For reasons that are not clear, the number of days when bacteria counts exceeded state limits was higher than in past normal or dry years. Sites that are usually clean also exceeded safe levels on several occasions. The only other year that had more days with unhealthy levels was in 2023, one of the wettest years on record. *E. coli* (a specific type of fecal bacteria associated with increased risk to human health, so this measure is most pertinent to swimming and fishing) were detected in a higher percentage of the samples in 2025 than in 2024. *E. coli* were detected in 29% of all samples.



This graph shows 5-year averages (2021-2025) for each site. All sites except for Moonlight Brook are well below the state limit (red line).

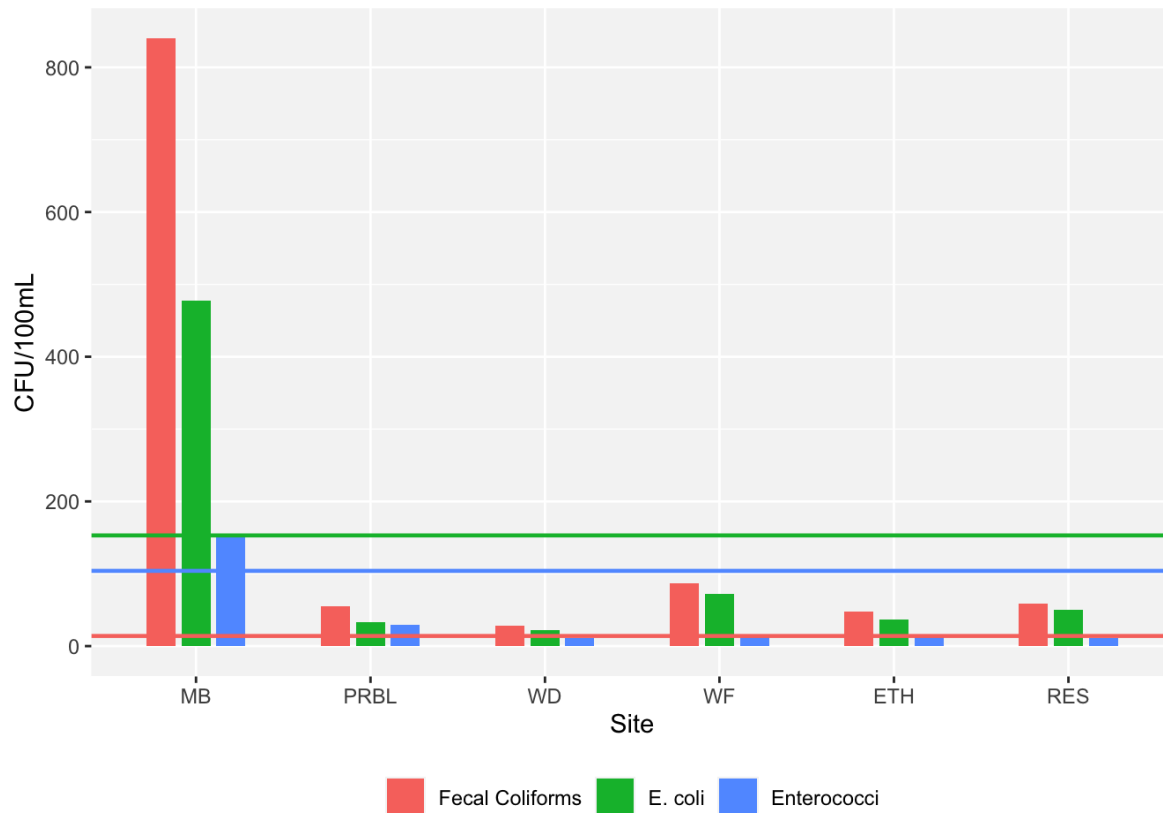


This graph compares *E.coli* levels at 6 locations along the Lamprey River from May to November.

NH State limit for acceptable *E.coli* for swimming and fishing in Class B freshwater is 406 CFU/100ml as shown by the red dotted line.

Site	
MB	Moonlight Brook, Schanda Park, Newmarket
PRBL	Piscassic River boat launch, Newmarket
WD	Wiswall Dam, Durham
WF	Wadleigh Falls canoe access, Lee
ETH	Epping Town Hall
RES	Raymond Elementary School

Bacterial Tracking 2025 continued on next page.



This graph compares the average concentrations (CFU/100 ml) of fecal indicator bacteria at the 6 sample sites from May to November 2025. The horizontal lines indicate NH State limits. Despite multiple efforts by the Town of Newmarket to address leaky sewer pipes in 2025, Moonlight Brook (MB) at Schanda Park remains a significant issue.

To read the full report, click [here](#). The LRAC will fund continuing bacterial tracking research in 2026.

## Doe Farm Update

As noted in the Fall 2025 Newsletter, Doe Farm in Durham is a popular and beautiful conservation area with significant frontage on the Lamprey River. This 85.4-acre forest is managed by the Town of Durham for timber and recreation. Management is guided by a forest stewardship plan that was last updated in 2015. As natural conditions, stewardship practices, and understanding of ecology and climate science change, the plan needs to be updated to reflect those changes. With this in mind, the Town of Durham Trustees of the Trust Fund applied for a LRAC Community Grant in 2024 to produce an update to the plan. The LRAC was happy to offer financial assistance to this effort.

The final plan has been completed and is now available through the following links: [forest management plan](#) or [https://www.lampreyriver.org/download\\_file/737/0](https://www.lampreyriver.org/download_file/737/0). It will also be available through the Town of Durham's website.



Doe Farm entrance trail



tree chewed by beavers along the Lamprey River

Images courtesy of [Doe Farm | The Town of Durham New Hampshire](#)

## Winter Time



great horned owl, photo by Laura S. Bicknell

### January

*The days are short,  
The sun a spark  
Hung thin between  
The dark and dark.*

*Fat snowy footsteps  
Track the floor,  
And parkas pile up  
Near the door.*

*The river is  
A frozen place  
Held still beneath  
The trees' black lace.*

*The sky is low.  
The wind is gray.  
The radiator  
Purrs all day.*

*— John Updike,  
A Child's Calendar*