

Report of the Exeter-Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee

The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) became the Exeter-Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee (ESRLAC) this past year, reflecting the inclusion of the Squamscott River into the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program. The towns of Chester, Raymond, Fremont, Sandown, Danville, Kingston, East Kingston, Brentwood, Kensington and Exeter welcome the towns of Newfields and Stratham to the committee. The Exeter-Squamscott River is one river with two names, reflecting the fresh and salt water portions of this major tributary to Great Bay.

ESRLAC celebrated its 15th year of stewardship of the river and its watershed in 2011. The year was marked by productive partnerships with several organizations, including the Rockingham Planning Commission, NH Department of Environmental Services, NH Coastal Program, Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership, Eastern Mountain Sports, and local Conservation Commissions. These partnerships provide ERLAC with an opportunity to work with communities in the watershed to advocate effectively for the protection of water quality, water quantity, wildlife habitat, and recreational opportunities.

ESRLAC partnered with the Exeter Conservation Commission to hold the 10th annual vernal pool workshop in May. Children and adults waded into woodland pools to identify salamanders, turtles and clusters of frog eggs. Development of forestland threatens vernal pools in every watershed community, and ESRLAC continues to advocate for the protection of vernal pools and their forested uplands.

In June, ERLAC partnered with Eastern Mountain Sports on an event designed to get people out on the river in canoes and kayaks. Dozens of people, adults and children, paddled the lower Exeter River on new boats provided by EMS or on their own boats, leaving from Gilman Park in Exeter and guided by ERLAC representatives.

ERLAC continues to work closely with the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) on projects of great importance. The first project was the geomorphic assessment of the Exeter River, a two year project completed this year. The purpose of the assessment was to identify erosion and other threats to water quality. ERLAC will continue to work with DES and watershed communities to implement restoration projects identified in the Plan. The second project was the nomination of the lower portion of the Exeter River and the tidal Squamscott River to the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program. ERLAC worked closely with DES staff to complete the nomination and the numerous public information meetings held in the watershed to explain the nomination. ERLAC is hopeful all of the river, fresh and tidal, will be enrolled in the RMPP in 2011.

ERLAC is comprised of dedicated volunteers that meet the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the conference room at the Rockingham County Nursing Home in Brentwood. Representatives are needed from Fremont. Please call 778-0885 for more information, or visit www.exeterriver.org.