

REPORT OF THE EXETER RIVER LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) celebrated its 13th year of stewardship of the river and watershed in 2009. 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 Great Bay Trout Unlimited. These partnerships provide ERLAC with an opportunity to work with local Conservation Commissions to advocate effectively for the protection of natural resources throughout the watershed.

ERLAC partnered with the Fremont Conservation Commission to hold the eighth 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.

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 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.

In October, ERLAC partnered with the Great Bay Chapter of Trout Unlimited, NH Fish and Game, and the NH Department of Environmental Services to hold a fly-fishing workshop for children. With Trout Unlimited guides beside them, dozens of kids had an opportunity to learn how to cast and how to catch trout from the Exeter River just below Pickpocket Dam. Staff from the NH Department of Environmental Services also worked with kids and their parents to identify macroinvertebrates found in the river and explain why these creatures are such an important indicator of the impacts of land use on water quality and quantity. A volunteer from NH Fish and Game was also on hand to teach kids how to tie their own fishing flies, rounding out a wonderful day of fishing and learning on the Exeter River.

ERLAC continues to work closely with the NH Department of Environmental Services and the consulting firm Bear Creek to complete a Geomorphic Assessment of the Exeter River. An assessment of the river corridor in Brentwood and Fremont is all that remains for this project which began five years ago. The consultants and ERLAC members have walked miles and miles of the river corridor identifying erosion and other threats to water quality. ERLAC will be working closely with watershed Conservation Commissions in 2010 on restoration of several of the sites identified.

ERLAC meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 pm in the conference room at the Rockingham County Nursing Home in Brentwood. Two representatives currently serve from Fremont on the Committee. Please call 778-0885 for more information, or visit www.exeterriver.org.

"Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher. "

~ William Wordsworth