

## Report of the Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee (LRAC) Annual Report FY 2013 (Oct 1, 2012 – Sept 30, 2013)



What started out just a few years ago as a routine dam safety upgrade for the 1887 Macallen Dam in Newmarket has become one of the hottest topics for the future of the Lamprey River. An inspection in 2008 revealed safety issues that needed to be addressed. If the dam were to be hit by a major flood, it could fail catastrophically. Initially, the Town of Newmarket was simply going to repair the dam, but controversy erupted over the high price tag, the costs of ongoing maintenance, and the continuing risk of flooding upstream.

(Photo: Macallen Dam, Newmarket ~ Courtesy of Dawn Genes)

As of October 2013, the future of the dam and all that it affects upstream, in historic downtown Newmarket, and downstream is uncertain. Should the dam be removed, lowered, made taller, widened, or repaired? Is there anything that can be done upstream to lessen the force of flood waters? What will happen to recreation and property values if the impoundment upstream is altered? How will wildlife be affected? What lies hidden in the sediments behind the dam? How will anadromous fish migration be affected by structural changes in the dam? How can the structural integrity of the former mills in Newmarket be preserved? These and many other questions await study and interpretation. Although decisive action is unlikely in the very near future, LRAC supports getting as much information as possible so that negative impacts can be understood and minimized.

**LRAC Accomplishments:** The LRAC had a busy and productive year. Representatives from most of the fourteen towns in the Lamprey River watershed worked hard to create a comprehensive rivers management plan and seek input from towns, planning commissions, land protection organizations, wildlife professionals, and citizens. The final plan was approved on Sept. 26, 2013 and will be made available to stakeholders and posted on [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org).

### **Land Protection:**

- Working with partners such as the Southeast Land Trust, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, The Nature Conservancy, town conservation commissions, and

others, the Wild and Scenic subcommittee continued to provide expertise and funding to protect an additional 98 acres of shoreline of ecologically significant land along the river, bringing the total protected since 1999 to 2803 acres. Among the more important projects completed this year was the Ath-Mor Farm in Lee, adding 86.68 acres and 1,630 feet of river frontage. For every \$3 spent, an additional \$7 was leveraged.

- Laurel Cox, land protection administrator, was awarded the Gulf of Maine Visionary Award by the Gulf of Maine Council for her continued service in land protection, especially in her ability to bring together the interests of conservation and agriculture.

#### **Education and Outreach:**

- A new comprehensive brochure was created and printed that includes the expanded area and efforts of the expanded Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee.
- The committee's website, [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org), continued to be updated and improved. More than 3350 people visited the site between November 2012 and March 2013.
- In April, the subcommittee partnered with students at Oyster River High School to study local vernal pools. Students documented overall conditions and counted amphibian egg masses to report to the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game.
- The subcommittee worked with the Lamprey River Watershed Association and the Town of Raymond Recreation Department to establish an annual Regatta and Family Fun Day at Raymond's Lamprey River School. Other participating groups included the Boy Scouts, Raymond Youth Coalition, New Hampshire Audubon, Raymond Fire Department, and members of the National Honor Society at Raymond High School.
- For the fifth year, the committee funded three small grants up to \$5000 each for creative and worthwhile projects. One grant supported the creation of a video to document 30 years of volunteer service to protect the Lamprey. A second grant was used to produce a Big Tree Tour guide to help residents find and appreciate the grand old trees along the Lamprey. The third grant was used to create a public participatory art installation entitled *Stream of Conscience* to help connect people to local water and build awareness of global water issues.
- The subcommittee partnered with Epping Summer Recreation to offer children the opportunity to learn about dragonflies and other aquatic animals at Mary Blair Park.

#### **Wildlife and Ecology:**

- The Wiswall fish ladder once again helped almost 20,000 river herring get up past the Wiswall Dam and migrate to spawning grounds upstream. According to the NH Dept of Fish and Game, "The Wild and Scenic Lamprey River could soon be home to one of the strongest river herring runs on the Atlantic seaboard."
- In 2011, LRAC commissioned research to map and perform a bioinventory of Lamprey River floodplain wetlands in the towns of Epping, Lee, Durham, & Newmarket. The study has been finalized and published. The maps and results will be very helpful in guiding future wildlife studies and informing efforts undertaken by the land protection and project review subcommittees.

- Follow-up spraying to eradicate Japanese knotweed was conducted at test sites in Lee, Epping, and Deerfield.

#### **History:**

- Planning for a fourth panel for the Wiswall falls kiosk was undertaken. LRAC led the petition in Durham to have the park officially named in memory of John Hatch, artist and key proponent of the Lamprey River. The panel will highlight John Hatch's contributions and celebrate the volunteer efforts of LRAC and the Lamprey River Watershed Association. LRAC will assume all costs associated with production and installation of the panel which will be completed by the end of 2013.
- Using plans developed with a Small Grant in 2012, the Epping Historical Society constructed a trail and installed interpretive signs at Mary Blair Park that highlight the history of the dam and mills that once defined the site.

**Recreation:** Based on a 2012 Small Grant for park planning, the Epping Recreation Department installed approximately a dozen natural play elements as part of a natural playground at Mary Blair Park. The natural play area is located in the woods adjacent to the park's baseball fields.

**Water Quality and Quantity:** LRAC has long supported the volunteer monitoring efforts of the Lamprey River Watershed Association to test and report water quality data and that tradition was continued in 2013. With severe reductions in state support for water quality monitoring, LRAC funding ensured that years of data were not interrupted. Results were reported to the Volunteer River Assessment Program and are available at NH Dept of Environmental Services.

**Project Review:** The expanded committee reviewed and commented on several projects that were submitted to the state for environmental permits. Among the most significant were the plans for habitat restoration at the Mast Road Natural Area in Epping, a power line reconstruction project that included Candia and Deerfield, and a proposed condominium/small business development along the Newmarket riverfront. In addition, the subcommittee submitted letters to the commissioner of the NH Dept of Environmental Services noting concerns about poorly regulated artificial turf and expansion of existing shoreland homes.

**Plans for 2014 and Issues to Watch:** The full committee will continue its main duties to work on issues identified in the 2013 Lamprey Rivers Management Plan and review projects proposed for the quarter mile corridor around the designated rivers. One proposed project to watch will be the widening of Route 108 from Durham to Newmarket to provide safer conditions for bicycles and bus stops. The land protection subcommittee will continue to be a strong presence in multiple on-going efforts to protect and conserve land along the Lamprey River. The outreach subcommittee plans to fund small grants again in 2014 and do a pilot after-school project with Epping to engage children in an eight week program. Partnering with the Lamprey River Watershed Association and others, the LRAC will continue to support research, volunteer water quality monitoring, and outreach efforts. After several years of relative inactivity, the water issues subcommittee plans to rebuild and reinvigorate its efforts.

2013 LRAC members included:

Barrington: vacant  
Brentwood: Emily Schmalzer, currently vacant  
Candia: Al Hall, Richard Snow  
Deerfield: Harriet Cady  
Durham: Anne Lightbody, Dick Lord, Rachel Stevens, Ann Welsh  
Epping: Joe Foley, Jenn Rowden  
Exeter: Todd Piskovitz  
Fremont: Pat deBeer, Fred Lindahl  
Lee: Jere Beckman, Sharon Meeker, Kitty Miller, Preston Samuel  
Newfields: Alison Watts  
Newmarket: Michelle Daley, Peter Wellenberger  
Northwood: vacant  
Nottingham: Mike Russo (chair)  
Raymond: Kathleen Hoelzel, Ted Janusz

Associate Member: Dawn Genes, executive director, Lamprey River Watershed Association

Specialists:

Phil Auger, land conservation  
David Viale, land conservation

Laurel Cox, land conservation administrator  
Suzanne Petersen, outreach and education

National Park Service: Jim MacCartney  
Contact: [www.lampreyriver.org](http://www.lampreyriver.org)

Respectfully submitted by



Michael Russo, Chair  
Lamprey Rivers Advisory Committee

