

Who is the Oyster River Watershed Association?

Founded in 2000, the Oyster River Watershed Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that seeks to protect, promote and enhance the ecological integrity and environmental quality of the Oyster River watershed through community participation and involvement. The Association holds monthly meetings and river walks, conducts outreach and educational activities throughout communities in the watershed, sponsors water quality monitoring through the NH Volunteer River Assessment Program on the Oyster River, and attends local meetings and provides occasional comment on projects of significance in the watershed. In 2001 the Association developed a watershed management plan for the Oyster River based on neighbor-to-neighbor collaboration.

How can I help the Oyster River become a designated river?

An important part of the nomination is proof of local support for the river corridor nomination. You can attend public hearings and meetings to voice support, write a support letter, assist the Oyster River Watershed Association with the inventory of river values, provide photos and historic documents, be a guide for river tours, and assist with other outreach activities. Letters can be sent to:

Oyster River Watershed Association
c/o Strafford Regional Planning Commission
2 Ridge Street, Suite 4
Dover, NH 03857
or email at: srpc@strafford.org

NOMINATION of the OYSTER RIVER to the NEW HAMPSHIRE RIVERS MANAGEMENT and PROTECTION PROGRAM

Questions and Answers



Protect, promote, and enhance the ecological integrity and environmental quality of the Oyster River watershed, through land protection and education.



Funding was provided by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services

What is a state designated river?

In 1988, the State Legislature established the Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP) to protect significant river resources for the benefit of present and future generations. The program has a two level approach to river management and protection: state protection of instream values*, and local protection of shorelines and adjacent lands through adoption of river management plans. The website and fact sheets for the RMPP can be found at: <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/index.htm>

What are the requirements and process for river nomination?

Any citizen or organization in the state may nominate a river or river segment for designation. Sponsors must submit a thorough description of the river's values and characteristics to the DES Commissioner. Each river nomination is evaluated by the Commissioner to ensure that the river's designation would be consistent with the purpose of the Rivers Management and Protection Act. After public hearings and a report prepared by the New Hampshire Rivers Council, if the Commissioner determines that the river or river segment meets the criteria in RSA 483:6, the nomination is forwarded to the state legislature. The final step in the designation process is the state legislature's consideration of a bill to designate the nominated river. When the governor signs the bill, this formally designates the river into the River Management and Protection Program.

* Instream value examples include: navigation; recreation; fishing; storage; conservation; aquatic and fish life; water quantity and quality; storage; and hydroelectric energy production.

Has the Oyster River been nominated yet?

The nomination is being prepared by the Oyster River Watershed Association for submittal by June 1, 2010. Strafford Regional Planning Commission has received a grant from DES to assist the Association with the preparation of the nomination documents.

Why is the Oyster River being considered for nomination?

The Oyster River has numerous reasons that make it worthy of designation. As a significant source of drinking water for the University of New Hampshire and the Town of Durham, the river is an important component in a region with increasing population and development pressures. The river and its environs support significant plant and animal species, and play a contributory role to the health of the Great Bay Estuary and the New Hampshire seacoast. In close proximity to the University, the river provides educational, research, and recreational benefits to students and the river communities. The river's history and beauty add to the region's sense of place as a rural landscape. It is an opportune time to consider the river and its watershed in a regional context.



Is the entire river being proposed for designation?

The designated section starts at the headwaters in Barrington and runs through to the Mill Pond Dam. The tidal portion of the river below the Mill Pond Dam is not included. See map for more detail. River segment classifications are defined by the RMPP.

- Segment 1 - Rural/Community (4.6 miles)** from Hall Rd in Barrington to Old Mill Rd in Lee.
- Segment 2 - Rural (3.07 miles)** from Old Mill Rd to Rte 155 in Lee.
- Segment 3 - Rural/Community (4.5 miles)** from Rte 155 to the Oyster River Dam in Durham.
- Segment 4 - Community (1.8 miles)** from the Oyster River Dam to the Mill Pond Dam in Durham.

What will be the duties of the Local Advisory Committee (LAC)?

The main duty of the LAC will be to develop and implement a river management plan and to advise local, state, and federal governing bodies and agencies of activities that may affect the water quality or flow of the protected river segment. The local advisory committee will not be regulatory, but will consider and comment on any governmental actions to approve, license, fund or construct facilities that would alter the resource values and characteristics for which the river segment is designated. The committee will develop a local river management plan, which may be adopted in whole or part by town planning boards as part of their master plan, and will report annually to DES. DES provides technical assistance to the local river management advisory committee and other local and regional entities on corri-

dor management. The LAC will be eligible to apply for funds to implement management goals.

Will designation the Oyster River mean lots of new regulations or affect local land use control in the river corridor?

Local municipal land use authority is NOT preempted. A local decision before river designation remains a local decision following designation. There are some restrictions for establishing new landfills, and hazardous and solid waste facilities. The State currently has the authority to institute a comprehensive instream approach on a case-by-case, site-specific basis. Through designation, instream flow would be protected using science-based modeling and a comprehensive review. The recently revised Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act will apply to the designated corridor starting at Mill Pond Dam in Durham and continuing upstream to the end of the designated corridor at Hall Road in Barrington

What does designation provide that is not available through other means?

An important feature of the Rivers Management and Protection Program is the opportunity for municipalities to participate in multi-town river corridor planning and implementation efforts. A local advisory committee is established, and is comprised of representatives from each river corridor community. Representatives are appointed by the DES Commissioner and come from a broad range of interests, including local government, business, conservation, recreation, agriculture, and river corridor landowners. This diversity brings a variety of perspectives to bear on resource protection and development issues.

