

## Newsletter Fall 2023



### Improvements at Sliding Rock Park/ Piscassic Park in Newmarket

Late last year, the LRAC approved a grant proposal from the Newmarket Conservation Commission to make improvements at Sliding Rock Park, also known as Piscassic Park. They had noted some hazardous trees that needed to be removed, tired signage and wasted kiosk space, and wanted to address kayaks that had been left on the ground and made the park look neglected. They also wanted to explore creating a universally accessible trail leading to the confluence of the Piscassic River and the Lamprey River.

The work has wrapped up and the results look very nice. We were happy to have helped with this worthwhile project.

# Welcome to Sliding Rock

## CONSERVATION & RECREATION AREA

This 2.3-acre park was donated to the Town of Newmarket in 1973 by Mr. Walter Cheney when he developed the surrounding area. The 1/2-mile loop trail offers a scenic view under tall pine and hemlock, leading to an overlook where the Piscassic River meets the Lamprey River.

### Trail Map

### Help care for this public space

- Open DAWN to DUSK.
- Pick up pet waste.
- Carry-in and carry-out any personal items and trash.
- Respect abutting landowners and other visitors.
- Remove private watercraft when not in use.
- Avoid smoking, alcohol, fires, and loud noises.
- Avoid removal of plants and other natural materials.

Sliding Rock Conservation and Recreation Area is managed by the Town of Newmarket. For more information, contact the Town at 603-659-8500 or [www.newmarketnh.gov](http://www.newmarketnh.gov).

### Exploring the Lower Lamprey River

The map below shows the location of river access sites for those wishing to explore the beauty and serenity of the lower Lamprey River by boat. Note that some launch sites provide access to the freshwater reaches above the Macdonald Dam in downtown Newmarket and others offer access to the saltwater portions of the Lamprey River and the Coast Bay Estuary.

### Kayak and Slip Rentals

The Newmarket Recreation Department rents kayaks at three locations from June to September:

- Schanda Park
- Schepmeyer Park
- Sliding Rock Conservation & Recreation Area

You can also rent a slip for your own boat at one of the three locations. For more information on kayak and slip rentals contact the Recreation Department at 603-659-8501 or [recreation@newmarketnh.gov](mailto:recreation@newmarketnh.gov).

### Water Access

#### Freshwater Access

- Sliding Rock Conservation & Recreation Area
- Schepmeyer Park

#### Saltwater Access

  - Bryant Rock
  - Schanda Park
  - NH Fish & Game Lamprey River Boat Access

### Boating Ethics and Safety

- Use caution around dams and rapids.
- Maintain NO-NOAAE speeds to protect shorelines and to respect other boaters.
- Do not leave your watercraft (kayak, canoe, paddleboard, etc.) unattended and avoid chaining it to a tree or structure.
- Do not litter on shore or in the water; carry-in/carry-out.
- Avoid loud noises.
- Respect shoreline property owners.
- Maintain safe distances from wildlife to prevent feeder stress and disturbance.
- Respect and clean boats and trailers of aquatic plants to prevent introduction of non-native species.

### Water Access Map

To learn more about the river visit [LampreyRiver.org](http://LampreyRiver.org) or use the QR code.

Thank you for your help in keeping the shorelines and waters of the Piscassic and Lamprey Rivers clean and healthy.

Part of the Sliding Rock Conservation and Recreation Area facility, built 1973, and other improvements were donated by the National Park Service under a grant. The Sliding Rock and Sliding Rock River system was also in collaboration with the Newmarket Conservation Commission and the Lamprey River Advisory Committee.

This is the new kiosk panel.



## Our Shared Lamprey River Watershed

The Lamprey River begins in Northwest Meadows State Park and winds 47 miles through seven towns before it reaches the Macallen Dam at the Mills in Newmarket. Below the dam, the Lamprey continues as a tidal river to Great Bay. From there, the waters flow down the Piscataqua River to the Gulf of Maine.

Of the eight rivers flowing to Great Bay, the Lamprey River watershed contributes the greatest volume of freshwater, playing a major role in maintaining the overall health of the economically and ecologically important Great Bay Estuary. This connectivity, between the fresh and salty parts of the coastal watershed, is exemplified by river herring, fish that are born in the freshwater reaches, migrate down to the estuary to feed, then out to the ocean to spend a few years, and then back again to breed and spawn. A remarkable journey that requires clean freshwater, estuarine habitats such as saltmarshes, and grass beds and oyster reefs, and a healthy ocean.

These birds and water are on Nibolona, the traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Passamaquoddy and Mi'kmaq Peoples past and present. We acknowledge and honor this ancestral site (water's relationship (flow), ancestral (flow), and the Abenaki (people) who have stewarded Nibolona throughout the generations.

**"Outstandingly Remarkable Values"**

Twenty-three miles of the Lamprey—from West Epping to the confluence with the Piscataqua River—are designated as a National Wild & Scenic River to preserve the river's "outstandingly remarkable values" including clean and abundant water; habitat for fish and wildlife; paddling, fishing, boating, and other outdoor recreation; history of people and place. The entire Lamprey River and its five major tributaries—Little, North, North Branch, Passamaquoddy, and Piscataqua—are also recognized by the State of New Hampshire for outstanding natural and cultural resources.

**Things YOU can do to help RESTORE and PROTECT our shared watershed**

- **Clean up Pet Waste** to prevent runoff that can pollute our waterways.
- **Respect the Shoreline** by carrying, and not dragging, boats to the water's edge to prevent erosion.
- **Dispose of Chemicals Properly** by never dumping them down drains or flushing them away.
- **Maintain your Septic System** by pumping it every 2-3 years to avoid failure that pollutes water.
- **Capture the Rain** by installing rain barrels on downspouts and using the water on lawns & gardens.
- **Build Healthy Soil** by setting lawn mower blade at 3" or higher and leave clippings in place; this reduces the need for water and fertilizer.
- **Maintain Native Shoreline Vegetation** to support habitat for wildlife and prevent runoff from lawns.
- **Volunteer** for a local conservation group or town board or join a stewardship workshop; check out [Extension.UNH.edu/About/Volunteering](https://extension.unh.edu/About/Volunteering).

Crabs are a common sight in the watershed. Abenaki

The old kayak rack (left) and the new canoe/kayak rack (right)

Other new signage asks park visitors not to leave boats unattended and to carry (not drag) boats, as well as information on how to rent a space on the new rack.

The trail investigation resulted in work that might be done at another time when significant funding might be available.

We hope all users will appreciate the improvements and do their part to keep the park attractive and welcoming.

The secondary panel.

## Too Much of a Good Thing: 💧 Rain and Water Quality in the River

🌧️ Nobody will be surprised to learn that we had an exceptionally rainy summer this year. The rain helped to moderate the temperature so we did not roast. It helped make the landscape green and lush. The amount of water in our rivers was normal-high, but we had no floods. Especially when we consider what other areas experienced weather-wise with drought, wildfires, tornadoes, hurricanes, and floods, we were very lucky. 🌈

While we escaped the worst effects of extreme weather, we did not escape one sad truth: all that rain washed a lot of potentially unhealthy bacteria off the land and into the water. 😞 At many public beaches, these bacteria forced the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) to issue warnings to the public to avoid swimming



and other primary contact activities. The Lamprey River and its tributaries do not have any public beaches, so NHDES does not post any specific beach closures, but that does not make the water any less unhealthy.

Preliminary results of our annual bacterial tracking research at several public access areas showed unsafe fecal bacteria levels at most sites in June and all sites in July. Ingesting this water or getting it into a wound could have dangerous consequences, especially for someone with a compromised immune system. After seeing the full scope and implications of the problem state-wide, NHDES issued a general warning in July to the public about the potential of encountering unhealthy water associated with heavy rainfall. For more detailed information visit [Be Aware of Water Quality Challenges and Risks After Heavy Rainfall | NH Department of Environmental Services](#)

Testing along the Lamprey River will continue through November. In addition to determining the level of bacterial contamination, the source or sources (human, dog, waterfowl, cow, etc.) will also be evaluated. The final report for 2023 should be available in December. Results will be shared with all towns in the Lamprey River watershed and summarized in the LRAC winter newsletter.

## **Federal Endangered Species Act Turns 50**

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Americans recognized that air, water, and nature were all under attack from human activities. The Clean Air Act was passed in 1970 and focused on regulating pollutants from both stationary and mobile sources, such as factories and vehicles. The Clean Water Act was passed in 1972 and focused on regulating industrial and municipal “point” sources of pollution, basically anything that came out of a pipe and got dumped into a waterway. Like many laws pertaining to the environment, they were based on an interpretation of the legal tort, or wrong, of trespass. If somebody’s waste enters your property without your permission or consent, that is trespass. The afflicted landowner, be it a person, community, or state has the right to sue the offender and seek redress. If trespass can be reasonably predicted due to the movement of air or water, this can legally be forbidden, or in other words, “do not trespass.”

The Endangered Species Act (16 U.S.C. § 1531) signed into law in December 1973 comes from a very different legal background. While many people believe that the Act is designed to protect vulnerable species because they have a right to exist, US law does not recognize the rights of animals, plants, or habitats; however, US law does recognize that humans have certain rights. Among those rights is the pursuit of happiness. In the US, endangered species enjoy protection only because humans have the right to enjoy them, and future humans also have the right to enjoy them.

The Act is 41 pages long and begins with these simple truths:

“FINDINGS.—The Congress finds and declares that—



(1) various species of fish, wildlife, and plants in the United States have been rendered extinct as a consequence of economic growth and development untempered by adequate concern and conservation;

(2) other species of fish, wildlife, and plants have been so depleted in numbers that they are in danger of or threatened with extinction;

(3) these species of fish, wildlife, and plants are of esthetic, ecological, educational, historical, recreational, and scientific value to the Nation and its people;"

The Endangered Species Act has two primary, linked goals: conserve threatened and endangered plants and animals *and* the habitats in which they are found. "Under §9(a)(1), no one, public or private, can "take" an endangered species of fish or wildlife. "Take" has been broadly defined to include "harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture or collect." Furthermore, the US Fish and Wildlife Service has declared that "harm" includes "significant habitat modification or degradation." Thus, the habitat as well as the endangered or threatened species is protected from private action. ([Endangered Species Act \(ESA\) | Wex | US Law | LII / Legal Information Institute \(Cornell.edu\)](#)) In addition, the Environmental Protection Agency is also responsible for making sure that various pesticides do not harm endangered species or their habitats.

The federal government has lists of organisms that are *endangered* (most serious), *threatened* with extinction, and *under study* (in danger, but not yet listed officially). Each state also has a list of organisms that meet those criteria. Along the Lamprey River, several species of turtles are the most widely known on that list: Blanding's turtles (NH State Endangered), spotted turtles (NH State Threatened), and wood turtles (NH Species of Concern).

		
Blanding's turtle Photo by Jon Bromley	spotted turtle Photo by Mike Jones <a href="http://www.mass.gov">www.mass.gov</a>	wood turtle Photo by Kevin Stohlgren <a href="https://guides.nynhp.org">https://guides.nynhp.org</a>

The NH Fish and Game Department keeps track of these and other species. Much of the information comes from wildlife biologists who actively study these animals and plants, but ordinary people also make significant contributions. If you ever see a listed species, please take a photo, note the date and location, and the context of the sighting and then call NH Fish and Game headquarters at (603) 271-3421 for instructions on submitting information about a sighting. Even if you have sent in a



report for the same species in the same location, all reports matter. A single report from ten years ago of a Blanding's turtle nesting behind your office matters. Several reports over many years of similar sightings really matter. Even road-kill sightings matter. These reports help state and local officials determine what areas are most valuable to protect or how best to allow (or disallow) certain development.

We hope all threatened and endangered species can survive in this world. Our happiness and, indeed, our own survival depend on it.

## **Tributary Instream Flow Study Update**

As of August 2023, the Lamprey River and all five major tributaries now have active stream gauges to measure the flow of water and all offer near-real time data to the public. Getting to this point was no small task. Sites had to be selected and then landowners had to be contacted for permission to install the units. Installing the units requires a lot of calibration and technical expertise, in running water and along sometimes-tricky river banks.

*One of the most difficult sites to connect belongs to the State of New Hampshire. It took over a year for the Department of Transportation to allow the NHDES to install the instruments in the photo. Once permission was granted, NHDES personnel had to overcome a dense patch of poison ivy. This is dedication to the job!*

The newest stream gage, Little River in Lee.  
Photo by Joe Schmidl, NHDES



Why is measuring stream flow such a big deal? For now, the big deal is trying to understand what constitutes “normal” flow. This will take several years of recording heavy flows, drought flows, and everything in between year-round. Once these data are collected, NHDES can create a custom instream flow management plan for each tributary and the main stem Lamprey River. The ultimate goal is to ensure that fish have enough water to survive in the context of human activities and alterations to the landscape. In real terms, this means that during a prolonged drought, towns might need to enact water conservation orders to limit the taking of water from the river. It also might mean that some of the water held in the impoundment of a dam upstream might need to be released to create a “relief pulse” to flow down the river. These relief pulses do not make a big difference to the pond or lake, resulting in a lowering of water level by



a fraction of an inch, but an inch of water flowing down the river might mean the difference between survival and death for a fish.

For full details of the NH Protected Instream Flow program and specifics for the Lamprey River and its tributaries, please visit [Instream Flow | NH Department of Environmental Services](#) and scroll down to the Lamprey River.

## Conservation Heroes

At the September 19 LRAC meeting, three long-time conservation heroes were recognized by the NHDES River Management and Protection Program and the National Park Service, Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers System.



Lamprey River Conservation Heroes  
Dick Lord, Kitty Miller, and Joe Foley

Dick Lord of Durham was recognized for having served the Lamprey River as an appointed representative to the LRAC for over 30 years, and counting. Not only is Dick the longest serving member of the LRAC, he is the longest serving member of any Local River Advisory Committee in New Hampshire. He has long been active in history, public engagement, land protection projects, recreation, and wildlife research projects. In addition, his photography has recorded some of the best views of the river.

Eileen “Kitty” Miller of Lee was recognized for her 25+ years of service as an appointed representative to the LRAC. As a wildlife biologist, Kitty also helped to characterize the special ecological places and resources that earned special designation for the river at both the state and federal levels. She has guided ecological research and has been a tireless advocate for safeguarding nature during the LRAC’s activities with land protection and reviewing proposed development along the river.



Joe Foley of Epping was recognized for his efforts and leadership with the LRAC for twelve years, mostly as chair. He brought his experience as an engineer and town board member to the committee and helped to shape the committee into being an important partner to municipalities. He was heavily involved with land protection projects and in reviewing development projects along the river. Joe will be retiring from the LRAC to spend more time with his family.

We can't thank you enough for all you have done for the river! 👍👍👍

## Help Wanted: New Conservation Heroes



The LRAC is always looking for new representatives. Each town in the watershed is allowed to have up to four representatives. There are currently openings for all towns (Barrington, Brentwood, Candia, Deerfield, Durham, Epping, Exeter, Fremont, Lee, Newfields, Newmarket, Northwood, Nottingham, and Raymond).

The committee meets on the third Tuesday evening of the month at the Lee Public safety Complex, 20 George Bennett Road. The public is always welcome. Come listen to what goes on and meet the committee members. If you want to join, the process is easy and we will be happy to help you.



Autumn colors upstream of Wadleigh Falls in Lee  
Photo by Jerry Monkman, Ecophotography