

# Information on the nomination of the Exeter and Squamscott River to the NH Rivers and Management and Protection Program (RMPP)

## *Exeter/Squamscott – One River with Two Names*

---

### **Benefits of enrolling the Exeter/Squamscott River in the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program:**

- Communities and residents working together to protect the river for present and future generations.
- River designation establishes a Local Advisory Committee (LAC), composed of residents from each of the riverfront communities along the entire length of the designated river. The LAC meets monthly to discuss issues of common concern along the river and in the watershed. The main responsibilities of the LAC are to develop and implement a local river corridor management plan and to advise local, state, and federal governing bodies and agencies of activities which may affect the water quality or flow of the designated river.
- State resources are directed to designated rivers before non-designated rivers. Resources include the technical assistance of DES Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP) staff and opportunities to apply for grant funds for technical and educational programs. More information on the RMPP can be found at the program's website:

<http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/index.htm>

### **Why the remaining portion of the Exeter River and all of the Squamscott River are being nominated to the State Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP):**

- The portion of the Exeter River from its headwaters in Chester down to Great Brook in Exeter was enrolled in the RMPP in 1995 and the Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC), was established in 1996. In 2009, the NH legislature amended the RMPP statute to allow tidal rivers to be enrolled in the program and so ERLAC is coordinating the nomination of the lower portion of the Exeter river and all of the Squamscott river. For more information on ERLAC, visit the committee's website at [www.exeterriver.org](http://www.exeterriver.org).
- Growth and development in the watershed continues, affecting water quality, quantity, recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and historic resources.
- The Exeter/Squamscott River is a unique and important resource and the stewardship of water quality, water quantity, wildlife and their habitats, scenic value and recreation opportunities lies with our towns and townspeople.

### **The steps in the RMPP nomination process:**

- The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee prepares a detailed natural resource assessment and holds at least one public meeting within the watershed prior to submission of the nomination package on May 31, 2010 to the NH Department of Environmental Services.
- Public endorsement is important and demonstrated by letters of support from town boards, landowners, local businesses, chambers of commerce and other civic organizations included in the application.
- The NHDES Rivers Program Coordinator, in cooperation with the Rivers Management Advisory Committee, will hold at least one public hearing in the watershed to receive public comment on the nomination.
- Once the nomination for designation in the Rivers Management and Protection Program is submitted, it takes at least one year to work through the legislative process it. ERLAC anticipates that designation of the lower portion of the Exeter River and the entire Squamscott River will be signed into law the second half of 2011.

## **Frequently asked questions:**

### ***Will more state regulation be placed on local landowners?***

All local land use decisions, including buffer ordinances, remain local. (RSA 483:2). Designation reinforces existing state and federal laws. The provisions of the NH Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Program (CSPA) apply to all designated river sections. This could be a change if your property was previously not included in the CSPA.

### ***Will the designation have a negative impact on land owners?***

River designation can increase respect for property rights and heighten recognition of the valuable contribution which landowners already make in river protection. The development of a river corridor management plan by the Local Advisory Committee can increase public understanding and interest in issues important to property owners and can bring technical assistance, access to grant funds, and other support to help address and solve such problems.

### ***Will additional permits be required?***

The same permits that are required before a river is designated would still be required after a river becomes designated. If your river section was not subject to the NH Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA) prior to designation it will be subject to these provisions after. CSPA permits are needed for activities within 250' of the river. Once designated, the LAC is provided an opportunity to review and provide comment on any permit within 1,320' of the river. Their comments are advisory only. This does not extend the timeline for permits, nor require the filling of any additional permits.

### ***What does designation mean for municipalities?***

Each designated river is protected and managed to maintain and enhance outstanding characteristics for which it was designated including drinking water supply. If your town wants to site a solid waste or hazardous waste facilities it must be 250 feet from the river.

### ***Does designated river status require additional or special in-stream flow standards?***

Water quality standards, including in-stream flow protection apply to all of the state's flowing waters. Standards speak to the river's suitability for fishing and swimming, ability to meet drinking water standards, and a policy to not let existing high quality waters degrade. In-stream flow requirements are developed for the entire river not just for an individual withdrawal.

### ***What happens once the river is officially designated?***

After the nomination becomes official, representatives are nominated by each riverfront community and appointed by the DES Commissioner for three year terms on the Local Advisory Committee (LAC). Representatives are nominated by the Board of Selectmen with input from the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. Interests represented on the LAC include, but are not limited to riverfront landowners, business, conservation, recreation, agriculture, and local government. The LAC is responsible for developing the local river corridor management plan and commenting on activities affecting the river that require state or federal permits.

*For more information, contact:*

*Theresa Walker, Rockingham Planning Commission*

*156 Water Street, Exeter, NH 03833*

*603-778-0885*

*twalker@rpc-nh.org*