

Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee (LMRLAC)

2014 Annual Report

The Lower Merrimack River Local Advisory Committee (LMRLAC) was created in 1990 after the Lower Merrimack was designated a protected river in the State of NH. The Lower Merrimack River Corridor, which extends shoreward ¼ mile in the Towns of Hudson, Litchfield and Merrimack, and the City of Nashua, is managed and protected under RSA 483 in accordance with the State's Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP).

Members of the LMRLAC are nominated by each riverfront municipality and are approved by the State's DES Commissioner. Representatives come from a broad range of interests, including but not limited to local government, business, conservation, recreation, agriculture, and riparian landowners. All members are volunteers. This diversity helps bring a variety of perspectives to bear on resource protection and development issues.

The main responsibilities of the LACs are:

- 1) Develop and implement a local river corridor management plan (CMP),
- 2) Advise local, state and federal governing bodies and agencies and developers of potential activities which may affect the water quality or flow of the protected river or segment, and
- 3) review and comment on any prospective federal, state or local plans for projects within the Corridor that would alter the resource values and characteristics for which the river or segment is designated, including recreational and scenic values.

Members:

Gene Porter (Chair) – Nashua (Appointed and elected Chair in 2014)

Michael Redding - Merrimack

Karen Archambault (Secretary) -- Nashua

George May – Merrimack

Nelson Disco (Vice Chair) – Merrimack

Michael Croteau (Treasurer) – Litchfield

Christine Dupree –Hudson (Appointed 2014)

Rick LeBourdais – Hudson (Appointed 2014)

Meetings are held at the Nashua Public Library on the 4th Thursday of the month at 7pm

We encourage new membership. Applications and additional information can be found at

<http://www.nashuarpc.org/about/related-organizations/lmrlac>

2014 Activities

In 2014 LMRLAC commented to owners, developers, local boards and the DES on several permit applications for projects the River Corridor. Improved stormwater management practices were encouraged as well as greater public access to the river, both for boats and for viewing.

The major projects reviewed were two riverside residential developments on the eastern shore. Phase IV of the Sparkling River Project in Hudson was judged reasonably well planned with regard to drainage, but lacking in provisions for boat access and shoreside trails. The new smaller Autumn Circle development on the Hudson/Litchfield line envisions ten new lots, with one on the Riverfront. The latter was noted to include a legacy

ramp to the River but the LMRLAC's recommendation that provision be made for public access at that point was not accepted by the developer or the Hudson Planning Board or the DES. The DES noted that they do not have authority to require provisions for trails or public access easements as a condition for approval of shoreside construction projects

Formal comments were submitted on three other projects, none of which raised substantial concerns about water quality or public access.

During the year it was noted that the timing of notification to the LMRLAC of prospective projects was dominated by the formal permitting process of the State DES. The details of this notification and review process were the subject of several DES-sponsored workshops during the Fall which were attended by two or more LMRLAC members. The result was an action plan at DES to improve the coherence of the process and to try to standardize the response times required by the various permitting offices.

Nevertheless, it became apparent during the year that waiting for the formal DES permit application notification process to kick in frequently resulted in the LMRLAC not being able to be fully effective in meeting its advisory responsibilities. Of particular note was the observation that owners, developers and municipalities have an obligation under RSA 483 to notify the LACs anytime future projects in the Corridor are being considered – an obligation that is not generally understood. Consequently the LMRLAC is preparing an updated "outreach" briefing on this topic that is intended to be used by members during 2015 to educate and encourage municipalities and developers to provide more timely involvement of the LMRLAC in shoreside project planning.

Several other topics were addressed during 2014.

Nashua's Independence Rowing Club informally briefed on their plans to convert their shoreside trailer storage pad to a clubhouse, and were advised to seek DES and City permits.

The State project manager for the remediation of the creosote seepage into the River in Nashua's North End updated the LMRLAC on the current monitoring program that is a precursor to the construction of a new retaining wall, hopefully to start in 2015.

The LMRLAC commented on the NRPC's new Draft Regional Plan. The three major comments were accepted by the Commission at their formal review meeting.

The State Public Water Access representative to the State's Public Water Access Advisory Board took note of the lack of public access to the 10 miles of navigable river in NH that is the Lower Merrimack and initiated a review of options such as the needed upgrade of the Greeley Park ramp in Nashua. In that regard it was noted that the pending installation of crest gate head pond level controls on the Pawtucket Dam in Lowell MA would help stabilize the level of the Lower Merrimack and make it even more attractive to the public.

Greater public access to, and use of, the Lower Merrimack River is a prerequisite for greater public involvement in, and support of, needed protection activities.