

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



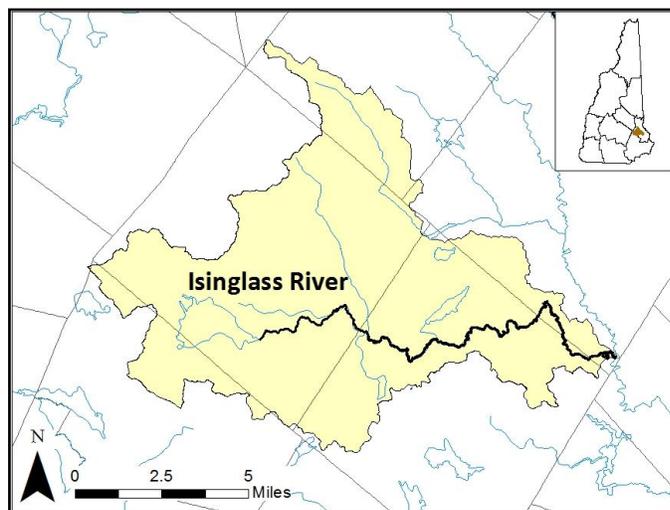
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The Isinglass River

Beginning at the outlet of Bow Lake, the Isinglass River flows freely for approximately 18 miles through the communities of Strafford, Barrington and Rochester until it joins the Cocheco River. The Isinglass River watershed is approximately 75 square miles and includes the Mohawk River, Nippo Brook, Berrys River, Green Hill Brook, and the outlets of Hanson and Ayers Ponds. Despite being situated in one of the fastest growing regions of the state, the Isinglass River is appreciated from a state and local perspective for its outstanding natural beauty and good quality water supply, as well as its history, educational opportunities, recreational features, wildlife and special plant communities.



Natural Beauty

Much of the Isinglass River corridor remains in a natural state; banks are lined by natural vegetation with scattered areas used for agriculture, forest management, or clustered residential development. There are few docks and no manmade impoundments or diversions along its entire length. Numerous areas of rapids occur along the river, including Locke's Falls, a popular site for enjoying the scenic beauty of the Isinglass.

The primarily undeveloped nature of the river corridor and watershed, the amount of available land for potential development, and its proximity to the rapidly developing urban and suburban areas of Strafford County and the Seacoast region make the protection of the Isinglass River and watershed a high priority. Zoning is currently predominantly agricultural and residential in the river corridor and watershed.

History

The Isinglass River corridor contains a history typical of New Hampshire's waterways of both pre- and post-European settlement. Archaeological evidence of Native American trails and living sites, including the Squanamagonic Community, suggest the river was both a source of food and a means of travel. Archeological sites that span the evolution of local economies from the 18th century through to the mid-20th century include a series of mills that once operated along the river and its tributaries. The mills processed a range of products from lumber to agricultural products to fabric. The remnants of these mill sites are still visible at several locations along the river, with the most impressive being the Locke Mill site in the city of Rochester. Another notable historic resource is the Ayers Lake Campground on Ayers Pond, which has been declared eligible at the state level for recognition as a Historic Site for early tourism. Ayers Pond drains into the Isinglass River via Betty's Brook.

Education

The Isinglass has served as a laboratory for local students in grades K-12. The use of a river that is local, and known to the students, has promoted a strong sense of stewardship and provided a unique incentive and opportunity to engage students in projects such as water testing, examining drainage patterns, wildlife and plant identification, and investigating land use over time. Isinglass communities take advantage of ongoing opportunities to develop appropriate river-related curricula and provide teacher training.

Water Supply and Quality

The Isinglass contributes directly to the drinking water of the city of Dover and recharges numerous wells along its length. The river also recharges Barrington's northern aquifer. Its high quality contributes significantly to the health of the Cocheco River into which it flows.

Wildlife, Habitat and Vegetation

The Isinglass River provides habitat for many species of wildlife such as deer, beaver, mink, and barred owls. Significant areas of unfragmented land still exist and offer river access to wildlife. Several state-listed species have been documented within the river corridor such as the Blanding's turtle, a state-listed endangered species, and spotted turtles, a state-listed threatened species. The smooth green snake and wood turtles, both state species of special concern, have been documented in the river corridor as well.



Rare natural communities such as a black gum/red maple basin swamp and a northern New England rich mesic forest are found in this area. The river corridor provides habitat for uncommon herbaceous species such as the state-listed threatened wild lupine and large yellow lady's slipper, as well as a number of rare state-listed endangered plants such as climbing hempvine, resupinate bladderwort and the Canada shore quillwort.

Recreation

Bow Lake Reservoir was historically known as Bow Pond in the 1700s when water-powered mills were built at the outlet which is the origin of the Isinglass. The outlet dam, referred to as Bow Lake dam and which nearly doubles the size of the lake, was replaced at some unknown time in the 1800 or 1900s. The present-day reservoir provides excellent swimming, boating and fishing opportunities that are available to residents and visitors year round. Below the dam, the Isinglass River is also actively used for fishing, swimming and boating. The *AMC River Guide/New Hampshire-Vermont* describes the Isinglass River as having 10 miles of flatwater and quickwater of Class I and II, navigable during high water from late March to the end of April. Formal and informal public access sites, including canoe access at three sites, can be found along the length of the river. More information on public access boating and fishing sites can be found at <http://www.wildlife.state.nh.us/access/access-sites.html>.

For More Information

For further information about the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program, visit the NHDES website at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/>, or contact the Rivers Coordinator, 29 Hazen Drive; PO Box 95; Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-2959; riversprogram@des.nh.gov.