
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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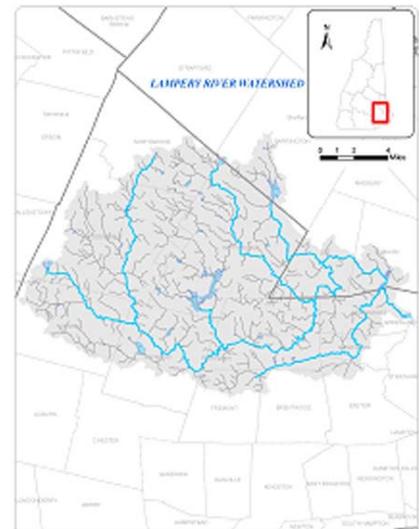
2011

The Lamprey River Watershed

*Including the North Branch, North, Little, Pawtuckaway, Piscassic
and entire portion of the main stem of the Lamprey Rivers*

The Lamprey River Watershed consists of six larger rivers, totaling 87.7 miles. These rivers flow south and east converging in the Lamprey River and empty into the Great Bay. The headwaters of these rivers are located in Rockingham and Strafford counties, heading east through a large number of municipalities. Due to their proximity and reach, these rivers have historically provided transportation, power and fresh water to dozens of New Hampshire municipalities.

In 1990, a portion of the main stem of the Lamprey River was one of the first rivers to be designated under the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP); see fact sheet [R&L-7 The Lamprey River](#). More recently, in 2011 a total of six river reaches in the Lamprey River Watershed were also designated under the RMPP, including the North Branch, North, Little, Pawtuckaway, Piscassic and entire portion of the main stem of the Lamprey Rivers. The economic value of this watershed, along with the vast array of natural habitats these rivers provide, make its protection and careful management important for both future water use and wildlife survival.



Offering both reserve water supplies for adjoining towns and an irreplaceable habitat for many endangered species, the Lamprey River Watershed has been recognized as needing protection and careful management at the state, federal and municipal levels.

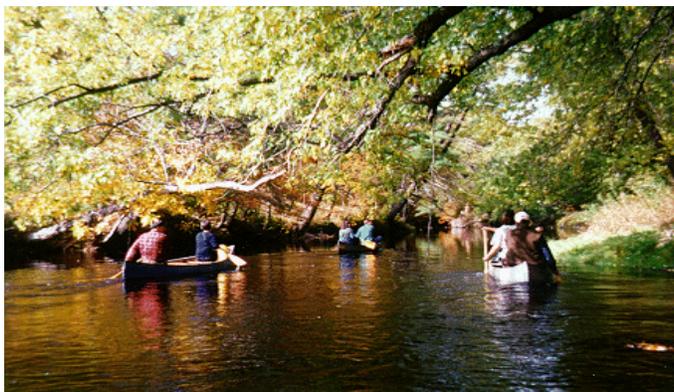
The river network within the Lamprey River Watershed provided transportation and has served as a freshwater source for thousands of years. The area is archaeologically sensitive, with many known Native American historical sites and many additional places meriting additional research. The outlet of the Lamprey River into the Great Bay made the watershed a natural water highway for early settlers, and as such many of New Hampshire's oldest towns are located on its banks. The river was soon dammed to control floods and power many mills, most notably lumber and textile; the mills used the waterway as their primary power source before electricity became widely available. There are 24 structures located within the watershed that are on the National or New Hampshire Register of Historic Places or on the Historic Bridge Inventory, including several covered bridges. Currently, portions of the Lamprey River Watershed are being protected and carefully developed with an eye towards preservation, as it is now valued more for its tourism and recreational values than its ability to provide power or remove sewage.

Wildlife and Plant Resources

The wide diversity in habitats, water flows and water temperatures within the Lamprey River Watershed is home to a vast number of plants and animals, including dozens of endangered or threatened species. Over 200 plant species and 30 fish species are native to the river. The river corridors and uninterrupted forest areas along the banks serve as an important “wildlife highway” that permits wild animals to move from one forest to another without endangering themselves or their human neighbors. The watershed is thus the highest ranked habitat in New Hampshire in terms of both diversity and need of protection. The high quality of most of the water also makes it invaluable for native species which are sensitive to pollution. The area is also subject to invasive species, both plant and animal and efforts are underway to eradicate them.

Recreating, Boating and Fishing

The scenery and uniquely beautiful array of environments within the Lamprey River Watershed make it very desirable for boating, hiking, camping and tourism. A number of the towns located within the watershed are home to skiing and snowmobiling facilities and trails, however, the predominant means of recreation on the river is canoeing. The purity and cleanliness of the water on most of the stretches makes the area good for swimming.



The river does not freeze in the winter and is not available for skating. Facilities for camping or wildlife watching are located in or near many of the municipalities within the watershed. The watershed is becoming a popular tourist destination for nature enthusiasts, and efforts are being made to increase the number and availability of facilities for tourists while leaving the natural wilderness undisturbed.

Canoeing is permitted in almost the entire watershed. The Lamprey, North and Piscassic rivers are known for exceptional kayaking and canoeing. Class I, II and III rapids exist within the diverse watershed, offering wide array of flat water and white water opportunities for any level of canoe or kayak enthusiast. Many of the municipalities within the watershed are home to canoe and kayak rental businesses, some of whom have organized tours with registered guides. Boat launches exist up and down the river, although motorized boating is prohibited or impractical in some areas. The low water level in the more rapid regions makes motor boats particularly unsuitable.

The Lamprey River Watershed supports an abundant fishery due to its great variety in water temperatures, depths and flow. The watershed contains some of the highest ranked fish habitats in the state. The Lamprey, North, Little and Piscassic rivers are all stocked with eastern brook and/or brown and rainbow trout. Many species of pan fish, bass and pike are native to the area. The rivers within the watershed support a diverse and varied assemblage of fish species due to the clean, mostly free flowing waters and the variety of habitats. Several introduced or invasive species also exist. There are many roads, bridges and trails specifically intended for fishing, and fishing by wading into the river is encouraged and permitted. The more western and shallow reaches of the rivers within the watershed are highly amenable to fly fishing.

For further information about the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program, visit <http://www.des.state.nh.us/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/> or contact Jacquie Colburn, Rivers Coordinator, at (603) 271-8801 or jacquie.colburn@des.nh.gov.