

ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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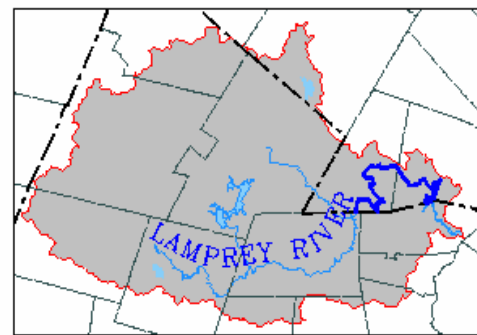
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The Lamprey River

The Lamprey River begins in Northwood, New Hampshire, and courses 60 miles through six towns before becoming tidal in Newmarket and emptying into the coastal estuary known as Great Bay. The river has been designated for special protection at both the state and federal levels.

The part of the Lamprey River designated under the NH Rivers Management and Protection Program in June 1990, is limited to the segment of the river that flows through the towns of Lee and Durham. A large percentage of the land in the river's corridor is undeveloped, creating extensive wildlife habitat, offering picturesque scenery, and yielding water of sufficient quality to be used as a reserve water supply for Durham.

Due to this river's valued resources and importance as a tributary to the Great Bay National Estuarine Reserve, it has also been designated into the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers System, a program of the National Park Service, becoming only the second river in the State of New Hampshire to receive such designation.



History

This segment of the Lamprey River is rich in history. Early commercial and industrial growth centered around the use of falls on the river for saw and grist mills. The Wiswall Falls Mill Site in Durham has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of the extensive 19th century mill complex located at this site. The mill originated as a sawmill, but was later used to produce a variety of other goods including shoe knives, nuts and bolts, pitchforks, carriages, matches and wallpaper. On an island below Wadleigh Falls, archaeologists have documented artifacts over 8,000 years old that are among the earliest dated archaeological artifacts in New Hampshire.

Wildlife and Plant Resources

As the largest tributary to the Great Bay National Estuarine Reserve, the river executes a significant role in maintaining the overall health of the protected bay's environment. A number of endangered and threatened bird species have been sighted along the river which rely on the river habitat for food and shelter. Among these is the federally-listed threatened bald eagle which is known to forage in the river while wintering at Great Bay, an area noted to have the highest abundance of eagle activity in the State of New Hampshire during the winter. The first osprey nest known to have been built in the seacoast region during this century was discovered within two miles of the river in 1989. Also occurring along this segment of the Lamprey River are 12 endangered or threatened plant species, as listed by the New

Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory. Two other notable species which inhabit the river are the state-listed threatened spotted turtle and the endangered brook floater mussel.

Recreation

The town of Durham owns two recreational areas in the river corridor. An 800 acre parcel at Doe Farm has extensive trails for hiking, jogging and skiing, and the Packers Falls Recreation Area provides public access to the whitewater for canoeing, swimming and tubing.

The privately-owned Durham Boat Company offers instruction, storage, and launching facilities for racing shells below Moat Island. Three campgrounds located along the river, Lamprey River, Wellington, and Ferndale Acres, provide facilities for seasonal camping.



Boating

Canoeing is a popular activity on the Lamprey River. Although located within 15 miles of the populated seacoast and 60 miles from metropolitan Boston, the upper portion of the river in Lee is described in a river guidebook as “a quiet retreat into the woods ... past densely forested banks of hemlock and hardwoods” For the more adventurous, the guidebook recommends Packers Falls in Durham as providing “one of the most challenging rapids in the Piscataqua Watershed.” Both public and informal launching areas provide canoe access to the river; no boat ramps have been developed on this segment of the Lamprey River. However, two boat ramps in Newmarket provide limited access to portions of the lower Lamprey in Durham and Newmarket.

Fishing

The Lamprey River supports a significant fishery. Shad, alewife, and Atlantic salmon are found up to the impassable Wiswall Dam in Durham. The river is also part of the anadromous fish restoration program, a cooperative state-federal restoration program which began in 1969. Naturally-reproducing species sought by fisherman include small and largemouth bass, chain pickerel, sunfish, American eel, and brown bullhead. The NH Fish and Game Department regularly stocks the river with shad, rainbow, brown and brook trout. One popular fishing site is a 3/4 mile segment of the Lamprey River below Wiswall Falls in Durham. Fishing continues into the winter, with ice-fishing popular along the length of the segment. To allow access for fishermen, Salmon Unlimited has negotiated agreements with private landowners along key areas of the river.

For More Information

For further information about the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program go to <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/index.htm> or contact Steve Couture, Rivers Coordinator, 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-8801; steven.couture@des.nh.gov.