Nomination Form for the Swift River
1990

B. Briefly describe the most important resource values which are present and why you believe the values are significant from either a statewide or local perspective. For example, if a significant statewide recreational resource is present, identify the type and location of the resource and explain why you believe it is of statewide significance. If you feel the value is threatened, explain why.

The Swift River is aptly named. Its steep gradient means for most of its length the river tumbles over rocks and boulders. Coupled with the surrounding mountains, and natural vegetation, the rapids provide considerable scenic beauty. With almost the entire length of the Swift River and its watershed located within the White Mountain National Forest, the natural beauty of the Swift River will not be compromised by commercial and residential development. Because of its mountainous location, and the protected status of its watershed, the value of the natural resources of the Swift River are of statewide and regional significance. The free-flowing nature of the river and the lack of hydroelectric facilities, impoundments or water withdrawals also increase the value of the natural resources of the Swift River.

Tourism is a major industry of the Mt. Washington Valley, the region in which the Swift River is located. With the Swift River providing opportunities for boating, swimming, fishing, camping, and sightseeing, it is a significant resource for the local economy.

The Kancamagus Highway which follows the Swift River valley has been declared by the US Forest Service as a National Forest Scenic Byway. It not only provides an opportunity for sightseers to view the beauty of the Swift River watershed, but also provides access to the many recreational resources of the region.

Because of the exceptional quality of the white-water boating, the availability of camping areas, and the beauty and sparsely developed nature of the surrounding area, the recreational resources of the Swift River have significant value at the statewide level.

IV. OTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In addition to the information required by the nomination form, sponsors are encouraged to submit any other information which they believe will support the nomination of the river. This may include a visual presentation (for example, a slide program of the river or maps showing the location of significant resources) or studies. Use the space below to indicate what, if any, supporting information has been submitted.

1. A location map and a 2 page resource map of the Swift River
2. "Saco and Swift River Landowner Questionnaire - Compilation and Analysis of Results" (The report referred to in Section III, above.)

V. RIVER CLASSIFICATIONS

Which river classification(s) do you recommend for this river/segment?

We recommend that the Swift River be designated as a Natural River for its entire length.

less severe as the Swift River enters the broad floodplain of the Saco River.

2. Wildlife Resources

List the species of mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians commonly found in the river and corridor. List any rare or endangered animals or habitat supported by the corridor environment, including location.

According to the literature review conducted by the Saco River Basin USDA Cooperative Study (1983a), there are 36 species of fish, 32 species of amphibians and reptiles, 165 species of birds, and 56 species of mammals using the various habitats which occur in the Saco River watershed, which includes the Swift River. Because the dominant habitat type found in the watershed is forestland, the most common species occurring would be those which can utilize the forest habitat. With the watershed being almost entirely within the White Mountain National Forest, the continued presence of forest habitat of sufficient size to support stable populations of most of the existing forest species can be assured.

Included in the list of species compiled by the Saco River Basin USDA Cooperative Study (1983a) are 13 endangered or threatened species. Section 1532(6) of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 defines an endangered species as: any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Section 1532(20) defines threatened species as: any species which is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The endangered and threatened species in the New Hampshire portion of the Saco River watershed are 4 endangered bird species (Pied-Billed Grebe, Common Tern, Sedge Wren, Loggerhead Shrike), 7 threatened bird species (Common Loon, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Harrier, Osprey, Arctic Tern, Common Nighthawk, Purple Martin), 1 endangered mammal (Canada Lynx), and 1 threatened mammal (Marten). These thirteen species were also included on a list of species compiled by the New Hampshire Audubon Society and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Dept. for inclusion under RSA 212-A, FIS 1000 passed in 1987 for the conservation of endangered species.

River where it flows in the Saco River floodplain there are a number of small areas of wetland soils.

- Endangered species

Comprehensive field surveys of the Swift River watershed for rare and endangered species have not been conducted and thus a definitive statement on the presence, absence, or status of species or natural communities can not be made. The database of the New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory indicates the presence of two records of a Northern New England Level Bog, an exemplary natural community, at Church Ponds and Bogs. There is also one record for *Polioptila caerula* (Blue-gray Gnatcatcher), ranked as endangered in New Hampshire, along the river near the Dugway camping area. (New Hampshire Natural Heritage Inventory, letter of 3 November, 1989)

4. Fish Resources

List the fish species commonly found in the river. List any rare or endangered fish species supported by the river. Describe significant habitat areas, including location. Indicate if significant fish restoration program is on-going or planned (anadromous fish, etc.). Indicate whether significant fisheries rely on natural reproduction or stocking programs.

The Swift River is an important coldwater sport fishery. Species include brook trout and introduced brown and rainbow trout. Historically, the Swift River was one of the premier trout fishing rivers in the region. Now, the fishing pressure exceeds the reproductive capability of the native populations so overall fishing success is largely dependent on the stocking of hatchery reared brook and rainbow trout. The Kancamagus Highway provides good public access both for stocking and fishing.

There are no anadromous fish runs on the Swift River, because of the numerous dams on the Maine portion of the Saco River. With considerable good habitat for salmon spawning in the Swift River, the potential exists for reestablishing the salmon runs if the barriers presented by the dams can be overcome. There is interest in setting up a salmon restoration program for the Saco and Swift Rivers, but it would require considerable effort and coordination between New Hampshire and Maine to be successful.

No threatened or endangered fish species are known to inhabit the river.

The town of Albany has a population of about 550, which is centered on Rte 16 to the south of the Swift River valley, and outside of the river corridor. The population center of the town of Waterville Valley is outside of the Swift River watershed. The town of Livermore lies entirely within the White Mountain National Forest, is unincorporated and has no residents.

b. Roads and Bridges

The Kancamagus Highway is on the south side of the Swift River and follows its full length. For the most part the road is more than 250 feet from the river. However, in Rocky Gorge the road is closer because of the steep sides of the valley. The Passaconaway Road is to the north of the lower 6 miles of the Swift River, and comes close to the river only where the mountain slopes come steeply down to the river.

There are only 5 bridges across the Swift River: the Bear Notch Road bridge, the Albany Covered Bridge for the Passaconaway Road, a railroad bridge, the West Side Road bridge, and a covered bridge just below the West Side Road bridge.

7 Natural Flow Characteristics

Briefly describe the natural flow characteristics of the river, including natural periodic variations in flow, or, if applicable variations caused by an upstream impoundment or significant diversion. Indicate where the river is free-flowing.

The Swift River is free-flowing for its entire length

Precipitation in the Swift River watershed is distributed fairly uniformly throughout the year. Because precipitation during the winter months occurs as snow and is stored until spring, runoff does not occur evenly. About 50% of the basin's runoff occurs in March, April, and May, when melting snow combines with heavy rains.

B. MANAGED RESOURCES

1. Impoundments

List all dams in the river. Briefly describe these structures, including their location and effect on the river and corridor.

There are no dams or impoundments on the Swift River

Conway was incorporated in 1765 and by 1777 had grown to a population of 273 people (Pendery and Wallace, 1979).

By the early 1800s small farmsteads dotted the region particularly in lowland areas along the Saco River. Numerous stone fences, dug wells, and cellar holes stand as a testimony to the industrious nature of these early pioneers. The Russell-Colbath House, built in the 1830s in what was then called Passaconaway, remains as an example of a farmhouse typical of that time. The house is owned by the US Forest Service and is open to the public, during the summer months, as a museum of Early American life. In 1987, the Russell-Colbath House was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Swift River is crossed by two covered bridges built in the mid 1800s. The Albany bridge is presently being restored by the US Forest Service, while the Conway bridge has been closed and is in need of repair and restoration.

Picturesque scenery, outstanding trout fishing, and an extensive network of foot trails in the surrounding mountains began to attract numerous tourists into the region as early as the mid-19th century. Large hotels and summer residences, including a number of architecturally significant buildings, were constructed during this resort era.

During the late 19th century the logging industry flourished in the White Mountains. The Conway Scenic Railroad, running between North Conway and Conway, crosses the Swift River and is a reminder of the area's rich railroad and logging history. Rail lines were built and operated throughout the region from the 1870s through the turn of the century. Numerous logging camps were constructed along all the major rivers in the area. Today many of the area's popular roads and trails, including the Kancamagus Highway, reside on former railroad beds. In 1911, the White Mountain National Forest was established, thereby bringing about the gradual demise of the damaging logging practices of that time.

Between 1933 and 1942 Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) activity flourished in the valley. Large camps existed along both the Saco and Swift Rivers. A monument commemorating the contributions made by the CCC exists at the Blackberry Crossing Campground adjacent to the Swift River in Albany.

2 Community Resources

Briefly describe how the river is recognized as a significant community resource.

The Swift River is a scenic and recreational asset for the residents of the towns of Albany, Conway, and the other towns in

can be paddled and is usually runnable from mid-April to the end of May. There is quickwater in the Albany Intervale alternating with Class III rapids. From Rocky Gorge to Lower Falls the rapids are continuous and difficult (Class III to Class IV). Though negotiable by an expert in an open canoe, this section and the one below it are more suitable for kayakers and rafters. The 6 miles of river below Lower Falls are Class IV and one of the most difficult uninterrupted runs in New England. The US Forest Service maintains a gauge at Big Eddy to measure the water level. The final three miles of the Swift River are quickwater with Class II - III rapids. (AMC River Guide, 1989)

During warm weather the river is used for swimming and sunbathing. The picnic areas at Rocky Gorge and Lower Falls are very popular, and receive heavy usage on hot summer days.

In the winter, cross country skiers are attracted to the river corridor for wilderness skiing. The Forest Service has developed a number of skiing trails, both along the river and into the surrounding areas. The Nanamocomuck Ski Trail runs along the north side of the Swift River from Lily Pond to the Albany Covered Bridge.

As stated above, a number of campgrounds are located along the Swift River. Both National Forest and private facilities are available to provide a full spectrum of camping opportunities. Wilderness camping also occurs within the White Mountain National Forest.

Recreational fishing for trout is a popular activity on the Swift River during the warm weather months. Fishing pressure is greatest on weekends with the largest concentration of fishermen limited to the section between Rocky Gorge and the Albany/Conway town line. Due to a history of heavy fishing pressure, the trout populations in the Swift River are maintained through stocking. A handicap access fishing area is provided by the US Forest Service next to the Albany Covered Bridge.

c. Describe existing recreational potential

It can be concluded from the above discussion that much of the recreational potential of the Swift River is already being utilized. The challenge is to maintain the quality of the recreational experience for future users.

2 Land Use Controls

Identify municipalities with existing master plans and/or zoning ordinances within the river corridor. Identify local land use controls which affect the river corridor (i.e., zoning, easements, subdivision regulations).

Albany: The town of Albany has both a Zoning Ordinance and a Master Plan. The Zoning Ordinance does not address conservation issues, in that there are no provisions for wetland or floodplain protection. The Master Plan expresses the need to protect streams, ponds, woodlands, and wetlands, and recommends that the Town establish a setback requirement for structures along the waters.

Conway: Within Conway's Zoning Ordinance both a River Conservation District and a Wetland Conservation District are defined. In these districts no new residential construction is permitted; nor can there be any new septic systems constructed or dredge and fill activities except under the guidelines of very specific special exceptions. The premise on which these two districts were created is legally sound and has withstood challenge elsewhere. Moreover, the boundaries of these districts have been scientifically determined and are delineated on official town maps. The purpose and intent in creating the two districts is clearly stated and the effectiveness of this ordinance is evidenced by the lack of development in these designated areas.

Saco River Basin USDA Cooperative Study, 1983a. Fish and wildlife appendix. 46 pp. plus appendices

Saco River Basin USDA Cooperative Study, 1983b Flood plain appendix. 32 pp. plus appendices.

Saco River Basin USDA Cooperative Study, 1983c. Forest resources appendix. 70 pp. plus appendices.

Saco River Basin USDA Cooperative Study, 1983d Water resources appendix. 109 pp. plus appendices.

Saco River Corridor Commission, 1977. The Saco River: A survey of recreational use.

Saco River Environmental Advisory Committee, 1973. Saco River corridor: The view from the valley. 39 pp.

Saco River Steering Committee, 1977 The Saco watershed in N.H A local view. 30 pp.

Saco River Steering Committee, and Carroll County Conservation District, 1975. Plan for streambank stabilization on the Saco River, New Hampshire.

Sillas, Albert, 1984. The Saco River overview. U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Laconia NH, Internal Report.

Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission, 1983 The Saco River: A plan for recreational management. 58 pp. plus appendices.

Stuart, Gordon, 1973. Water quality monitoring, Swift River: Program Evaluation. Saco Ranger District, White Mountain National Forest, Internal Report.

Sutton, Lee, and Roy Hitchcock, Jr., 1965. Watershed analysis, Swift River. Saco Ranger Distract, White Mountain National Forest, Internal Report.

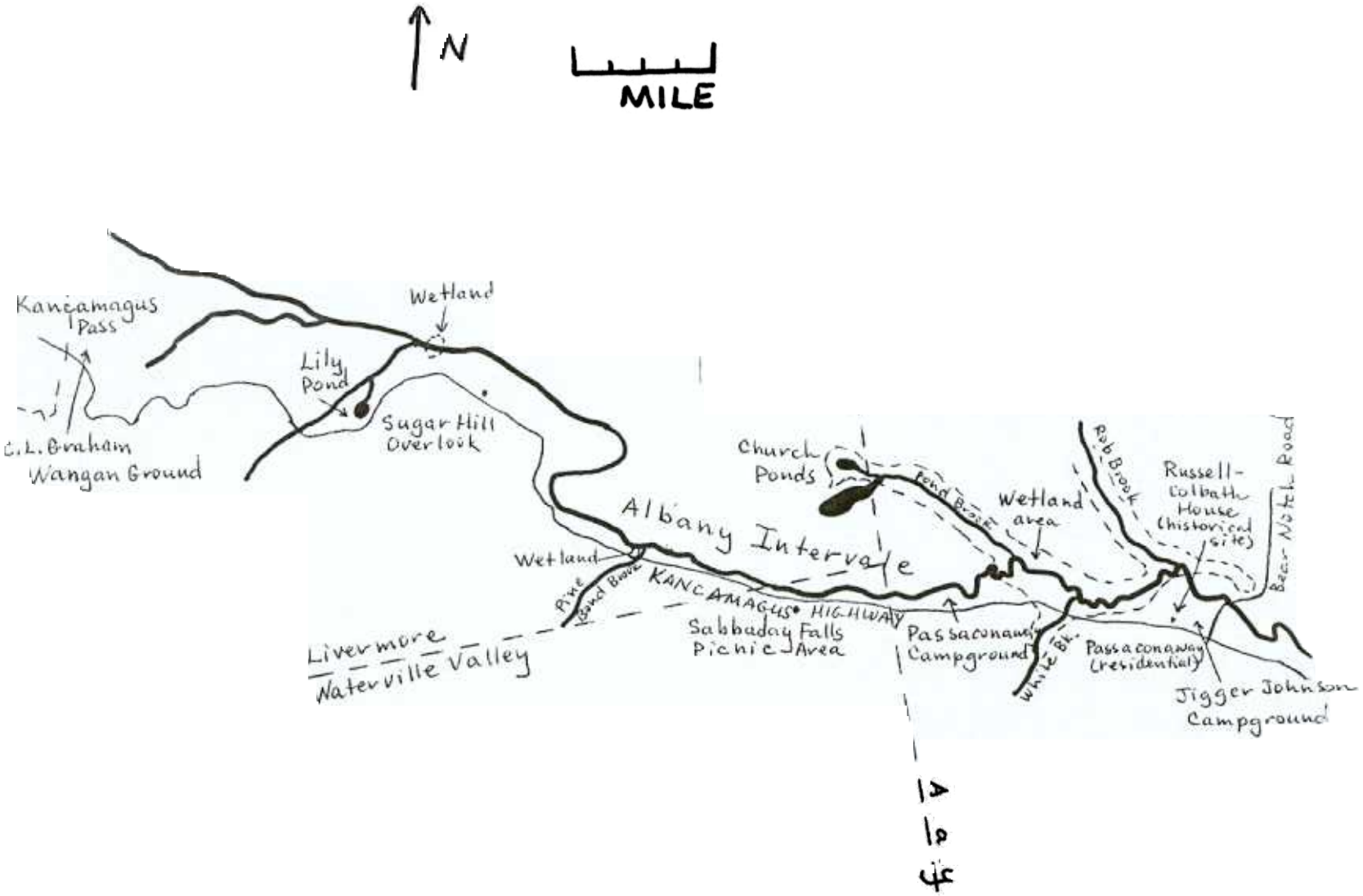
Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, 1974. Flood hazard analysis, Conway, New Hampshire. 32 pp plus appendices.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service, 1977 Soil Survey of Carroll County, New Hampshire.

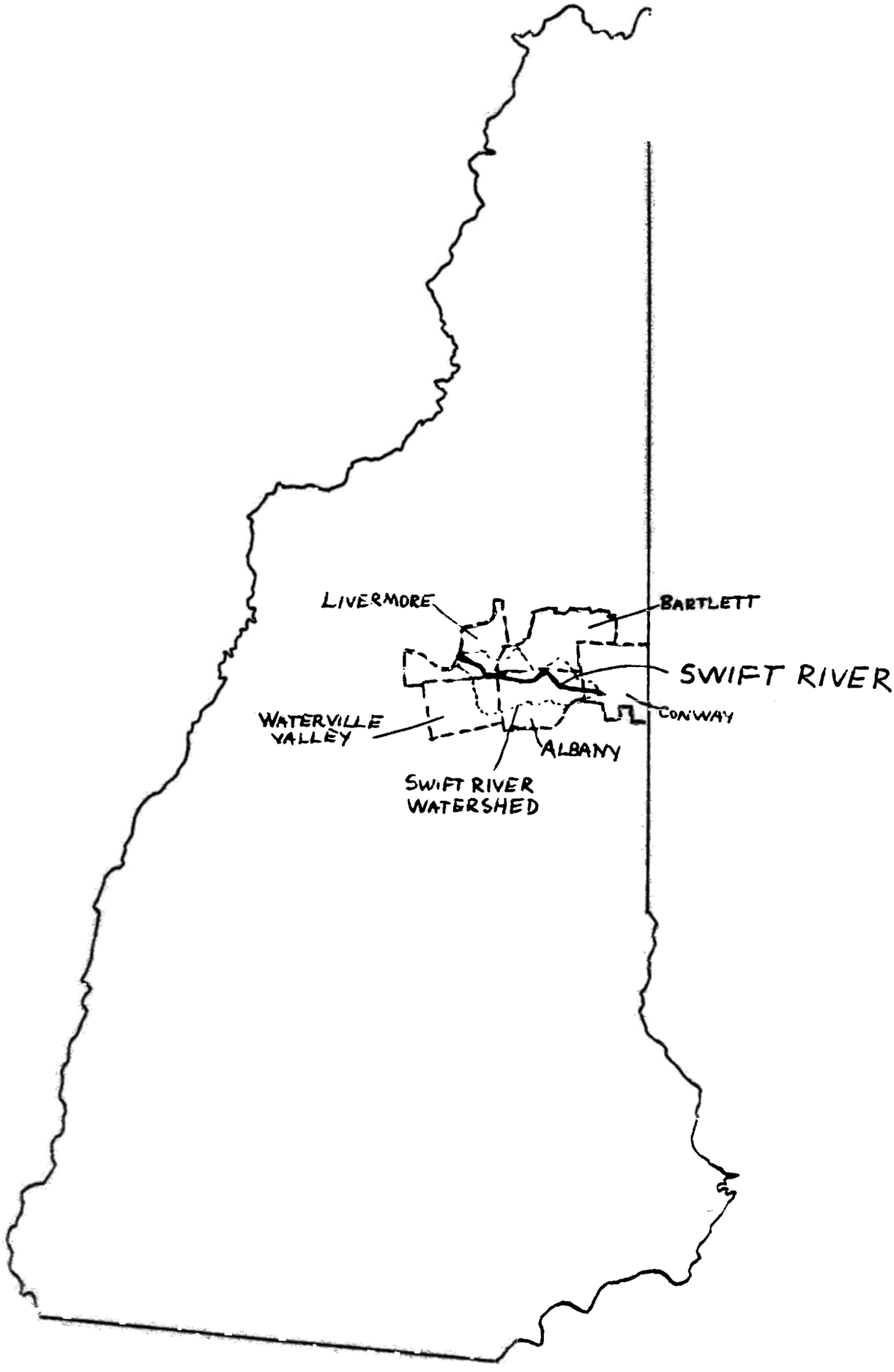
Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Maine Atlantic Sea Run Salmon Commission, and Maine Department of Marine Resources, 1987 Saco River strategic plan for fisheries management.

U.S. Geological Survey, 1987. Topographic maps, 7.5 minute series, provisional edition. (Crawford Notch, Stairs Mtn., Bartlett, North Conway West, North Conway East, Silver Lake, and Conway Quadrangles).

SWIFT RIVER UPPER PORTION



SWIFT RIVER - LOWER PORTION


LIVERMORE
BARTLETT
SWIFT RIVER
CONWAY
WATERVILLE VALLEY
ALBANY
SWIFT RIVER WATERSHED

Saco and Swift River Landowner Questionnaire

Compilation and Analysis of Results

By

Sarah Kimball

Saco River Advisory Council

October, 1989

forestry. Only 7% indicated some type of commercial use of their property.

The river played a role in the decision to purchase their property for 75% of the respondents. Scenic beauty and/or recreational opportunity were given as reasons by 31% of the respondents, while 8% said that they had specifically wanted riverfront property. The land had been in the family of 6% of the respondents.

When asked what they planned to do with their land in the future, 91% answered that they would continue its present use. Other plans included building a residence (for 8%), subdividing (for 6%), and commercial development (for 6%).

The landowners were asked about public use of their land. Public access to the river was permitted by 30% of the respondents. Twenty eight percent did not indicate any problems related to the public use of the rivers. Of the problems that were identified, littering was the most common problem (checked off by 47% of the respondents), followed by failure to respect "no trespassing" signs (38%), rowdy behavior (24%), vandalism (24%), and noise (23%). Actions in response to the problems were taken by 30% of the respondents, and included calling the police, dealing with the individuals directly, posting signs, cleaning up litter, and erecting fencing and gates.

In the section concerning the respondents' attitudes toward the river, 94% thought that the river contributed to the quality of life in their community. The specific factors indicated were: scenic value (91%), boating (83%), fishing (76%), wildlife and waterfowl habitat (74%), free flowing water (73%), open space (67%), and swimming (62%). The respondents were then asked to rank characteristics associated with the rivers from Very Important to Very Unimportant. The characteristics ranked as Very Important for a majority of the respondents were: water quality; scenic quality; free flowing rivers; wildlife, waterfowl and fisheries habitat; access for swimming, fishing and boating. Ranked as Very Unimportant were industrial and commercial development opportunity. There was not a concensus on the importance of residential development opportunity in that the number of respondents ranking it very important was equivalent to the number ranking it very unimportant. The majority of the respondents selected the ranking midway between.

The landowners were asked to check off any problems they had noticed along the river. Flooding was noted by 48% of the respondents, and 42% were concerned about erosion. In addition, 6 respondents identified specific areas where the erosive power of the river was removing some of their acreage. Water pollution was checked off by 21% of the respondents, with 7 respondents commenting on their concern that the proposed sewage treatment plant would be a potential source of pollution. Thirty two percent of the respondents felt that development was occurring

wanted to see the beauty and pristine qualities of the rivers protected from pollution and overuse. One commenter realized some of the complexities of the issue when he said he would "support any program that balances the public and private use of the river and its shoreline while preserving its natural beauty" Others were not in favor of increased bureaucracy which would limit the rights of the individual landowner; they felt that those who wanted to preserve the land should purchase it. Some felt that protection at the state level would be more effective than at the town level because of the lack of expertise within the individual towns.

On the subject of taxes, some felt that taxes were already too high, and that existing tax money should be used more efficiently. Those retired on a set income were limited in how much they could pay. It was all right to allocate taxes for river protection, but some expressed reluctance to support new taxes.

The Saco River Advisory Council was urged to keep the public informed and involved throughout the designation process.

Conclusions

The Saco and Swift Rivers are important to the people who participated in the questionnaire, especially for the natural beauty, scenic qualities and recreational opportunities that the rivers provide. The rivers played a role in their decision to purchase their property, they contribute to their quality of life and are worthy of designation as special rivers in the state of New Hampshire.

Water quality is a characteristic of the rivers that the respondents felt was very important. Of all the qualities of the rivers that could be protected, water quality was identified by the highest percentage of respondents as needing protection.

The respondents indicated that industrial and commercial development opportunities were not important to them. In fact, they said that industrial and commercial shoreline development should be limited. Though there was not a concensus on the importance of residential development opportunities, a majority of the respondents felt that there should be minimum setback requirements for new construction.

The existing free flowing condition of the rivers is important to the landowners. They said the rivers should be protected as free flowing, and many respondents indicated that dam construction should be limited to achieve this purpose.

The participants supported action by the towns to protect the river in their community by a sizable majority. They were also willing to support the allocation of town taxes for river protection.

6. Do you permit public access to the river(s) across your property?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

7a. Have you been affected by any of the following problems related to public use of the river(s)? (Please check as many as apply.)

[ ] Failure to respect "no trespassing" signs
[ ] Littering
[ ] Noise
[ ] Vandalism
[ ] Overuse
[ ] Fire
[ ] Rowdy behavior
[ ] Other (please specify) _____

7b. If you have had problems related to public use of your land, what actions have you taken in response?

The next questions refer to the rivers and your community in general.

8. Do you think the river contributes to the quality of life in your community?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

If yes, how? (Please check as many as apply.)

[ ] Open space
[ ] Agriculture
[ ] Water supply
[ ] Wildlife and waterfowl habitat
[ ] Wetland ecosystems
[ ] Swimming
[ ] Boating
[ ] Fishing
[ ] Scenic value
[ ] Free flowing water
[ ] Shoreline development
[ ] Historical/Cultural sites
[ ] Other (please specify) _____

9. Do you believe the Saco and Swift are worthy of designation as special rivers in the State of New Hampshire?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

12. Do you believe that any of the following general measures should be taken to protect the river(s) and the special opportunities it (they) offer to the region? (Please check as many as apply.)

[ ] Protect free flowing nature of river
[ ] Limit residential shoreline development
[ ] Limit commercial shoreline development
[ ] Limit industrial shoreline development
[ ] Protect scenic character of river corridor
[ ] Protect water quality
[ ] Provide public access
[ ] Provide recreation facilities
[ ] Protect wildlife and waterfowl habitat
[ ] Protect fisheries habitat
[ ] No additional protection needed
[ ] Other (please specify) _____

13. Do you feel any of the specific steps listed below would be appropriate for river and river corridor protection? (Please check as many as apply.)

[ ] Stricter enforcement of local and state regulations regarding water and wetlands
[ ] Minimum setback requirements for new construction
[ ] Floodplain protection regulations
[ ] Purchase of property in the river corridor (from willing sellers)
[ ] Purchase of development rights in the river corridor
[ ] Voluntary easement donation program
[ ] Limit dam construction
[ ] No additional protection needed
[ ] Other (please specify) _____

14. Are you presently or have you considered using any of the following land protection techniques on your property? (Please check as many as apply.)

	In Use	Have Considered
Conservation easements	[ ]	[ ]
Development restrictions	[ ]	[ ]
Scenic restrictions or easements	[ ]	[ ]
Deed restrictions	[ ]	[ ]
Land donation	[ ]	[ ]
Current use	[ ]	[ ]
Other (please specify) _____	[ ]	[ ]

15a. Do you feel the town should take action to protect the river in your community?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

15b. If yes, are you willing to support allocating town taxes if necessary?
[ ] Yes [ ] No

Please add any general comments you may wish to make regarding the Saco and Swift Rivers on a separate sheet of paper or in the margins.

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.