

Souhegan WMPAAC Annual Report November 2009

Presented to His Excellency, Governor John H. Lynch
NH Senate President, Sylvia Larsen
Speaker of the NH House of Representatives, Terie Norelli
Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Services, Thomas S. Burack
and the State Library

November 1, 2009

by the

Souhegan River Water Management Planning Area Advisory Committee

In compliance with Laws of 2002, Chapter 278, the Souhegan River Water Management Area Advisory Committee is pleased to submit this annual report of the committee's findings and activities for 2009. This law defines the two committees for each river under the pilot program to advise the Instream Flow process—the Technical Review Committee (TRC) and the Water Management Area Advisory Committee (WMPAAC). According to Chapter 278, "Each Water Management Planning Area Advisory Committee shall make an interim report regarding its progress and findings on or before November 1 of each year of their existence to the Senate President, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Governor, the Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Services, and the State Library."

NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) maintains a website for the Souhegan WMPAAC at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/instream/souhegan/wmpa.htm>. The website contains the minutes, agendas, and copies of all presentations and documents distributed at the WMPAAC meetings. UNH also maintains a Souhegan Instream Flow Project website at www.unh.edu/erg/souhegan/.

The Souhegan Water Management Plan is under development. The Water Management Plan implements the protected flows established as water quality standards for the Souhegan Designated River by Commissioner Burack on April 1, 2008. The Souhegan protected flows are described in a report titled **Souhegan River Protected Instream Flow Report** and dated October 1, 2007 that can be found at the DES Public Information and Permitting Unit on Hazen Drive in Concord and at the State Library or at <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/instream/souhegan/study.htm> under Task 7. Protected flows were described for a six periods during the year reflecting biologically significant times. They were described within the natural variations in magnitude, frequency and duration of flows that occur during each period of the year. The protected instream flow descriptions for fish include allowable and catastrophic durations for three flow magnitudes. Each flow magnitude occurs at different frequencies: 1) common flows, 2) low flows expected on a frequency of once in two to three years, and 3) low flows expected once in ten years. Protected flows were also described for recreation and riparian vegetation and wildlife.

The Water Management Plan describes the management activities to be conducted by Affected Dam Owners and Affected Water Users to maintain the protected flows identified in the Souhegan River Protected Instream Flow Report. Oversight and coordination of the development of the Water Management Plan is the chief responsibility of the WMPAAC. These management activities will be implemented when stream flows fall below the protected flow magnitudes for longer than the allowable and catastrophic durations. The management alternatives are being developed with the Affected Dam Owners and the Affected Water Users and are scheduled for completion this year. The cost of alternatives will be part of the decision make process used by the Affected Dam Owners, Affected Water Users and DES to choose the most effective management alternatives. The Water Management Plan that

describes the selected alternatives will go in detail before the public at a public hearing later this year. DES is developing a webpage that will present the protected instream flow conditions relative to stream flow in real time. The web page will make use of USGS stream gage data to compare current conditions to the protected flow magnitudes and durations during all periods of the year.

The Souhegan WMPAAC met July 30, 2009. This was the first meeting since October 16, 2007 when the committee met to begin the Water Management Plan process. (Note: the contractors have been focused largely on the development of the Lamprey protected instream flows until July 2009.) Attendees introduced themselves. DES reiterated the makeup of the protected flows and the components of the Water Management Plan. The new stream gage near Wilton that was installed in May 2008 was described.

The DES contractors completed Task 8 since the last meeting – an assessment of water use with the established protected flow. The purpose of this task was to help identify times and locations where the protected flows may not be met so that the Water Management Plan could be focused to offset these occurrences. The assessment looked at the protected flows during three wet, three dry and three normal years as well as the last 5 and the last 30 years. The results of the Task 8 assessment showed that water use in the watershed is, for the most part, a small factor in maintaining protected flows except near the Milford Fish Hatchery. Preliminary evaluation shows that the Milford Fish Hatchery well withdrawals have the potential to affect low flows in the Souhegan beginning near the wells and continuing until the point where the hatchery's return flow reenters the Souhegan. The results of this assessment were presented to the Souhegan WMPAAC.

DES's contractors described the dam owners and water users identified as Affected Dam Owners and Affected Water users under the rules who will be part of the Water Management Plan. The WMPAAC will evaluate the plan's components after they are developed by the Affected Water Users Affected Dam Owners, and the DES contractors. The committee will ensure all the affected parties have levels of effort appropriate to their water needs and business conditions in meeting the protected flows. The draft Water Management Plan will go before a public hearing for review and comment before adoption.

Committee Changes

Jay Chrystal, representing a business in the Water Management Planning Area (WMPA), resigned March 13, 2009 because of lack of time. Ryan Crosbie has replaced Lawrence Major at PIKE Industries and has been attending the meetings in his place as one of the representatives of affected business water users in the WMPA. Mr. Crosbie has not officially replaced Mr. Major on the committee. Minda Shaheen has replaced Angela Vincent at the Nashua Regional Planning Commission and has been attending the meetings in her place representing conservation interests. Ms. Shaheen has not officially replaced Ms. Vincent on the committee.

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