

2008 Annual Report Exeter River Local Advisory Committee

The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee (ERLAC) celebrated its 12th year of stewardship of the river and watershed in 2008. The year was marked by productive partnerships with several organizations, including the Rockingham Planning Commission, NH Department of Environmental Services, NH Coastal Program, and NH Estuaries Project. These partnerships provide ERLAC with an opportunity to work with local Conservation Commissions to advocate effectively for the protection of natural resources throughout the watershed.

ERLAC partnered with the Raymond Conservation Commission to hold the seventh annual vernal pool workshop in May. Children and adults waded into woodland pools to identify salamanders, turtles and clusters of frog eggs. Development of forestland threatens vernal pools in every watershed community.

Several ERLAC members spent the summer working with the NH Department of Environmental Services to collect and identify macroinvertebrates in the Exeter River and its tributaries. These intrepid volunteers waded into the water at several locations to capture and identify bugs hiding under rocks in rapid sections of the river. Macroinvertebrates are used as an indication of water quality. ERLAC members are also actively monitoring water temperature and other indicators. Results from these sampling programs will be available in early 2009 on ERLAC's website, www.exeterriver.org.

In October, ERLAC partnered with the Great Bay Chapter of Trout Unlimited, NH Fish and Game, and the NH Department of Environmental Services to hold a fly-fishing workshop for children. With Trout Unlimited guides beside them, dozens of kids had an opportunity to learn how to cast and how to catch trout from the Exeter River just below Pickpocket Dam. Staff from the NH Department of Environmental Services also worked with kids and their parents to identify macroinvertebrates found in the river and explain why these creatures are such an important indicator of the impacts of land use on water quality and quantity. A volunteer from NH Fish and Game was also on hand to teach kids how to tie their own fishing flies, rounding out a wonderful day of fishing and learning on the Exeter River.

ERLAC continues to work closely with the NH Department of Environmental Services and the consulting firm Bear Creek on a Geomorphic Assessment of the Exeter River. The consultants and ERLAC members have walked miles and miles of the river corridor identifying erosion and other threats to water quality. ERLAC will be working closely with watershed Conservation Commissions in 2009 on restoration of several of the sites identified.

ERLAC meets the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the conference room at the Rockingham County Nursing Home in Brentwood. Representatives are needed from your community. Please call 778-0885 for more information, or visit www.exeterriver.org.