

Elizabeth "Libby" Herland
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Pittsfield, MA 01201

Mr. Jamie Fosburgh, Manager
Northeast Region Rivers Program
National Park Service
15 State Street
Boston, MA 02109

Ms. Lucy Wallace, Chair
Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Committee
c/o Nashua River Watershed Association
592 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

June 18, 2018

Dear Mr. Fosburgh and Ms. Wallace,

With great pleasure, I add my voice to those who know and love the Nashua River in expressing support for the designation of the Nashua River and its major tributaries, the Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers, as Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers. I know the Nashua River well, as about 8 miles of the river flows through the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). For 14 years, until my retirement in the fall of 2017, I had the privilege of serving as the manager of the Eastern Massachusetts National Wildlife Refuge Complex. This 8-refuge complex includes the 1,698-acre Oxbow NWR, primarily located in Harvard, Ayer and Shirley, Massachusetts. The Nashua River and its associated riverine wetlands are the heart of the refuge. The river and the adjacent lands are so valuable for wildlife and for people that they have been permanently protected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a part of a national network of lands and waters known as the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The "Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Stewardship Plan" covers three types of outstandingly remarkable river-related resources. The Oxbow NWR is host to recreational opportunities (hunting, wildlife observation, hiking, and paddling), beautiful scenery (lush forested riverbanks and riverine wetlands), and significant biological diversity (Blanding's turtles). The Oxbow NWR - a "crown jewel" of permanently protected land - will become the anchor in a newly designated Partnership Wild and Scenic River.

A Partnership Wild and Scenic River designation of the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers will not only benefit the rivers and their resources, but also all the protected lands along these rivers. History has already proven the wisdom of this type of river designation. The Eastern Massachusetts NWR Complex also contains the 3,858-acre Great Meadows NWR, which contains 12 miles of the Sudbury and Concord Rivers. These rivers, along with portions of the Assabet River, were designated by Congress in 1995 as Partnership National Wild and Scenic Rivers. This designation helped secure the

outstandingly remarkable scenic, ecological, recreational, historical and literary values of the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord (SuAsCo) rivers, and helped secure an enduring protection of the lands and waters and conservation values of the Great Meadows NWR.

As the manager of the Great Meadows NWR, I sat on the SuAsCo River Stewardship Council. I witnessed the benefits of the partnership designation to the municipalities along the rivers and the agencies and organizations who worked to protect and enhance the values of the rivers. The partnership designation was important; it brought people together, encouraged us to develop and work toward common goals, and helped make the rivers a vital and meaningful part of each town.

There is no doubt that the synergy that developed in the SuAsCo River Stewardship Council will also develop for the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers. In fact, I witnessed this start to happen while, in my capacity as the manager of the Oxbow NWR, I served on the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Committee. During that time, I saw the potential goal of achieving a permanent designation of these rivers generate enthusiasm and pride among people living within the study area. This designation will build on existing relationships and projects, including those between the Oxbow NWR and some of the nonprofit agencies and municipalities involved in the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study. Once the rivers are designated by Congress, I foresee existing and new levels of cooperation continuing for years and years to come.

In my opinion, all the ingredients for success are now in place as the designation is sought for the Nashua, Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers. The river-related resources are outstanding, the rivers have been found eligible and suitable by the Study Committee, the Stewardship Plan is comprehensive and excellently-written, the eleven towns in the study area have all attested to their support through affirmative Town Meeting votes, and the partnerships are strong.

I am so pleased with the work of the Study Committee, and I am thrilled with the acceptance of the Stewardship Plan by all the municipalities within the study area. It will be an honor for the Oxbow NWR to be part of another "Partnership Wild and Scenic River". I wish you tremendous success in achieving this designation.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elizabeth Herland", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth "Libby" Herland